

Personal Correspondence Department

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MAIL PROCESSING CENTER

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 L207 Father, one-->John 10:30; Jesus Christ,
 L069 Father's Day-->Mother's Day,
 L295 Father's voice-->John 05:37; Some have heard the
 L001 Fatima, Medjugorge-->Miracle of
 L157 fifth, seventh, tenth months-->Zechariah 08:19; Fast fourth,
 L034 fig tree-->Mark 11:12-14; Jesus curse

L150* figure-->First tithe, how
 L242 find answers to questions-->Where
 L091 Fire-->Revelation 20:10; Beast, False Prophet in Lake of
 L026 fire, Gehenna, Hinnom-->Mark 09:48; Immortal worms, hell
 L277 fire, punishment-->Matthew 25:41 vs Matthew 25:46; Everlasti
 L229 First shall be last-->Matthew 19:30;
 L150* First tithe, how figure
 L156 first wife-->Lilith, Adam's
 L197 fish-->Jonah 1:17; Whale, great
 L060 flag-->Pledge of allegiance to the
 L008 fleeing, winter or Sabbath-->Matthew 24:19-20; Time of
 L097 Flood-->Life span before and after Noah's
 L164 Flying Objects-->UFOs, Unidentified
 L040 food-->Storing
 L161 food-->Kosher, nonkosher wine,
 L260 Fool's Day-->April
 L024 form]-->Alphabets, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman [Printed
 L284 forsake Jesus-->Matthew 27:46; Father
 L134 Fossils, early man
 L076 four elders-->Revelation 04:10; 05:08, 14; The twenty-
 L157 fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth months-->Zechariah 08:19; Fast
 L227 fraternal orders, service organizations-->Lodges,
 L215 Fruit trees-->Leviticus 19:23-25;
 L154* fund-->Building

G

L310 Galatians 4:10
 L136 Gamble's trademark-->Procter &
 L189 Gambling, dice, cards, bingo
 L130 Garner Ted Armstrong
 L183 gee"-->Euphemisms, slang, "gosh", "
 L026 Gehenna, Hinnom-->Mark 09:48; Immortal worms, hell fire,
 L191 Gelatin
 L192 Genealogy chart of British Royal Family
 L116 Genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 01 and Luke 03
 L292 Generation, How long is a
 L119 Genesis 09:22-25; Canaan cursed for Ham's sin
 L194 Genesis 30:37-43; Selective breeding
 L288 Genesis 32:32; OK to eat hip joint
 L019 Genesis 38, Onan-->Spill seed in belly of whore;
 L193 Genesis 49:10; Until Shiloh come
 L291 gentiles-->Luke 21:24; Times of the
 L195 Germany in prophecy
 L278 Ghost-->Holy Spirit,
 L101 Giants
 L280 God-->Doctrines and beliefs of the Worldwide Church of
 L273 God hear sinners
 L224 God require legal ceremony-->Marriage,
 L033 God seek to kill Moses-->Exodus 04:24-26;
 L158 God, jealous
 L205 God's chosen people-->Jews,

L233 gods in Millennium-->Micah 4:5; Many tongues, languages,
 L196 Golgotha
 L183 gosh", "gee"-->Euphemisms, slang, "
 L068 gospel door to door-->Preach
 L238 Gospel preached to the dead-->Peter (I) 4:06;
 L197 great fish-->Jonah 1:17; Whale,
 L309 Great Tribulation, Day of the Lord
 L024 Greek, and Roman [Printed form]-->Alphabets, Hebrew,
 L240 group-->Prayer
 L311 Gulf War-->Persian

H

L018 hair-->Leviticus 19:27; Shave, cut
 L077 hair style-->Woman's
 L055 hair-->Corinthians (I) 11:03-16; Woman's covering, veil, hat
 L119 Ham's sin-->Genesis 09:22-25; Canaan cursed for
 L041 hand, pluck out eye-->Matthew 05:29-30, Mark 09:43-48; Cut o
 L002 hands-->Laying on of
 L088 Handwriting of ordinances-->Colossians 2:14;
 L020 Handwriting on wall, MENE, TEKEL-->Daniel 05:25;
 L198 Hanukkah
 L055 hat, hair-->Corinthians (I) 11:03-16; Woman's covering, veil
 L218 hate father, mother, family-->Luke 14:26; Christian
 L186 Have more children now
 L228 head of Church-->Matthew 16:18-19; Peter, rock,
 L220 healed immediately-->Mark 08:22-25; Blind man not
 L167 Health of Mrs. Tkach
 L273 hear sinners-->God
 L275 hear voice-->Acts 09:07 vs Acts 22:09; All
 L295 heard the Father's voice-->John 05:37; Some have
 L131 Heart symbol
 L045 heaven-->Revelation 19:01; People in
 L024 Hebrew, Greek, and Roman [Printed form]-->Alphabets,
 L296 Hebrews, Who wrote
 L058 hell-->Matthew 10:28; Destroy body and soul in
 L026 hell fire, Gehenna, Hinnom-->Mark 09:48; Immortal worms,
 L056 Help obtain Bible or Bible reference
 L212 Hezekiah born-->Kings (II) 16:02, 18:02; Ahaz 11 when son
 L142 High school diploma by mail
 L026 Hinnom-->Mark 09:48; Immortal worms, hell fire, Gehenna,
 L288 hip joint-->Genesis 32:32; OK to eat
 L290 historical proof Jesus Christ lived-->Secular,
 L266 history, sponsor-->The WORLD TOMORROW, origin,
 L287 hold all resurrected people-->Revelation 20:05, 11-12; Earth
 L171 holy kiss-->The
 L278 Holy Spirit, Ghost
 L172 home-->Teaching children at
 L299 horse estrogen, pig insulin-->Oyster calcium,
 L023 Hunting and killing animals
 L202 Hypnotism

I

L100 identity ancient Chaldeans, Babylonians-->Modern
 L050 identity ancient tribes of Israel-->Modern
 L004 identity of ancient Israel-->Books proving modern
 L138 II) 1; Elect lady-->John (
 L212 II) 16:02, 18:02; Ahaz 11 when son Hezekiah born-->Kings (
 L048 II) 3:10; Destruction of the earth-->Peter (
 L174 II) 30; Ephraim, Manasseh captives of Assyrians-->Chronicles
 L177 Illuminati-->Conspiracy theory, Bilderbergers, Trilateralist
 L220 immediately-->Mark 08:22-25; Blind man not healed
 L272 Immorality, violence in the Bible
 L112 immortal-->Matthew 27:52-53; Risen saints
 L026 Immortal worms, hell fire, Gehenna, Hinnom-->Mark 09:48;
 L199 immunizations-->Vaccinations,
 L072 included in the 144,000-->Revelation 07; Dan not
 L079 income-->Deuteronomy 23:18; Christian sell dogs, tithe on
 L135 Indian-->Origin of American
 L133 initial-->Joseph W. Tkach; Pronounce name, middle
 L081 Inspired order of the books of the Bible
 L070 inspired part of the Bible-->Mark 16:09-12,
 L111 Instrumental music, singing in church
 L299 insulin-->Oyster calcium, horse estrogen, pig
 L118 Insurance
 L303* intercourse during menstruation-->Sexual
 L170 intercourse on the Sabbath-->Sexual
 L039 interest-->Usury, taking
 L015 Interracial marriage
 L129 Iscariot-->Matthew 27:05, Acts 01:18; Death of Judas
 L050 Israel-->Modern identity ancient tribes of
 L004 Israel-->Books proving modern identity of ancient
 L293 Israel cross Red Sea or Reed Sea-->Exodus;

J

L148 James Version marginal references-->King
 L158 jealous-->God,
 L204 Jephthah's vow-->Judges 11;
 L264 Jeremiah-->Matthew 27:09; Prophecy not in
 L284 Jesus-->Matthew 27:46; Father forsake
 L043 Jesus beginning/beginner of Creation-->Revelation 03:14;
 L221 Jesus call Peter Satan-->Mark 08:33;
 L301 Jesus Christ-->Second coming of
 L128 Jesus Christ-->Pictures and statues of
 L113 Jesus Christ a Jew
 L231 Jesus Christ a Nazarene-->Matthew 02:23;
 L106 Jesus Christ between ages 12 and 30
 L173 Jesus Christ born in autumn, not December 25-->Proof
 L116 Jesus Christ in Matthew 01 and Luke 03-->Genealogy of
 L290 Jesus Christ lived-->Secular, historical proof
 L109 Jesus Christ nailed to cross or stake
 L250 Jesus Christ the end of the law-->Romans 10:04;

L207 Jesus Christ, Father, one-->John 10:30;
 L115 Jesus Christ, the "Son of Man"
 L034 Jesus curse fig tree-->Mark 11:12-14;
 L139 Jew-->Abraham a
 L113 Jew-->Jesus Christ a
 L237 Jew, Benjaminite-->Paul,
 L078 jewelry, cosmetics-->Personal adornment,
 L013 Jewish calendar year number
 L205 Jews, God's chosen people
 L217 John-->Luke 16:16; Law done away since
 L208 John (I) 5:16-17; Sin not unto death
 L138 John (II) 1; Elect lady
 L295 John 05:37; Some have heard the Father's voice
 L286 John 09:03; Man predestined to be blind
 L067 John 10:16; Other sheep
 L207 John 10:30; Jesus Christ, Father, one
 L288 joint-->Genesis 32:32; OK to eat hip
 L197 Jonah 1:17; Whale, great fish
 L168 Joseph W. Tkach biography
 L133 Joseph W. Tkach; Pronounce name, middle initial
 L089 Jubilee year-->Land Sabbath,
 L129 Judas Iscariot-->Matthew 27:05, Acts 01:18; Death of
 L204 Judges 11; Jephthah's vow
 L082* Jury duty

K

L146 kerchiefs-->Ezekiel 13:18-23; Pillows,
 L187 kid in mother's milk-->Exodus 23:19, Deuteronomy 14:21; Seet
 L210 kidneys-->Leviticus 03:17; Eat fat,
 L033 kill Moses-->Exodus 04:24-26; God seek to
 L252 killed: 70 or 50,070-->Samuel (I) 06:19; Men
 L023 killing animals-->Hunting and
 L185 killing, euthanasia-->Mercy
 L148 King James Version marginal references
 L211 Kings (I) 17:21; Child's soul
 L212 Kings (II) 16:02, 18:02; Ahaz 11 when son Hezekiah born
 L171 kiss-->The holy
 L161 Kosher, nonkosher wine, food

L

L304 Labor unions
 L138 lady-->John (II) 1; Elect
 L091 Lake of Fire-->Revelation 20:10; Beast, False Prophet in
 L089 Land Sabbath, Jubilee year
 L213 language other than English-->Literature in
 L233 languages, gods in Millennium-->Micah 4:5; Many tongues,
 L249 law-->Romans 07:04; Dead to the
 L250 law-->Romans 10:04; Jesus Christ the end of the
 L217 Law done away since John-->Luke 16:16;

L086 Lawsuit, 1979
 L002 Laying on of hands
 L214 Leaven in cereals, beer, wine, nonfoods
 L006 left-->Matthew 24:40-41; One taken the other
 L144 Legal assistance
 L224 legal ceremony-->Marriage, God require
 L178 Legal rights
 L094 Let the dead bury the dead-->Matthew 08:22;
 L258 letter to "Dear Youth 91"-->Acknowledge
 L210 Leviticus 03:17; Eat fat, kidneys
 L200 Leviticus 17:10-11; Eating blood, rare meat
 L125 Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy 22:11; Mixed fabrics
 L215 Leviticus 19:23-25; Fruit trees
 L018 Leviticus 19:27; Shave, cut hair
 L029 Life after death experience
 L097 Life span before and after Noah's Flood
 L156 Lilith, Adam's first wife
 L110 lists-->Ten Commandments, two
 L213 Literature in language other than English
 L290 lived-->Secular, historical proof Jesus Christ
 L227 Lodges, fraternal orders, service organizations
 L292 long is a-->Generation, How
 L309 Lord-->Great Tribulation, Day of the
 L203 lots-->Casting
 L116 Luke 03-->Genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 01 and
 L218 Luke 14:26; Christian hate father, mother, family
 L217 Luke 16:16; Law done away since John
 L291 Luke 21:24; Times of the gentiles
 L216 Luke 22:36; Disciples buy swords
 L307 Luke 23:43, Thief on the cross

M

L209 Magen David-->Star of David,
 L219 Magi (wise men)-->Matthew 02; The
 L083 Magus-->Simon
 L142 mail-->High school diploma by
 L028 Malachi 4:5-6; Elijah to come
 L134 man-->Fossils, early
 L220 man not healed immediately-->Mark 08:22-25; Blind
 L286 Man predestined to be blind-->John 09:03;
 L182 man wear earring-->Christian
 L057 Man's 6000 years of self rule
 L115 Man"-->Jesus Christ, the "Son of
 L174 Manasseh captives of Assyrians-->Chronicles (II) 30; Ephraim
 L148 marginal references-->King James Version
 L222 Mark 04:11-12; Why parables
 L220 Mark 08:22-25; Blind man not healed immediately
 L221 Mark 08:33; Jesus call Peter Satan
 L041 Mark 09:43-48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye-->Matthew 05:29-3
 L026 Mark 09:48; Immortal worms, hell fire, Gehenna, Hinnom
 L034 Mark 11:12-14; Jesus curse fig tree
 L070 Mark 16:09-12, inspired part of the Bible
 L035 Mark 16:18; Protection from snakes, poison
 L184 Market (European Community) members-->Common

L015 marriage-->Interracial
 L223 Marriage between cousins, close relatives
 L226 Marriage in the end time
 L225 Marriage valid outside Church
 L224 Marriage, God require legal ceremony
 L116 Matthew 01 and Luke 03-->Genealogy of Jesus Christ in
 L219 Matthew 02; The Magi (wise men)
 L231 Matthew 02:23; Jesus Christ a Nazarene
 L041 Matthew 05:29-30, Mark 09:43-48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye
 L268 Matthew 07:06; Pearls before swine
 L094 Matthew 08:22; Let the dead bury the dead
 L058 Matthew 10:28; Destroy body and soul in hell
 L228 Matthew 16:18-19; Peter, rock, head of Church
 L232 Matthew 19:16-19; Only six Commandments
 L229 Matthew 19:30; First shall be last
 L007 Matthew 24:15; Abomination of Desolation
 L008 Matthew 24:19-20; Time of fleeing, winter or Sabbath
 L037 Matthew 24:32; Tell winter, summer by budding of trees
 L006 Matthew 24:40-41; One taken the other left
 L277 Matthew 25:41 vs Matthew 25:46; Everlasting fire, punishment
 L230 Matthew 26:17; Passover day
 L129 Matthew 27:05, Acts 01:18; Death of Judas Iscariot
 L264 Matthew 27:09; Prophecy not in Jeremiah
 L284 Matthew 27:46; Father forsake Jesus
 L112 Matthew 27:52-53; Risen saints immortal
 L175 Meaning of circa, cir., c.
 L200 meat-->Leviticus 17:10-11; Eating blood, rare
 L283 meat-->Corinthians (I) 10:27; OK to eat unclean
 L306 medical science-->Donate body to
 L027 mediums, clairvoyants, miracle workers-->Nostradamus,
 L001 Medjugorge-->Miracle of Fatima,
 L184 members-->Common Market (European Community)
 L252 Men killed: 70 or 50,070-->Samuel (I) 06:19;
 L219 men)-->Matthew 02; The Magi (wise
 L020 MENE, TEKEL-->Daniel 05:25; Handwriting on wall,
 L303* menstruation-->Sexual intercourse during
 L185 Mercy killing, euthanasia
 L233 Micah 4:5; Many tongues, languages, gods in Millennium
 L066 Michael not Christ
 L133 middle initial-->Joseph W. Tkach; Pronounce name,
 L187 milk-->Exodus 23:19, Deuteronomy 14:21; Seethe kid in mother
 L049 Millennium-->After the
 L274 Millennium-->Revelation 20:07; Satan released after
 L233 Millennium-->Micah 4:5; Many tongues, languages, gods in
 L021 minister-->Becoming a
 L080 minister as "Reverend"-->Address
 L001 Miracle of Fatima, Medjugorge
 L027 miracle workers-->Nostradamus, mediums, clairvoyants,
 L245* miscarried babies in resurrection-->Aborted, stillborn,
 L125 Mixed fabrics-->Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy 22:11;
 L100 Modern identity ancient Chaldeans, Babylonians
 L050 Modern identity ancient tribes of Israel
 L004 modern identity of ancient Israel-->Books proving

L157 months-->Zechariah 08:19;-Fast fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth
 L075 months, planetary week-->Calendar, names of days and
 L267 moon-->Plant crops by signs of the zodiac,
 L047 moons-->New
 L235 Mormon and other religious books-->The Book of
 L033 Moses-->Exodus 04:24-26; God seek to kill
 L122 Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration
 L181 Moses not bless Simeon-->Deuteronomy 33; Why
 L218 mother, family-->Luke 14:26; Christian hate father,
 L069 Mother's Day, Father's Day
 L187 mother's milk-->Exodus 23:19, Deuteronomy 14:21; Seethe kid
 L294 Movement-->New Age
 L167 Mrs. Tkach-->Health of
 L111 music, singing in church-->Instrumental

N

L109 nailed to cross or stake-->Jesus Christ
 L133 name, middle initial-->Joseph W. Tkach; Pronounce
 L075 names of days and months, planetary week-->Calendar,
 L231 Nazarene-->Matthew 02:23; Jesus Christ a
 L294 New Age Movement
 L047 New moons
 L084 Nicolaitans-->Revelation 02:06, 15;
 L236 Nimrod
 L097 Noah's Flood-->Life span before and after
 L214 nonfoods-->Leaven in cereals, beer, wine,
 L161 nonkosher wine, food-->Kosher,
 L027 Nostradamus, mediums, clairvoyants, miracle workers
 L186 now-->Have more children
 L013 number-->Jewish calendar year
 L016 Number not being used]-->[
 L025 Number not being used]-->[
 L063 Number not being used]-->[
 L051 Number not being used]-->[
 L053 Number not being used]-->[
 L163 Number not being used]-->[
 L140 Number not being used]-->[
 L098 Number not being used]-->[
 L099 Number not being used]-->[
 L108 Number not being used]-->[
 L121 Number not being used]-->[
 L117 Number not being used]-->[
 L206 Number not being used]-->[
 L234 Number not being used]-->[
 L243 Number not being used]-->[
 L302 Number not being used]-->[
 L005 Number not being used]-->[
 L269 Number not being used]-->[
 L276 Number not being used]-->[
 L281 Number not being used]-->[
 L285 Number not being used]-->[
 L046 Numbers in the Bible

O

L105 oath-->Christian swear by
 L164 Objects-->UFOs, Unidentified Flying
 L056 obtain Bible or Bible reference-->Help
 L288 OK to eat hip joint-->Genesis 32:32;
 L289 OK to eat in a restaurant-->Sabbath;
 L283 OK to eat unclean meat-->Corinthians (I) 10:27;
 L265 Old and New Covenants
 L019 Onan-->Spill seed in belly of whore; Genesis 38,
 L256 operas-->Soap
 L011 Opinion of or comment on book
 L010 Opinion of or comment on other religion
 L297* Oral sex
 L030 ordained as preachers-->Women
 L081 order of the books of the Bible-->Inspired
 L227 orders, service organizations-->Lodges, fraternal
 L088 ordinances-->Colossians 2:14; Handwriting of
 L227 organizations-->Lodges, fraternal orders, service
 L165 organs-->Donating, transplanting
 L135 Origin of American Indian
 L270 Origin of the black race
 L092 Origin of the cross
 L017 Origin of the races
 L257 Origin people of Central, South America
 L239 Origin Polish people
 L266 origin, history, sponsor-->The WORLD TOMORROW,
 L225 outside Church-->Marriage valid
 L299 Oyster calcium, horse estrogen, pig insulin

P

L104 pal-->Pen
 L222 parables-->Mark 04:11-12; Why
 L251 Parade-->Rose
 L070 part of the Bible-->Mark 16:09-12, inspired
 L230 Passover day-->Matthew 26:17;
 L237 Paul, Jew, Benjaminite
 L268 Pearls before swine-->Matthew 07:06;
 L104 Pen pal
 L153* pension-->Tithe on social security, disability, old-age
 L239 people-->Origin Polish
 L205 people-->Jews, God's chosen
 L287 people-->Revelation 20:05, 11-12; Earth hold all resurrected
 L045 People in heaven-->Revelation 19:01;
 L257 people of Central, South America-->Origin
 L311 Persian Gulf War
 L078 Personal adornment, jewelry, cosmetics
 L238 Peter (I) 4:06; Gospel preached to the dead
 L048 Peter (II) 3:10; Destruction of the earth
 L221 Peter Satan-->Mark 08:33; Jesus call
 L228 Peter, rock, head of Church-->Matthew 16:18-19;

L282 Pharaoh of Exodus drowned in Red Sea
 L128 Pictures and statues of Jesus Christ
 L299 pig insulin-->Oyster calcium, horse estrogen,
 L146 Pillows, kerchiefs-->Ezekiel 13:18-23;
 L075 planetary week-->Calendar, names of days and months,
 L267 Plant crops by signs of the zodiac, moon
 L176 plague-->Ten Commandments wall
 L060 Pledge of allegiance to the flag
 L041 pluck out eye-->Matthew 05:29-30, Mark 09:43-48; Cut off han
 L035 poison-->Mark 16:18; Protection from snakes,
 L145 Poisonous snakes, spiders, carnivorous animals
 L239 Polish people-->Origin
 L300* Polygamy
 L095 postponed-->Answer to question
 L114 Prayer for the dead
 L240 Prayer group
 L068 Preach gospel door to door
 L238 preached to the dead-->Peter (I) 4:06; Gospel
 L030 preachers-->Women ordained as
 L286 predestined to be blind-->John 09:03; Man
 L024 Printed form)-->Alphabets, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman [
 L136 Procter & Gamble's trademark
 L133 Pronounce name, middle initial-->Joseph W. Tkach;
 L173 Proof Jesus Christ born in autumn, not December 25
 L290 proof Jesus Christ lived-->Secular, historical
 L195 prophecy-->Germany in
 L244 prophecy-->Black race in
 L180 prophecy-->Daniel 09:24-27; 70 weeks
 L264 Prophecy not in Jeremiah-->Matthew 27:09;
 L091 Prophet in Lake of Fire-->Revelation 20:10; Beast, False
 L035 Protection from snakes, poison-->Mark 16:18;
 L004 proving modern identity of ancient Israel-->Books
 L279 Psalm 119; Symbols between verses
 L044 Psalm 23
 L149 psychic-->Edgar Cayce,
 L277 punishment-->Matthew 25:41 vs Matthew 25:46; Everlasting fir
 L241 Purim

Q

L095 question postponed-->Answer to
 L242 questions-->Where find answers to

R

L270 race-->Origin of the black
 L244 race in prophecy-->Black
 L017 races-->Origin of the
 L200 rare meat-->Leviticus 17:10-11; Eating blood,
 L282 Red Sea-->Pharaoh of Exodus drowned in
 L293 Red Sea or Reed Sea-->Exodus; Israel cross

L293 Reed Sea-->Exodus; Israel cröss`Red Sea or
 L056 reference-->Help obtain Bible or Bible
 L148 references-->King James Version marginal
 L074 Reformed or World Calendar
 L059 Reincarnation
 L223 relatives-->Marriage between cousins, close
 L274 released after Millennium-->Revelation 20:07; Satan
 L010 religion-->Opinion of or comment on other
 L235 religious books-->The Book of Mormon and other
 L054* remarriage-->Divorce and
 L224 require legal ceremony-->Marriage, God
 L289 restaurant-->Sabbath; OK to eat in a
 L287 resurrected people-->Revelation 20:05, 11-12; Earth hold all
 L245* resurrection-->Aborted, stillborn, miscarried babies in
 L014 Resurrection of animals
 L084 Revelation 02:06, 15; Nicolaitans
 L071 Revelation 02:09; 03:09; Synagogue of Satan
 L043 Revelation 03:14; Jesus beginning/beginner of Creation
 L076 Revelation 04:10; 05:08, 14; The twenty-four elders
 L247 Revelation 05:06; Seven spirits
 L062 Revelation 06:09-11; Souls under the altar
 L072 Revelation 07; Dan not included in the 144,000
 L246 Revelation 10:04; Seven thunders
 L107 Revelation 11; The two witnesses
 L090 Revelation 14:11; Smoke of their torment
 L045 Revelation 19:01; People in heaven
 L287 Revelation 20:05, 11-12; Earth hold all resurrected people
 L274 Revelation 20:07; Satan released after Millennium
 L091 Revelation 20:10; Beast, False Prophet in Lake of Fire
 L080 Reverend"-->Address minister as "
 L178 rights-->Legal
 L248 rings-->Wedding
 L112 Risen saints immortal-->Matthew 27:52-53;
 L228 rock, head of Church-->Matthew 16:18-19; Peter,
 L024 Roman [Printed form]-->Alphabets, Hebrew, Greek, and
 L249 Romans 07:04; Dead to the law
 L250 Romans 10:04; Jesus Christ the end of the law
 L126 Romans 14:05-6; Esteem one day above another
 L251 Rose Parade
 L192 Royal Family-->Genealogy chart of British
 L057 rule-->Man's 6000 years of self

S

L169 Sabbath-->Servile work on the
 L170 Sabbath-->Sexual intercourse on the
 L159 Sabbath-->WORLD TOMORROW aired Sunday, not
 L008 Sabbath-->Matthew 24:19-20; Time of fleeing, winter or
 L289 Sabbath; OK to eat in a restaurant
 L089 Sabbath, Jubilee year-->Land
 L112 saints immortal-->Matthew 27:52-53; Risen
 L252 Samuel (I) 06:19; Men killed: 70 or 50,070

L262 Samuel (I) 28; Witch of Endor
 L221 Satan-->Mark 08:33; Jesus call Peter
 L071 Satan-->Revelation 02:09; 03:09; Synagogue of
 L274 Satan released after Millennium-->Revelation 20:07;
 L201 Satan the devil's fate
 L142 school diploma by mail-->High
 L306 science-->Donate body to medical
 L253 Scythians
 L282 Sea-->Pharaoh of Exodus drowned in Red
 L293 Sea or Reed Sea-->Exodus; Israel cross Red
 L301 Second coming of Jesus Christ
 L151* Second tithe
 L290 Secular, historical proof Jesus Christ lived
 L153* security, disability, old-age pension-->Tithe on social
 L019 seed in belly of whore; Genesis 38, Onan-->Spill
 L033 seek to kill Moses-->Exodus 04:24-26; God
 L187 Seethe kid in mother's milk-->Exodus 23:19, Deuteronomy 14:2
 L254 Selah
 L194 Selective breeding-->Genesis 30:37-43;
 L057 self rule-->Man's 6000 years of
 L255 Self-defense
 L079 sell dogs, tithe on income-->Deuteronomy 23:18; Christian
 L227 service organizations-->Lodges, fraternal orders,
 L169 Servile work on the Sabbath
 L247 Seven spirits-->Revelation 05:06;
 L246 Seven thunders-->Revelation 10:04;
 L157 seventh, tenth months-->Zechariah 08:19; Fast fourth, fifth,
 L297* sex-->Oral
 L303* Sexual intercourse during menstruation
 L170 Sexual intercourse on the Sabbath
 L018 Shave, cut hair-->Leviticus 19:27;
 L067 sheep-->John 10:16; Other
 L193 Shiloh come-->Genesis 49:10; Until
 L022 Shroud of Turin
 L267 signs of the zodiac, moon-->Plant crops by
 L181 Simeon-->Deuteronomy 33; Why Moses not bless
 L083 Simon Magus
 L119 sin-->Genesis 09:22-25; Canaan cursed for Ham's
 L208 Sin not unto death-->John (I) 5:16-17;
 L111 singing in church-->Instrumental music,
 L273 sinners-->God hear
 L232 six Commandments-->Matthew 19:16-19; Only
 L183 slang, "gosh", "gee"-->Euphemisms,
 L090 Smoke of their torment-->Revelation 14:11;
 L035 snakes, poison-->Mark 16:18; Protection from
 L145 snakes, spiders, carnivorous animals-->Poisonous
 L166 snuff-->Chewing tobacco,
 L256 Soap operas
 L153* social security, disability, old-age pension-->Tithe on
 L031 Solomon-->Song of
 L212 son Hezekiah born-->Kings (II) 16:02, 18:02; Ahaz 11 when
 L115 Son of Man"-->Jesus Christ, the "
 L031 Song of Solomon

L211 soul-->Kings (I) 17:21; Child's
 L058 soul in hell-->Matthew 10:28; Destroy body and
 L062 Souls under the altar-->Revelation 06:09-11;
 L257 South America-->Origin people of Central,
 L097 span before and after Noah's Flood-->Life
 L145 spiders, carnivorous animals-->Poisonous snakes,
 L019 Spill seed in belly of whore; Genesis 38, Onan
 L065 spires-->Steeple and
 L278 Spirit, Ghost-->Holy
 L247 spirits-->Revelation 05:06; Seven
 L266 sponsor-->The WORLD TOMORROW, origin, history,
 L143 Stage acting, drama classes
 L109 stake-->Jesus Christ nailed to cross or
 L209 Star of David, Magen David
 L128 statues of Jesus Christ-->Pictures and
 L065 Steeple and spires
 L245* stillborn, miscarried babies in resurrection-->Aborted,
 L040 Storing food
 L077 style-->Woman's hair
 L037 summer by budding of trees-->Matthew 24:32; Tell winter,
 L159 Sunday, not Sabbath-->WORLD TOMORROW aired
 L105 swear by oath-->Christian
 L268 swine-->Matthew 07:06; Pearls before
 L216 swords-->Luke 22:36; Disciples buy
 L131 symbol-->Heart
 L279 Symbols between verses-->Psalm 119;
 L071 Synagogue of Satan-->Revelation 02:09; 03:09;

T

L006 taken the other left-->Matthew 24:40-41; One
 L039 taking interest-->Usury,
 L038 tea drinking-->Coffee,
 L172 Teaching children at home
 L130 Ted Armstrong-->Garner
 L020 TEKEL-->Daniel 05:25; Handwriting on wall, MENE,
 L271 telecast-->Bible used on The WORLD TOMORROW
 L037 Tell winter, summer by budding of trees-->Matthew 24:32;
 L263 Ten Commandments-->Exodus 34:28; Who wrote
 L176 Ten Commandments wall plaque
 L110 Ten Commandments, two lists
 L157 tenth months-->Zechariah 08:19; Fast fourth, fifth, seventh,
 L064 The Apostles' Creed
 L042 The Beast," computer in Brussels-->"
 L235 The Book of Mormon and other religious books
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 L308 The Trinity
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 L266 The WORLD TOMORROW, origin, history, sponsor
 L177 theory, Bilderbergers, Trilateralists, Illuminati-->Conspira
 L307 Thief on the cross-->Luke 23:43,
 L152* Third tithe

L155* Third-tithe years, how determine
 L036 Thummim-->Urim and
 L246 thunders-->Revelation 10:04; Seven
 L226 time-->Marriage in the end
 L093 time cycle-->Calendar, 19-year
 L179 Time of day of the crucifixion
 L008 Time of fleeing, winter or Sabbath-->Matthew 24:19-20;
 L291 Times of the gentiles-->Luke 21:24;
 L152* tithe-->Third
 L151* tithe-->Second
 L079 tithe on income-->Deuteronomy 23:18; Christian sell dogs,
 L153* Tithe on social security, disability, old-age pension
 L155* tithe years, how determine-->Third-
 L150* tithe, how figure-->First
 L167 Tkach-->Health of Mrs.
 L168 Tkach biography-->Joseph W.
 L133 Tkach; Pronounce name, middle initial-->Joseph W.
 L166 tobacco, snuff-->Chewing
 L159 TOMORROW aired Sunday, not Sabbath-->WORLD
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 L266 TOMORROW, origin, history, sponsor-->The WORLD
 L233 tongues, languages, gods in Millennium-->Micah 4:5; Many
 L090 torment-->Revelation 14:11; Smoke of their
 L136 trademark-->Procter & Gamble's
 L122 transfiguration-->Moses and Elijah in the
 L012 transfusions-->Blood
 L165 transplanting organs-->Donating,
 L034 tree-->Mark 11:12-14; Jesus curse fig
 L215 trees-->Leviticus 19:23-25; Fruit
 L037 trees-->Matthew 24:32; Tell winter, summer by budding of
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 L309 Tribulation, Day of the Lord-->Great
 L177 Trilateralists, Illuminati-->Conspiracy theory, Bilderberger
 L308 Trinity-->The
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 L076 twenty-four elders-->Revelation 04:10; 05:08, 14; The
 L110 two lists-->Ten Commandments,
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L164 UFOs, Unidentified Flying Objects
 L283 unclean meat-->Corinthians (I) 10:27; OK to eat
 L164 Unidentified Flying Objects-->UFOs,
 L304 unions-->Labor
 L132 Urantia Book-->The
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L199 Vaccinations, immunizations
 L225 valid outside Church-->Marriage
 L055 veil, hat, hair-->Corinthians (I) 11:03-16; Woman's covering
 L279 verses-->Psalm 119; Symbols between
 L148 Version marginal references-->King James
 L272 violence in the Bible-->Immorality,
 L052 Visions and dreams
 L275 voice-->Acts 09:07 vs Acts 22:09; All hear
 L295 voice-->John 05:37; Some have heard the Father's
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L168 W. Tkach biography-->Joseph
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 L311 War-->Persian Gulf
 L261 Water divining, witching
 L182 wear earring-->Christian man
 L248 Wedding rings
 L075 week-->Calendar, names of days and months, planetary
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 L197 Whale, great fish-->Jonah 1:17;
 L188 Wheels within wheels-->Ezekiel 01 and 10;
 L242 Where find answers to questions
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 L222 Why parables-->Mark 04:11-12;
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 L161 wine, food-->Kosher, nonkosher
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 L219 wise men)-->Matthew 02; The Magi (
 L262 Witch of Endor-->Samuel (I) 28;
 L261 witching-->Water divining,
 L107 witnesses-->Revelation 11; The two
 L055 Woman's covering, veil, hat, hair-->Corinthians (I) 11:03-16
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 L263 wrote Ten Commandments-->Exodus 34:28; Who

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L089 year-->Land Sabbath, Jubilee
 L013 year number-->Jewish calendar
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 L009 02; Bastard not enter congregation-->Deuteronomy 23:
 L219 02; The Magi (wise men)-->Matthew
 L212 02, 18:02; Ahaz 11 when son Hezekiah born-->Kings (II) 16:
 L084 02:06, 15; Nicolaitans-->Revelation
 L071 02:09; 03:09; Synagogue of Satan-->Revelation
 L231 02:23; Jesus Christ a Nazarene-->Matthew
 L116 03-->Genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 01 and Luke
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 L055 03-16; Woman's covering, veil, hat, hair-->Corinthians (I) 1
 L071 03:09; Synagogue of Satan-->Revelation 02:09;
 L043 03:14; Jesus beginning/beginner of Creation-->Revelation
 L210 03:17; Eat fat, kidneys-->Leviticus
 L249 04; Dead to the law-->Romans 07:
 L250 04; Jesus Christ the end of the law-->Romans 10:
 L246 04; Seven thunders-->Revelation 10:
 L076 04:10; 05:08, 14; The twenty-four elders-->Revelation
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 L126 05-6; Esteem one day above another-->Romans 14:
 L129 05, Acts 01:18; Death of Judas Iscariot-->Matthew 27:
 L287 05, 11-12; Earth hold all resurrected people-->Revelation 20
 L247 05:06; Seven spirits-->Revelation
 L076 05:08, 14; The twenty-four elders-->Revelation 04:10;
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L041 05:29-30, Mark 09:43-48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye-->Matth
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L238 06; Gospel preached to the dead-->Peter (I) 4:
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L275 07 vs Acts 22:09; All hear voice-->Acts 09:
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L220 08:22-25; Blind man not healed immediately-->Mark
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L275 09:07 vs Acts 22:09; All hear voice-->Acts
L119 09:22-25; Canaan cursed for Ham's sin-->Genesis
L180 09:24-27; 70 weeks prophecy-->Daniel
L041 09:43-48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye-->Matthew 05:29-30, Ma
L026 09:48; Immortal worms, hell fire, Gehenna, Hinnom-->Mark

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L138 1; Elect lady-->John (II)
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L310 10-->Galatians 4:
L091 10; Beast, False Prophet in Lake of Fire-->Revelation 20:
L048 10; Destruction of the earth-->Peter (II) 3:
L193 10; Until Shiloh come-->Genesis 49:
L188 10; Wheels within wheels-->Ezekiel 01 and
L076 10; 05:08, 14; The twenty-four elders-->Revelation 04:
L200 10-11; Eating blood, rare meat-->Leviticus 17:
L250 10:04; Jesus Christ the end of the law-->Romans
L246 10:04; Seven thunders-->Revelation
L067 10:16; Other sheep-->John
L283 10:27; OK to eat unclean meat-->Corinthians (I)
L058 10:28; Destroy body and soul in hell-->Matthew
L207 10:30; Jesus Christ, Father, one-->John
L212 11 when son Hezekiah born-->Kings (II) 16:02, 18:02; Ahaz
L200 11; Eating blood, rare meat-->Leviticus 17:10-
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L125 11; Mixed fabrics-->Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy 22:
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L107 11; The two witnesses-->Revelation
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L055 11:03-16; Woman's covering, veil, hat, hair-->Corinthians (I
L034 11:12-14; Jesus curse fig tree-->Mark
L279 119; Symbols between verses-->Psalm
L106 12 and 30-->Jesus Christ between ages
L287 12; Earth hold all resurrected people-->Revelation 20:05, 11
L222 12; Why parables-->Mark 04:11-
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L088 14; Handwriting of ordinances-->Colossians 2:
L043 14; Jesus beginning/beginner of Creation-->Revelation 03:
L034 14; Jesus curse fig tree-->Mark 11:12-
L076 14; The twenty-four elders-->Revelation 04:10; 05:08,
L126 14:05-6; Esteem one day above another-->Romans
L090 14:11; Smoke of their torment-->Revelation
L187 14:21; Seethe kid in mother's milk-->Exodus 23:19, Deuterono
L218 14:26; Christian hate father, mother, family-->Luke
L072 144,000-->Revelation 07; Dan not included in the
L007 15; Abomination of Desolation-->Matthew 24:
L084 15; Nicolaitans-->Revelation 02:06,
L305 16-->Colossians 2:
L067 16; Other sheep-->John 10:
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L208 16-17; Sin not unto death-->John (I) 5:
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L212 16:02, 18:02; Ahaz 11 when son Hezekiah born-->Kings (II)
L070 16:09-12, inspired part of the Bible-->Mark
L217 16:16; Law done away since John-->Luke
L035 16:18; Protection from snakes, poison-->Mark
L228 16:18-19; Peter, rock, head of Church-->Matthew
L210 17; Eat fat, kidneys-->Leviticus 03:
L230 17; Passover day-->Matthew 26:
L208 17; Sin not unto death-->John (I) 5:16-
L197 17; Whale, great fish-->Jonah 1:
L200 17:10-11; Eating blood, rare meat-->Leviticus
L211 17:21; Child's soul-->Kings (I)
L079 18; Christian sell dogs, tithe on income-->Deuteronomy 23:
L129 18; Death of Judas Iscariot-->Matthew 27:05, Acts 01:
L035 18; Protection from snakes, poison-->Mark 16:
L228 18-19; Peter, rock, head of Church-->Matthew 16:
L146 18-23; Pillows, kerchiefs-->Ezekiel 13:
L212 18:02; Ahaz 11 when son Hezekiah born-->Kings (II) 16:02,
L157 19; Fast fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth months-->Zechariah 08
L252 19; Men killed: 70 or 50,070-->Samuel (I) 06:
L228 19; Peter, rock, head of Church-->Matthew 16:18-
L093 19-year time cycle-->Calendar,
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L187 19, Deuteronomy 14:21; Seethe kid in mother's milk-->Exodus
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L232 19:16-19; Only six Commandments-->Matthew
L125 19:19, Deuteronomy 22:11; Mixed fabrics-->Leviticus

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 L018 19:27; Shave, cut hair-->Leviticus
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L088 2:14; Handwriting of ordinances-->Colossians
 L305 2:16-->Colossians
 L008 20; Time of fleeing, winter or Sabbath-->Matthew 24:19-
 L287 20:05, 11-12; Earth hold all resurrected people-->Revelation
 L274 20:07; Satan released after Millennium-->Revelation
 L091 20:10; Beast, False Prophet in Lake of Fire-->Revelation
 L211 21; Child's soul-->Kings (I) 17:
 L187 21; Seethe kid in mother's milk-->Exodus 23:19, Deuteronomy
 L291 21:24; Times of the gentiles-->Luke
 L094 22; Let the dead bury the dead-->Matthew 08:
 L220 22-25; Blind man not healed immediately-->Mark 08:
 L119 22-25; Canaan cursed for Ham's sin-->Genesis 09:
 L275 22:09; All hear voice-->Acts 09:07 vs Acts
 L125 22:11; Mixed fabrics-->Leviticus 19:19, Deuteronomy
 L216 22:36; Disciples buy swords-->Luke
 L044 23-->Psalm
 L231 23; Jesus Christ a Nazarene-->Matthew 02:
 L146 23; Pillows, kerchiefs-->Ezekiel 13:18-
 L215 23-25; Fruit trees-->Leviticus 19:
 L009 23:02; Bastard not enter congregation-->Deuteronomy
 L079 23:18; Christian sell dogs, tithe on income-->Deuteronomy
 L187 23:19, Deuteronomy 14:21; Seethe kid in mother's milk-->Exod
 L307 23:43, Thief on the cross-->Luke
 L291 24; Times of the gentiles-->Luke 21:
 L033 24-26; God seek to kill Moses-->Exodus 04:
 L180 24-27; 70 weeks prophecy-->Daniel 09:
 L007 24:15; Abomination of Desolation-->Matthew
 L008 24:19-20; Time of fleeing, winter or Sabbath-->Matthew
 L037 24:32; Tell winter, summer by budding of trees-->Matthew
 L006 24:40-41; One taken the other left-->Matthew
 L173 25-->Proof Jesus Christ born in autumn, not December
 L220 25; Blind man not healed immediately-->Mark 08:22-
 L119 25; Canaan cursed for Ham's sin-->Genesis 09:22-
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 L277 25:41 vs Matthew 25:46; Everlasting fire, punishment-->Matth
 L218 26; Christian hate father, mother, family-->Luke 14:
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 L283 27; OK to eat unclean meat-->Corinthians (I) 10:
 L018 27; Shave, cut hair-->Leviticus 19:
 L180 27; 70 weeks prophecy-->Daniel 09:24-
 L129 27:05, Acts 01:18; Death of Judas Iscariot-->Matthew
 L264 27:09; Prophecy not in Jeremiah-->Matthew
 L284 27:46; Father forsake Jesus-->Matthew
 L112 27:52-53; Risen saints immortal-->Matthew
 L058 28; Destroy body and soul in hell-->Matthew 10:
 L263 28; Who wrote Ten Commandments-->Exodus 34:

L262 28; Witch of Endor-->Samuel -(I)
 L041 29-30, Mark 09:43-48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye-->Matthew

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L048 3:10; Destruction of the earth-->Peter (II)
 L106 30-->Jesus Christ between ages 12 and
 L174 30; Ephraim, Manasseh captives of Assyrians-->Chronicles (II)
 L229 30; First shall be last-->Matthew 19:
 L207 30; Jesus Christ, Father, one-->John 10:
 L041 30, Mark 09:43-48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye-->Matthew 05:
 L194 30:37-43; Selective breeding-->Genesis
 L037 32; Tell winter, summer by budding of trees-->Matthew 24:
 L288 32:32; OK to eat hip joint-->Genesis
 L221 33; Jesus call Peter Satan-->Mark 08:
 L181 33; Why Moses not bless Simeon-->Deuteronomy
 L263 34:28; Who wrote Ten Commandments-->Exodus
 L216 36; Disciples buy swords-->Luke 22:
 L295 37; Some have heard the Father's voice-->John 05:
 L194 37-43; Selective breeding-->Genesis 30:
 L019 38, Onan-->Spill seed in belly of whore; Genesis

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L238 4:06; Gospel preached to the dead-->Peter (I)
 L310 4:10-->Galatians
 L233 4:5; Many tongues, languages, gods in Millennium-->Micah
 L028 4:5-6; Elijah to come-->Malachi
 L006 40-41; One taken the other left-->Matthew 24:
 L277 41 vs Matthew 25:46; Everlasting fire, punishment-->Matthew
 L006 41; One taken the other left-->Matthew 24:40-
 L194 43; Selective breeding-->Genesis 30:37-
 L041 43-48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye-->Matthew 05:29-30, Mark
 L307 43, Thief on the cross-->Luke 23:
 L277 46; Everlasting fire, punishment-->Matthew 25:41 vs Matthew
 L284 46; Father forsake Jesus-->Matthew 27:
 L041 48; Cut off hand, pluck out eye-->Matthew 05:29-30, Mark 09:
 L026 48; Immortal worms, hell fire, Gehenna, Hinnom-->Mark 09:
 L193 49:10; Until Shiloh come-->Genesis

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L233 5; Many tongues, languages, gods in Millennium-->Micah 4:
 L028 5-6; Elijah to come-->Malachi 4:
 L208 5:16-17; Sin not unto death-->John (I)
 L252 50,070-->Samuel (I) 06:19; Men killed: 70 or
 L112 52-53; Risen saints immortal-->Matthew 27:
 L112 53; Risen saints immortal-->Matthew 27:52-

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L028 6; Elijah to come-->Malachi 4:5-

L126 6; Esteem one day above another-->Romans 14:05-
L057 6000 years of self rule-->Man's

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L252 70 or 50,070-->Samuel (I) 06:19; Men killed:
L180 70 weeks prophecy-->Daniel 09:24-27;

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L258 91"-->Acknowledge letter to "Dear Youth

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you requested our comments about the "miracle of Fatima" or the apparition at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia.

Perhaps you realize it is claimed that Mary appeared to children in vision with messages for mankind. While we have no reason to doubt that the children experienced a vision, we do not believe what they saw was really Mary.

The Bible warns that people will witness miracles and supernatural phenomena which will mislead them (Matt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). We also find a biblical example of this kind of false miracle in I Samuel 28:7-20. King Saul believed the dead prophet Samuel appeared, giving him a message; but it was really an evil spirit impersonating Samuel!

How do we know that Mary did not actually appear from heaven? Because the Bible reveals that the righteous dead remain in their graves until the resurrection at Christ's return (see I Corinthians 15:22-23, 50-54; I Thessalonians 4:13-17; Hebrews 11:39-40). Mary is still awaiting the resurrection and cannot appear to anyone.

For further, detailed information giving the Bible teaching about the state of the dead, please request our free publications **IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?** and **WHAT IS MAN?**

Thank you for your interest in the Bible answer to mysterious occurrences that baffle so many.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TRACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the "laying on of hands," mentioned a number of times throughout the Bible.

The laying on of hands is a symbolical act which sets individuals apart and signifies the imparting of spiritual blessings, authority and power. In the Old Testament, a blessing was often conferred in this way. An example is Jacob's laying his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh to pass on blessings they were to receive from God (Gen. 48:13-20).

In the New Testament, a newly baptized person had hands laid on him for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Notice in Acts 8:17-18 that after a number in Samaria had been baptized, Peter and John "laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And . . . through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given." Also see Acts 19:5-6 and II Timothy 1:6.

The laying on of hands also accompanies an elder's prayer for the afflicted. We read in Acts 9:17: "And Ananias . . . laying his hands on him [Paul] he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus . . . has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit'" (NKJ).

Another purpose for the laying on of hands is that of ordination. An example is found in Acts 6. Here seven men became deacons when the apostles prayed and "laid their hands on them" (verse 6).

The laying on of hands, then, serves to show that God works through His ministry. This ceremony is mentioned as a doctrine in Hebrews 6:2.

Thank you again for your question. If we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Atlantis.

Most of the available information on this subject comes to us through the writings of Plato in his Timaeus and Critias. Atlantis, of course, is not mentioned in the Bible.

According to Plato, Atlantis was an island in the Atlantic Ocean beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Straits of Gibraltar). It was called the "sacred island" and "Helgoland," meaning "Holy Land". Plato wrote that it was ruled by ten rulers. The different divisions of the people were called by such names as "Gadeirus" and "Mneseus" (Critias from The Works of Plato, translated by B. Jowett, p. 388).

Apparently, Atlantis was a powerful kingdom, even controlling much of the European continent and North Africa between the Atlantic and Egypt. But, it suddenly sank into the sea as a result of an earthquake.

Jurgen Spanuth thoroughly discusses the existence and possible location of Atlantis in his book Atlantis--The Mystery Unravalled. You might be able to obtain a copy of this book in a local library. He concludes that the island of Atlantis was located in Helgoland Bay at the mouth of the Elbe River and that some of the people were also called "Sakar" and "Denes."

Some discount all this as nothing more than myth. Others speculate that the inhabitants of Atlantis were a colony of the ten-tribe house of Israel, because their names were similar to those of Gad, Manasseh, Issachar, and Dan (Gen. 49:3-27). It has also been speculated that Atlantis sank beneath the sea about the same time God punished the ancient nation of Israel by sending it into captivity to Assyria in 718 B.C. (II Kings 17:3-6).

We cannot prove or disprove the existence of Atlantis. Neither can we verify any of the speculations concerning it.

Perhaps yet undiscovered information will one day help solve this intriguing mystery.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding references dealing with the modern identity of the ancient house of Israel.

The primary source of evidence used for identifying the descendants of the house of Israel and the throne of David is the Bible itself. God's Word, despite the ideas of critics, is as much a form of evidence as any secular historical record.

The knowledge of the identity of the house of Israel is a major key to understanding biblical prophecy. But it was God's intention to seal many prophecies from the world and reveal them only in these latter days. Much of this sealing was accomplished by hiding the identity of the house of Israel. Therefore, we should not expect to find recognized historical records giving clear evidence of the migrations of the ten tribes of Israel.

We might, however, expect locally preserved individual accounts to include information about these people. And indeed they do. In Ireland, for instance, tradition marks the arrival in the first half of the sixth century B.C. of a small group of people led by a white-haired prophet known as Ollamh Fodhla. Local unwritten tradition further has it that this man was really the prophet Jeremiah.

It is significant that most kings of Scotland and England have been Masons and that one of their traditional beliefs is that the house of David was transferred to Northwest Europe from Palestine. This information can be found in Algernon Herbert's Britannica After the Romans. The old book entitled Irish Prince and Hebrew Prophet, Masonic Publishing Company, Bleecker Street, New York City, also makes reference to a Hebrew prophet (Jeremiah), especially in chapters 5, 11, and 12.

Other books of interest are Our British Ancestors, by Samuel Lysons, London, 1865; Irish Pedigrees, by O'Hart, James Duffey and Company, Ltd., Dublin; Ogygia, or, A Chronological Account of Irish Events, by Roderic O'Flaherty, Dublin, 1793; Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright, by J. H. Allen; History of Ireland, by Thomas Moore; History of Ireland, by Abbe MacGeoghegan; and Towers and Temples of Ireland, by Keane.

These authors probably did not fully understand God's truth or His purpose regarding Israel. Nevertheless, helpful information can be gleaned from their writings by anyone who does understand God's purpose and uses the Bible as the primary source.

Critics may say that local traditions are no proof. But, together with the biblical record, there is no other evidence which God allowed to be preserved. Those who believe the Bible will understand the identity of the ten tribes of Israel. Those who do not will come to understand this wonderful truth once God's plan is fulfilled.

Thank you again for your inquiry. It is our pleasure to be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 24:40-41.

To be properly understood, these verses must be read in their context. This chapter records some of what Jesus told His disciples about His second coming. Among other things He said, "Then [at the time of Christ's return] shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (verses 40-41). The meaning is that when Christ comes again there is to be a separation made between those who will and those who will not enter God's Kingdom at that time.

At the second coming, the saints are to be instantly changed (I Cor. 15:50-53) and taken up to meet Christ in the clouds (I Thess. 4:15-17). They will descend with Him upon the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4) to begin ruling the earth (Rev. 20:4). Those who are not "taken" will be given the opportunity for salvation at a later time.

For proof that Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36 do not refer to a secret rapture, as some teach, please feel welcome to request our article "The Secret Rapture" and our booklet THE MILLENNIUM AND BEYOND.

Thank you for your interest. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the "abomination of desolation," mentioned in Matthew 24:15 and several other passages.

Daniel's original prophecy (Daniel 12:11) has more than one fulfillment. The first took place in 167 B.C., on the 25th day of the month Kislev (November-December in the Roman calendar). With the help of his army, Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes erected an altar to the Greek god Zeus on the temple mount in Jerusalem and offered swine upon it.

The "abomination of desolation" Jesus mentioned was the desecration of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in A.D. 70. But, there is yet to be another fulfillment.

A short time before Christ returns, armies will once again surround Jerusalem and an "abomination" will be set up in the city. At that time, those in Jerusalem are told to flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:16; Luke 21:20-21).

If you have not read our booklet THE WORLD WON'T END THIS WAY, please write for it. This booklet explains those events leading up to and culminating in the return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

If you have additional questions, or if we can serve you in any other way, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 24:19-20.

These verses are part of a prophecy that was fulfilled in type in A.D. 69 when Christians fled just before the final siege of Jerusalem began, just prior to its total destruction in A.D. 70. Jesus knew that those with small children and nursing babies would have it especially hard. (The "woe" in verse 19 is said compassionately, as compared to Matthew 23:13, where it is said as a thing deserved.)

Winter and the Sabbath are mentioned because they are unfavorable times for fleeing. The inclement weather of winter could impede one's progress. Attempting to escape on the Sabbath would draw the undue attention of the invading armies, since both Jews and true Christians are supposed to rest on that day.

The time is coming again, during the Great Tribulation, when Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies. The people of God will again have to flee to a place of safety to avoid the terrible bloodshed that is prophesied to occur (Rev. 12:14). For further study, please feel welcome to request our article "Is There a Place of Safety?"

It can be frightening to look at the Tribulation without also seeing the coming new world. We would like to suggest, therefore, that you may wish to read our literature about the peaceful, wonderful world Jesus will build when He returns. Simply ask for it that way, and we will know what you mean.

Whenever we may assist you with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Deuteronomy 23:2, which states, "A bastard shall not enter the congregation of the Lord."

This instruction forbade an illegitimate child or, as some Bible scholars believe, a racially mixed Israelite from holding a public office in the nation of Israel. We should remember that Old Testament Israel was an unconverted, carnal people whose interests had to do only with the flesh. This statute was given in order to keep the physical nation pure and strong.

Today, however, God is building a spiritual house rather than a physical nation. Each individual may or may not become a part of the building depending on how he conducts his life. A child is not prevented from receiving eternal life because of his parents' sins, nor are the parents to be cut off from God as a result of their children's sins. Our relationship with God depends wholly upon our own actions (please notice Jeremiah 31:29-30).

Jesus Christ said that true Christians are to worship God in spirit (John 4:23-24). Therefore, one's physical ancestry will not prevent one from becoming a child of God today. The descendants of certain nations and peoples were never to enter the congregation of ancient Israel, but today we are told that all men of all nations may enter God's Family upon real repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Please read Acts 17:30, Galatians 3:28-29, and II Peter 3:9.

If you would like additional information concerning true Christianity, please write for our articles about becoming a Christian. There is no charge or obligation, of course.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. You asked us to comment on the work of another religious organization. Although we appreciate the confidence you have placed in us, we do not publish literature that discusses other faiths.

The Worldwide Church of God believes that Jesus gave the Church the great commission of preaching the gospel in all the world. The Church is to teach the observance of everything He taught the disciples and to baptize those who repent.

In obedience to Christ's command, we publish literature that will help people come to a deeper understanding of God's Word. Following are just a few of the many dozens of publications we offer, free of charge, to help in one's Bible study. Additional publications are offered weekly on the WORLD TOMORROW telecast and in the PLAIN TRUTH magazine. We invite you to request any of these booklets or write us about Bible subjects that are of interest to you.

- WHO WAS JESUS?
- WILL CHRIST RETURN?
- THE MILLENNIUM AND BEYOND
- RECAPTURING TRUE VALUES--THE STORY OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD
- WHAT IS THE TRUE GOSPEL?
- WHERE IS THE TRUE CHURCH?
- WHICH DAY IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH?

Thank you again for your interest. If there is some way we may be of further assistance, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning a book which deals with the future.

Although we understand your interest, perhaps we could best serve you in another way. Instead of analyzing material of this type, we offer literature which explains what the Bible teaches.

Please feel welcome to request any of the booklets listed below. When the information arrives, we hope you will compare it with your own Bible. References from the Bible are given in the booklets to make it easy for you to do so.

Simply check the literature below that you would like to receive and return this sheet with your correct name and address. Your literature will be sent right away. There is, of course, no charge or obligation of any kind.

We appreciate this opportunity to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

- ___ THE WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW--WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE (WT)
- ___ WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING IN THE NEXT LIFE? (DL)
- ___ WORLD PEACE--HOW IT WILL COME (PE)
- ___ THE WORLD WON'T END THIS WAY (WE)
- ___ INTRODUCTION TO PROPHECY (IP)
- ___ INSIDE THE BOOK OF REVELATION (REV)
- ___ THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE (CC)

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning blood transfusions.

Although the Bible does not specifically mention this medical practice, we do not believe God will condemn one for having a transfusion. Some religious groups have misinterpreted God's command against eating blood (Lev. 3:17) and have mistakenly extended it to receiving blood by transfusions. Ingesting blood and receiving it into the circulatory system are not the same thing.

While having a transfusion is not a sin, there are medical risks involved, as any doctor will tell you. Thus, one ought to weigh these risks and the anticipated benefits carefully.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning the Jewish calendar.

This year (September 20, 1990, through September 8, 1991) is 5751 on the Jewish calendar because the Jews count their years from 3761/3760 B.C.E. (Before Common Era). That is the year of the commencement of the lunisolar calendar.

In the century following the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) certain Jewish scholars took the date 3761/3760 B.C.E. and assigned it to the time described in Genesis 1 and 2. Thus, the Jews preserved the correct date for calendar calculation but mistakenly associated it with creation week.

Actually, Creation occurred over two centuries prior to the beginning of the lunisolar calendar. The basic factor upon which the lunisolar calendar is based, the average length of the lunar month, would have taken more than two centuries of measurement and observation to determine.

The Jews celebrate their new year in the autumn. The Bible refers to two different years, the civil and the sacred. In ancient Israel, the civil year began in the autumn, on the first day of the seventh month. It is comparable to the fiscal year in the United States. It was more or less the legal year, which was used to reckon the reign of kings and other chronological events.

The true sacred year of the Bible begins with the month of Nisan (also called Abib), in the spring (Ex. 12:2). The sacred year portrays God's great plan.

It has been our pleasure to serve you. If you have other questions you would like answered, please send them to us.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked whether God will resurrect animals.

The indications in the Bible are that of all God's physical creation, only man is destined to live again in the Kingdom of God. Only man was made in God's image (Gen. 1:26) and given a mind for the purpose of developing righteous character, which will fit him for eternal life. Our free booklet WHY WERE YOU BORN? explains the purpose of human life and the awesome destiny of man.

Nowhere does the Bible indicate that animals have any hope of life beyond the grave. Like all physical creatures, including man, animals go to their graves when they die (Eccl. 3:19-20). But, for man, there is a resurrection (John 5:28-29). No such promise is given specifically for beasts.

For further information on man's resurrection, you may wish to request our booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW?

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question about the subject of interracial marriage.

The Bible does not comment on this matter in the form of a law or commandment. Therefore, the Church of God does not view interracial marriage as sin.

The Bible teaches that all racial groups are children of Adam and Eve, made of one blood (Acts 17:26), and have equal status in the eyes of God and the Church, and equal promise of salvation and eternal life in the family of God.

The absence of a "Thou shalt not," however, does not mean that God approves interracial marriage in every situation. Jesus told His followers that we are to be the light of the world-- which means to lead exemplary lives--so that others might see the good results of living God's way (Matthew 5:14-16). Therefore, we ought to strive as much as possible not to offend the values and traditions of our society and culture. If a Christian does something that is perceived as immoral, whether or not it actually is immoral, we diminish our ability to serve God effectively as witnesses to others by our example. Paul explains the need for Christians to conduct themselves in such a way as not to bring reproach on the name of Christ for any reason (Titus 2:6-8). What may be lawful may not always be expedient (I Corinthians 6:12; 10:23).

Marriage is one of life's greatest joys when wise choices have been made and the couple are compatible and able to grow in love together. A wise marriage is one in which two people are well suited for each other. The more compatible the couple is, the fewer obstacles they will have to overcome in their relationship. A couple should therefore consider compatibility in as many areas as possible, including personality, intellect, cultural background, race, upbringing, character, financial habits, even views on matters such as child rearing. In short, a wise marriage is one in which each partner complements, rather than competes with, the other.

Sociological studies show that four major areas--those of religion, race, culture and age--are the most difficult barriers for married couples to overcome as they strive for happiness with their mates. These major areas should be very carefully considered in choosing a mate. Amos 3:3 reveals that two persons should be in agreement on important matters so they can live together with a greater prospect of success and happiness. (See also II Corinthians 6:14-17.)

Anyone considering marriage should also be certain to take the wishes of his or her family into careful consideration. The feelings of a family and extended family normally have a significant and long-range effect on a person's marriage. This is not a matter that should be taken lightly.

Thus, while interracial marriage is not a sin, the foregoing factors could render it an unwise decision.

We trust that these comments will be of help to you. Please let us know whenever we may be of any further assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning the origin of the races.

The Bible plainly teaches that God made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell on the earth (Acts 17:26). It also tells us that Eve was the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20).

Therefore, God's Church teaches that God created Eve with the capability of producing children having the varied characteristics that are now manifested in the different races. There must have been great diversity in her offspring.

Normally, individuals of similar characteristics are attracted to each other. The children and grandchildren of Adam and Eve would have naturally separated into families of racially similar people and, as they continued to marry within their own groups, distinct racial traits would have become established.

God tells us that He separated the families of man and decreed the boundaries of their dwelling places (Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26). Natural barriers, such as mountain ranges and oceans, would have served to keep the racial families apart and prevent amalgamation.

Thus, God intended that there be different races and He caused them to develop. Nonetheless, He considers all humans to be His children through Adam and intends for all who repent and overcome to ultimately receive sonship in His Kingdom (I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9; and Rev. 21:3-7).

Thank you for again your question. If we can be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the meaning of Leviticus 19:27 and 21:5. Do these passages imply that it is wrong to shave or cut one's hair?

Notice a more modern rendering of these verses in the American Translation by Goodspeed: "You must not shave around your temple, nor do away with the corners of your beard" (Lev. 19:27); and, "They must not shave part of their heads bald, nor shave off the corners of their beards, nor make incisions in their bodies" (Lev. 21:5).

It was a ceremonial custom of the heathen to cut and trim their beards and hair into special shapes in honor of a particular pagan deity--the sun god. The ancient Egyptians had their dark locks cropped short or shaved with great nicety, so the hair which remained on the crown appeared in the form of a circle surrounding the head (the halo has been borrowed from this), while the beard was dressed in a square form. Alternatively, a round bald spot might be shaved on the head.

It is this type of false worship the Bible forbids. Shaving one's beard and cutting one's hair for normal good grooming is something entirely different and not at all condemned in the Scriptures!

Thank you for your interest. If we can be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry.

You asked whether there is a scripture that states, "It is better for a man to spill his seed in the belly of a whore than to spill it on the ground."

There is no such statement anywhere in the Bible!

Possibly it is a corruption of the story mentioned in Genesis 38, beginning in verse 3: "And she [the wife of Judah] conceived and bare a son; and he called his name Er. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, THAT HE SPILLED IT ON THE GROUND, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord [was evil in the eyes of the Eternal]: wherefore he slew him also" (verses 3-10).

You will notice that the woman in the account was not a whore. She simply expected that the bachelor brother of her dead husband would give her a child to preserve the family inheritance as God had commanded (Deut. 25:5-10). God killed Onan because he disobeyed the command to father a child in his dead brother's name.

This ancient national statute was a part of the old covenant and is no longer applicable today.

Thank you for your interest. If we can be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the mysterious words "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" found in Daniel 5:25.

Belshazzar, ruler of the Babylonian Empire, watched as these words were supernaturally written on the palace wall the very night his kingdom fell (October 13, 539 B.C.). Each of these words is a measure of weight (used in much the same way as our ounce, pound, hundredweight, and ton).

The basic unit of weight in Babylon was the gold shekel (TEKEL in this verse). The mena equalled 50 shekels; the upharsin (half a mena) equalled 25. The four words, therefore, stood for: MENA, 50 shekels; MENA, 50 shekels; TEKEL, 1 shekel; UPHARSIN, 25 shekels. The total was 126 shekels.

In addition, each shekel was divided into smaller units (as our pound is divided into ounces, for example). The shekel was equal to 20 gerahs (Ezek. 45:12). The 126 shekels of Daniel 5:25, then, equalled 2,520 gerahs.

The handwriting on the wall symbolized the fact that God had "weighed" Belshazzar's kingdom and found it wanting (verses 26 and 27). God was about to punish Belshazzar's realm for 2,520 years. This is confirmed by another prophecy in Daniel.

King Nebuchadnezzar had been told that a total of "seven times" of punishment would befall Babylon (Dan. 4). In prophecy, a "time" equals a year of 360 days. This can be seen by noting that 3 1/2 "times" equals 42 months or 1,260 days (Rev. 12:6, 14; 13:5). "Seven times," therefore, equals 2,520 days. In certain prophecies, however, such as here, each day represents a year in fulfillment (Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6).

So, then, from the experiences of both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, it is evident Babylon would be punished for a period of 2,520 years.

After that time, it was to rise again--as symbolized by the tree which sprouted and grew after the iron band was removed (Dan. 4). We can expect to see the rise of modern Babylon in

this present generation (foretold in Revelation 18). It will appear in the form of the final revival of the Roman Empire in Europe! The PLAIN TRUTH magazine will keep its readers informed on those developments.

Thank you for your question. It is a pleasure to assist you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked how one can become an ordained minister of the Worldwide Church of God.

As you may already realize, the Church of God is different from the churches of this world in many respects. Above all, it is governed by God through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church (Col. 1:18). On earth under Christ are the human leaders He has chosen specially and put in office (please see Ephesians 4:11-13).

In other words, a man cannot choose the ministry of Jesus Christ for his vocation. Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). It is Jesus Christ who selects those whom He will ordain into His ministry. His will in these matters is revealed through the established ministry.

Being ordained means being put into an office of lifelong service and good works. The apostle Paul said, "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop [pastor], he desires a good work" (I Tim. 3:1, NKJ). Paul then outlined some of the basic requirements taken into account in evaluating a man's fitness to serve as a minister (verses 2 through 7).

One of those stipulations is that a man not be a novice, or, as the margin of some Bibles renders it, "not one newly come to the faith" (verse 6). To be a minister, then, a man must first have served well as a lay member of God's Church and must have grown spiritually. A man's readiness and ability to serve in the ministry will be seen by the fruits of his life (Matt. 7:16).

The Worldwide Church of God, therefore, ordains only baptized, spiritually mature members whom God is obviously calling into the ministry. James cautions brethren to "be[come] not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (Jas. 3:1). Because of the nature and the potential for good or for evil of those offices, God holds teachers and ministers much more accountable than the people they serve. Being a minister carries a very heavy responsibility (see Hebrews 13:17).

When Jesus chose His disciples, He did not make them ministers of the Gospel immediately. Rather, He taught them daily for about three-and-a-half years. In a similar way today, ordination follows a period of training and preparation in one of the Church's programs designed for that purpose.

Of course, there are many ways besides being in the ministry in which people can serve the Church. James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). Jesus said of those who are to inherit His Kingdom, "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matt. 25:35-36, NKJ). In other words, we actually serve Christ by serving His people. This type of service is enjoined upon every member of the Church.

We sincerely hope we have answered your question adequately, and that our literature, the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, The WORLD TOMORROW program, and our other services, will help you to continue growing in deeper understanding of God's plan for mankind and how you can have a greater part in it.

Please let us know whenever we may be of further service in your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Shroud of Turin.

Though many have tried, this shroud has never been shown to be connected with the burial of Jesus Christ in any way. In fact, tests have now proven that it was not. Laboratory research, authorized by the Roman Catholic Cardinal Anastasio Ballestrero, has demonstrated that this piece of cloth was woven in the Middle Ages. The Los Angeles Times for October 14, 1988 quoted Cardinal Ballestrero as saying, "The calibrated calendar age range assigned to the shroud cloth, with a 95% confidence level, is from 1260 to 1390 A.D."

Notice some of the evidence from God's Word, the Bible. John 11:44 plainly shows the custom of the Jews in burying the dead. Several cloths were used and bound about the body. Jesus' body was "wound" in "linen clothes" (John 19:40). All this would seem to differ from what is told about the Shroud of Turin.

In short, the Shroud of Turin could not have been Christ's burial sheet. We do not believe God would permit any such object to be preserved.

We appreciate your interest. Please feel welcome to let us know whenever we may further assist you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning hunting and killing animals.

In the beginning, God gave man dominion over the fish, the birds, and game of the earth (Gen. 1:28). David, one of God's servants, was a hunter and killed game. The disciples were fishermen, and Jesus Himself helped them catch fish on occasion (Luke 5:1-9).

God also inspired scriptures to tell us which kinds of animals, fish, and fowl He created to be eaten by humans. Notice that game animals are included (Lev. 11; Deut. 14:3-21). We can conclude, therefore, that it is not against God's will to catch, kill, and use animals for food. Nor is it wrong to kill predators. David killed a lion and a bear which were menacing his sheep (I Sam. 17:34-36).

Of course, this is not to say that game should be killed indiscriminately or recklessly. And, it is repulsive to see some hunters kill merely for the sake of gaining a trophy, the antlers of a deer or an elk, for example, and leave the rest of the carcass to rot. Such irresponsible actions are wrong.

Nevertheless, the idea that it is wrong to kill any animals whatsoever is not supported by the Bible. If it were, God would not have bothered to tell man which animals to eat. He would simply have instructed man not to eat any of them.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

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PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

THE HEBREW, GREEK AND ROMAN ALPHABETS

HEBREW	NAME	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	NUMERIC VALUE	GREEK	NAME	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT	NUMERIC VALUE	ROMAN	NUMERIC VALUE
א	ALEPH	Silent	1	Α α	ALPHA	a	1	A	
ב	BETH	b, bh, v	2	Β β	BETA	b	2	B	
ג	GIMEL	g, gh	3	Γ γ	GAMMA	g	3	C	100
ד	DALETH	d, dh	4	Δ δ	DELTA	d	4	D	500
ה	HE	h	5	Ε ε	EPSILON	ě	5	E	
ו	VAU	v, w	6	Ϝ ϝ	STAU, STI		6	F	
ז	ZAYIN	z	7	Ζ ζ	ZETA	z (dz)	7	G	
ח	HETH	h, ch, kh	8	Η η	ETA	ē	8	H	
ט	TETH	ṭ	9	Θ θ	THETA	th	9	I	1
י	IOD	y, j, i	10	Ι ι	IOTA	i	10	J	
כ	CAPH	k, ch, kh	20	Κ κ	KAPPA	k	20	K	
ל	LAMED	l	30	Λ λ	LAMBDA	l	30	L	50
מ	MEM	m	40	Μ μ	MU	m	40	M	1000
נ	NUN	n	50	Ν ν	NU	n	50	N	
ס	SAMECH	s	60	Ξ ξ	XI	x, ks	60	O	
ע	AYIN	*	70	Ο ο	OMICRON	ō	70	P	
פ	PE	p, ph, f	80	Π π	PI	p	80	Q	
צ	TZADE	ṣ, ts	90	Ρ ρ	KOPPA		90	R	
ק	KOPH	q	100	Ρ ρ	RHO	r, rh	100	S	
ר	RESH	r	200	Σ σ,ς	SIGMA	s	200	T	
שׁ	SHIN	sh	300	Τ τ	TAU	t	300	U	
ת	TAU	t, th	400	Υ υ	UPSILON	y, u, ü	400	V	
ך	KAPH		500	Φ φ	PHI	ph, f	500	W	
ם	MEM		600	Χ χ	CHI	ch, kh	600	X	1
ן	NUN		700	Ψ ψ	PSI	ps	700	Y	
ס	PE		800	Ω ω	OMEGA	ō	800	Z	
ץ	TZADE		900	Ϙ ϙ	SAMPI		900		

*Silent, or glottal stop

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TRACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry about Mark 9:48.

Some believe that Jesus referred to sinners as worms and said that those people would never die but would live on in agonizing torment. Those who say this fail to notice that Jesus did not call wicked people "worms," but spoke of "their worm." The original Greek word means grub or maggot.

Jesus was referring to a local method of garbage disposal in order to emphasize the permanent consequences of sins not repented of. The margins of some Bibles show that the words "hell fire" in verse 47 should be translated "Gehenna fire." Gehenna, or the valley of Hinnom, is located outside Jerusalem. Trash, refuse, animal carcasses, and even the dead bodies of despised criminals were thrown there to be destroyed by the fires which were kept burning on the valley floor. If some animal or vegetable matter caught on one of the ledges below the rim, it would be devoured by maggots.

Jesus' point was that whatever was thrown into the valley never came out again; it was totally consumed. In other words, just as nothing and no one exterminated the maggots or extinguished the flames in the valley of Gehenna, so there will be no escape from the certain fate which God has decreed for all unrepentant sinners--death in the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14).

Some of these same principles apply to Isaiah 66:24. The meaning is not that unrepentant sinners or worms live forever. In fact, just the opposite is true. If the worms which infest a dead body are not killed, the rotting flesh will be consumed until it is gone. The maggots go through a process known as pupation and turn into flies. Those flies, in turn, deposit additional eggs, and the process is repeated until nothing is left for them to feed on. Similarly, any fire which is not quenched--not deliberately put out--will last only as long as there is fuel to keep it burning and then go out. The whole point is that sin not repented of has absolute and permanent results--eternal oblivion!

Our free booklet TO HELL AND BACK explains in greater detail. We would be happy to send you a free copy upon your request.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry.

We are often asked about witches, mediums, crystal gazers, fortune-tellers, so-called prophets, hypnotists, clairvoyants, supposed miracle workers, and the like. We are also asked about the predictions of particular individuals, such as Nostradamus (a sixteenth-century French astrologer).

We can know whether anyone who claims to have "supernatural" powers really is a prophet, messenger, or servant of God. In the Bible we find these instructions: "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 13:1-3, RSV).

God further warns us, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). This is how we should "try" the spirits: "And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:19-20, NKJ).

Here, then, is the test of a true servant of God. He will teach the people to believe and to obey exactly what the Word of God says (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4). The working of miracles--whether imagined or real--is NOT and never has been the proof of a true servant of God.

It has been a pleasure serving you. Please feel welcome to let us know anytime we can be of assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question as to whether Malachi 4:5-6 means that the prophet Elijah will reappear on earth before Christ's Second Coming.

This prophecy is dual--it has two fulfillments! It was first fulfilled by the man who prepared the way for Christ's human ministry, John the Baptist (Matt. 17:10-13).

The angel who announced his coming birth applied the passage from Malachi directly to John: "And he [John the Baptist] shall go before him [Christ] in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Clearly, John was not Elijah reincarnated (the Bible nowhere teaches reincarnation). But, John was given Elijah's office--he performed a similar ministry. Elijah, of course, was the man who, with power from God, witnessed to a rebellious nation and commanded the people, "If the Lord be God, follow him" (I Kings 18:21).

When John began preaching repentance and baptizing in the wilderness, the priests and Levites came from Jerusalem and asked him if he were Elijah. John answered, "I am not" (John 1:19-23). But, Jesus Himself said that John was in fact the prophesied "Elijah" of that day (Matt. 11:7-15).

The second stage of this prophecy was to be fulfilled in the last days--"before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). At the close of this present evil age, the message of "Elijah" is again to be thundered to disobedient Israel as a witness and to prepare a people for Christ's Second Coming.

The Worldwide Church of God is doing this through the "open door" of the mass media; it is proclaiming the Gospel of

the Kingdom of God in every part of the world in power and in love on television, by the printed word, and by personal example (please see Matthew 5:13-16; 24:14 and Revelation 3:8).

If you would like to receive a copy of our booklet WHAT IS THE TRUE GOSPEL?, please feel welcome to request it. We would be happy to send you a copy free upon your request.

We appreciate this opportunity to be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about some of the recent claims of people who say they experienced "life" after they had supposedly died.

Though many of these happenings are understandably astounding and seem to contradict what the Bible says about death, the whole idea of this so-called "life after life" experience is based on the premise that these people died.

According to the medical profession, some of these individuals were clinically dead. However, medical science has not yet agreed on what constitutes actual death in a human being. Real death, according to the Bible, is total and complete unconsciousness--without memory, feeling, knowledge, or perception (Eccl. 9:5, 10; Ps. 6:5). It appears, therefore, that those who were revived to relate their experiences may not really have been dead, but simply in an unconscious state.

Furthermore, science has discovered that the human brain and nervous system are actuated by electrical signals and impulses. The brain is dependent on a steady supply of blood and oxygen to function properly. When circulation and respiration are impaired or interrupted for even a few minutes, the brain begins to malfunction, and will eventually cease functioning altogether.

It is thought by some researchers that the strange lights, sensations, perceptions, and the like, associated with "coming back from death" may be attributable to the electrical malfunctions of the brain and nervous system associated with the trauma of nearly dying.

If you would like more information on the state of the dead, write for our booklets entitled WHAT IS MAN? and IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW?

Thank you for your interest.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question as to whether God's Word permits the ordination of women as preachers.

The apostle Paul's instructions were: "I permit no woman to teach or to have [exercise] authority over men; she is to keep silent" (I Tim. 2:12, RSV). Also see I Corinthians 14:34. Paul is explaining that it is not proper for women to exercise administrative ecclesiastical authority over men within the Church. In other words, women were not to become Church elders or give sermons. (Based on Paul's teachings, the Worldwide Church of God does not ordain women into the ministry.)

The New Testament does, however, give a precedent for the ordination of deaconesses (see I Timothy 3:8-11 and Romans 16:1, RSV). Apparently, Priscilla and Aquila, who served under Paul's administration, were deacon and deaconess. In the Church at that time was a very powerful and effective teacher named Apollos. Apollos' knowledge was imperfect, though, and ". . . when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26, RSV). Here we find a woman and her husband together teaching a man the way of God more perfectly. Notice also Paul's instruction in Titus 2:3-5.

The Bible also includes examples of instruction collected from outstanding women. Included are Hannah's prayer, Miriam's song, and the teachings of Lemuel's mother.

Thank you for your interest. If you have additional Bible questions, please feel welcome to send them to us. We will be happy to answer them for you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your request for information concerning the Song of Solomon.

We do not have any literature which specifically explains this book of the Bible. However, it is translated more clearly in the Moffatt Bible. If you have access to this translation, it should be of help to you.

Briefly, the Song of Solomon was written by Solomon and illustrates a right and wholesome attitude toward the intimacies of normal married life. Its central theme is the wedding night and the love talk between a man and his bride.

Henry H. Halley, in his Pocket Bible Handbook, states: "Its essence is to be found in its tender and devoted expressions of the intimacies and delights of wedded love." Some scholars believe this book has a dual purpose and spiritually also illustrates the intimate relationship Christ has with His Church (His Bride).

If you would like information concerning the God-ordained purposes of sex, please write for our booklet LOVE, MARRIAGE & SEX. It is free of charge.

Thank you again for your interest. If we may be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry about "confession."

The Worldwide Church of God believes that Christians are to confess their sins to God--not men. Notice David's example in Psalm 51. No man can forgive sins. Neither has any man been given the office of mediator between mankind and God. This office is held by Jesus Christ alone. The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Wherefore he [Christ] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). The apostle Paul also wrote in I Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Thus, as stated, confession of one's sins ought to be made to God--not to a fellow human being.

John wrote that when we sin, we have an advocate with God the Father--Jesus Christ the righteous (I John 2:1-2). He is faithful to forgive our sins when we confess to Him (I John 1:7-10). Therefore, we can come boldly to His throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16).

The Scriptures do tell us that we may confess our faults to one another--so we can pray for each other (Jas. 5:16). But there is a difference between seeking a brother's help in overcoming a fault--human weakness--and confessing sins of the past. The latter should usually not be done because only God can forgive sin. And humans do not forget, as God does when our sins are removed (Heb. 8:12).

Some try to use John 20:23 to prove that persons in ecclesiastical offices have the power to forgive sins. This verse reads: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (New King James Version). However, it does not mean that mere men can actually forgive sins in a spiritual sense. God alone can forgive sins (Mark 2:7-10; Luke 5:21-24). Christ spoke these words to His future apostles in the context of the Church authority He was giving them (see John 20:21)--the power to

disfellowship those who were dissenters or heretics (see I Corinthians 5:2 and I Timothy 1:20) and bring them back into the congregation upon repentance (II Cor. 2:6-10).

Thank you for your interest. If you do not have our literature concerning true repentance and conversion, please feel welcome to request the booklet entitled JUST WHAT DO YOU MEAN--CONVERSION?

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Exodus 4:24-26 and why God sought to slay Moses.

Whether or not it was Moses or his son whom God sought to kill has been disputed by a number of Hebrew scholars. Verse 24 does not clearly give the answer.

Moses knew that all Israelites were to be circumcised after they were eight days old. However, his wife was a gentile and did not believe in circumcision. Apparently, Moses let his wife have her way and failed to circumcise his son.

If you will read all of Exodus 4, you will see that Moses was going back to lead God's people, Israel, out of Egypt, and yet did not have his own house in subjection. God could not allow His direct representative to lead the entire nation of Israel when he had not faithfully obeyed the command to circumcise his own son. Please see Genesis 17:10-14.

Thank you again for your question. If we can be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked why Jesus cursed a fig tree (Mark 11:12-14).

At a distance, Jesus saw a fig tree with leaves, and, being hungry, He approached it hoping to find some fruit, for figs will quite often appear earlier than the leaves. Upon reaching the tree, all He found were leaves; the tree had produced no fruit. Mark, the author of the book, added the comment that "the time of figs was not yet" (verse 13).

This statement is somewhat puzzling--until we understand the growing and fruiting cycles of fig trees. Notice the following interesting information about the fig season in Palestine:

"It has been asked, 'How could our Lord expect to find ripe figs in the end of March?' Answer, Because figs were ripe in Judea as early as the passover. Besides, the fig tree puts forth its fruit first, and afterwards its leaves. Indeed, this tree, in the climate which is proper for it, has fruit on it all the year round, as I have often seen" (Clarke's Commentary).

Fruit tree growers know that ordinarily a small amount of fruit ripens prior to the main crop. It is referred to as the first ripe fruit or the firstfruits. When Jesus approached the tree, it was the time of the firstfruits of figs, but it was not yet time for the main harvest. Mark 11:13 must mean that the particular tree on which Christ expected to find figs was barren, because it had no figs on it at all. It did not fulfill its purpose, and, as any diligent orchardist would do, Jesus simply eliminated an unproductive tree, not with an axe or a saw, but by faith. Please compare Luke 13:6-9.

Jesus used this incident to teach His disciples--and all Christians today--that the outward appearance does not count with

God. Instead, what really counts is whether or not one produces godly fruit in his or her life (Luke 13:6-9; Gal. 5:22-23; John 15:8, 16).

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Mark 16:18.

This verse is a promise of protection--not a command--to those individuals God has called to preach the Gospel (notice verse 15).

An example of this occurred when the apostle Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake while gathering firewood (Acts 28: 1-6). It is important to realize that he was not purposely handling the snake. Rather, this incident was an unexpected accident. And God miraculously protected His servant according to His promise!

Deliberately handling poisonous snakes or drinking deadly liquids expecting God's protection is definitely contrary to Christ's teachings. In Matthew 4:5-6, Satan tried to persuade Christ to throw Himself down from a pinnacle merely because He had a promise of protection. However, Christ rebuked Satan because he had misapplied the scripture. Christ said to Satan, as He says to anyone who delights in misapplying God's promise of protection, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (verse 7). Therefore, the practice of deliberately handling deadly snakes or drinking poisonous liquids is definitely wrong!

Thank you again for your question. If you would like information concerning faith and how it is manifested, write for our free booklet entitled WHAT IS FAITH?

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Urim and the Thummim.

Exodus 28:30 states that the Urim and Thummim were placed in a breastplate which was worn by Aaron, the high priest, and that this breastplate was able to reveal God's judgment. In Numbers 27:21 is an account of the Urim being used to give judgment; it showed what God wanted Israel to do.

Josephus, a well-known Jewish historian, wrote about the Urim and Thummim in Book Three, Section Eight of his book Antiquities of the Jews. He describes the Urim as being two sardonyx stones which were placed on the shoulders of the high priest; and the Thummim, he says, were twelve stones which were set in three rows of four stones in a breastplate which the high priest also wore. When God wished to guide the Israelites, He often did so by means of these stones. Josephus states, "God declared beforehand by these twelve stones which the high priest bear on his breast, and which were inserted into his breastplate, when they should be victorious in battle; for so great a splendor shone forth from them that the army began to march, that all the people were sensible [aware] of God being present for their assistance."

These few details from historical tradition plus the brief mention in the Bible is all the information presently available on this subject.

Thank you again for your question. If we can be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. Many have asked whether there is a verse in the Bible which states, "You can't tell winter from summer except by the budding of the trees."

There is no scripture which makes this statement. However, the idea may stem from a misapplication of Matthew 24:32: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." This verse does not mean that the seasons would become indistinguishable. Christ simply used the budding of the fig tree to illustrate a point about His second coming.

Just as we know spring is here and summer is near when the trees put out new leaves, so we will know Christ's return is near when we see the events He mentioned occur. Notice verse 33: "So likewise ye, when ye see all these things [those things described in verses 4-29], know that it [the day of Christ's return] is near, even at the doors."

If you would like to receive literature concerning the signs preceding Christ's return, write for our booklet entitled THE WORLD WON'T END THIS WAY.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may be of further assistance. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning drinking coffee.

Coffee is a mild stimulant, which apparently is not harmful if used sparingly. Most people can tolerate and enjoy a moderate amount with no harmful effects. However, some people find that even a small amount causes nervousness, and they would probably be better off not to drink it at all. Neither should a person let coffee drinking become so necessary that the day is ruined if he does not have his coffee.

The same principle applies to tea.

If you would like to receive additional guidelines to maintaining good health, please request our free booklet entitled PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHFUL LIVING.

Whenever we can be of service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning taking interest (usury).

The Bible teaches that, as they are able, Christians are to help persons who are in real need and to refrain from charging interest in such situations. We should love our neighbor and not take advantage of his financial difficulties. Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. 5:42).

Although a Christian's attitude should be one of giving, sharing, and helping in meeting the needs of the less fortunate, there are instances when it would be all right to accept interest. For example, if money is loaned to another individual purely as a business deal so he can make money, then it is not wrong to collect interest, because both are sharing in the profits. It is also proper to accept interest from money placed in savings accounts, since the money is earning the increase.

If you would like additional information concerning principles of finance, please write for our booklet MANAGING YOUR PERSONAL FINANCES. There is no charge or obligation, of course.

Whenever we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning storing food for the prophesied time of famine and tribulation.

To what extent you choose to have food on hand for future needs is a personal decision. Since we live in an interdependent society, where food and water shortages in many areas can occur with little or no warning, it might be advisable to have some supplies set aside for such emergencies. God commends the ant for gathering necessary provisions during the summer for the long winter months (Prov. 6:6-8). This is meant as a lesson for us.

However, it would be foolish to hoard food thinking that doing so will preserve one's life during the prophesied period of famine and tribulation. Christ said that conditions during the tribulation would be so bad that all would perish if it were not for God's intervention to save mankind (Matt. 24:21-23). Therefore, Christians ought to put their faith in God's protection--not in the amount of food they may have stored away.

Whenever we can be of further service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 5:29-30 and Mark 9:43-48.

Christ did not intend that this instruction be taken literally. The eye, the hand, or the foot cannot sin of and by themselves. Sin originates in the mind. A person who is totally blind, for example, or one who is missing a limb can still sin.

Jesus was simply using parts of the body to illustrate an important principle. He was explaining that a Christian should not tolerate sin as an integral part of his life. If, for example, an individual has a sinful habit, he ought to totally eradicate that habit even though the process may be as painful as losing an arm or a leg. What Christ is saying is that it would be far better to give up a sinful pleasure than to lose out on salvation (also see Colossians 3:5-17).

If you would like to receive information on overcoming sins and faults, please write for our article "How to be an Overcomer." There is no charge or obligation.

Thank you again for your question. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about reports that in Brussels there exists a giant computer referred to as "The Beast." Supposedly stored in it are numbers soon to be imprinted on the foreheads or hands of those who will be permitted to buy or sell.

Such stories are widely circulated, but no proof exists for any of them. Those reports seem to be based on Revelation 13.

The "beast" mentioned in Bible prophecy is not a machine but a governmental system headed by an evil human dictator. When Jesus comes, He will personally throw both that dictator and his "false prophet" accomplice into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

Receiving the "beast's" number and its mark has to do with giving allegiance to the government this dictator will establish and to the false religion which will be part of that system. The Bible uses the symbols of the forehead and the right hand to represent one's allegiance by thoughts and works. The Scriptures teach that God's law is to be uppermost in our lives. Please see Deuteronomy 6:8 and 8:3.

The "beast's" system will be a counterfeit of God's way, and its mark a counterfeit of God's sign. What is God's sign, the sign of our allegiance to Him? It is the Sabbath! (Eze. 20:12). (Our free booklet WHICH DAY IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH? explains this in greater detail.)

The PLAIN TRUTH magazine will keep its readers informed as prophecies concerning the coming antichrist dictator are fulfilled. In the meantime, we suggest that you request our booklet entitled WHO OR WHAT IS THE PROPHETIC BEAST? for additional information on this vital subject.

We appreciate this opportunity to be of service. If you have other questions concerning the Bible, please feel welcome to send them to us.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about Revelation 3:14. Many wonder whether this means Jesus was created by God.

The correct meaning of the phrase "the beginning of the creation of God" is the Beginner of all creation. It refers to its originating instrument (see Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus is the Head and Governor of all creatures; He is the King of creation. For further evidence of this meaning, please see the commentary by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown and the one by Adam Clarke.

Proverbs 8:22-25 is sometimes cited as evidence that Jesus was created. However, this passage is clearly referring to wisdom personified (see verse 1), not to God! Notice that God possessed wisdom in the beginning and used it in creating the worlds.

The Bible tells us plainly that Jesus (who was known as Melchizedek anciently) had no beginning of days nor end of life (Heb. 7:1-3). He was not created, but was the Creator of all things that were made (Col. 1:16). He was with the Father in the beginning, and all things were made by Him (John 1:1-3). He has always existed.

Thank you for your question. If you have additional Bible questions, please send them to us. We will be happy to answer them for you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the 23rd Psalm.

Many things could be written about this beautiful, meaningful Psalm. Regrettably, space permits only a few, brief comments here.

The Psalm begins, "The Lord is my shepherd." David, the author of this song, refers to God as a shepherd guarding His flock. He said that God was his Protector and Provider, the One he looked to for all his needs. Even Christ Himself, when He was human, said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). Because we are weak, corruptible, mortal human beings, we have to depend entirely upon God for all our being.

The song continues, "I shall not want." "Want" here means lack. David was confident that he would lack nothing to support his body and life, that God would provide all his needs. This is echoed in Psalm 34, verses 9 and 10.

David went on to write, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." David compares himself to a lamb contentedly grazing while the shepherd watches over it. The New Testament refers to God's people as lambs. Jesus Himself is called both a shepherd and the Lamb of God.

Continuing, "He restoreth my soul." David knew he was a sinner. But he also knew that God had redeemed him and given him life. David elsewhere expressed his great joy at having had his sins forgiven; notice Psalm 51.

David's next thoughts were, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." What is righteousness? "All thy commandments are righteousness," answers David in Psalm 119:172. When we obey and are blessed, God is glorified. But even the will to obey comes from God; no man can find the path to true righteousness without being lead to it by God.

Looking forward, David wrote, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." David had such confidence in God that he had no fear even in the face of death! This peace of mind comes only from God. Paul said, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:7).

David's next thoughts were, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." God promises to bless us even though enemies may surround us. Not only will He supply our needs, but He is able to supply "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

The Psalm concludes, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." David looked forward to a full life then and after that in God's Kingdom for all eternity.

Amen.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Revelation 19:1, which speaks of "much people in heaven."

This is an unfortunate translation of the Greek word ochlos. This word can mean people, but it also has a variety of other English synonyms. Since the Bible elsewhere plainly tells us that the reward of the saved is this earth--not heaven--it is evident that another synonym of the Greek word ochlos should have been chosen. (You may wish to request a copy of our booklet WHAT IS THE REWARD OF THE SAVED?)

The Goodspeed translation and the Revised Standard Version render ochlos as "multitude." The Moffatt translation renders it as "host," while the Amplified New Testament and the Numeric English New Testament render it as "crowd."

These translations best convey the meaning of the original Greek. Thus, the "people" of Revelation 19:1 are actually the "host, crowd, or multitude" of heaven. This verse is speaking of angels who are in heaven. They are the great multitude that sings forth praises to God (Rev. 5:11-12).

Thank you again for your question. If we can be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the significance of numbers which occur frequently in the Bible.

Indeed, there are meanings associated with certain numbers. At the same time, seeing significance in all numbers or in some numbers at all times is an extreme and could lead to gross error. With that note of caution, below is a brief review of a few numbers and their biblical significances.

The number one denotes unity or commencement. Paul wrote, "There is one body, and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:4-5). Jesus Christ is the "first begotten of the dead" (Rev. 1:5).

The number three denotes completeness or resurrection. Jesus rose the third day, Daniel prayed three times a day, Peter denied Christ three times, and Jesus Christ prayed three times to the Father before He was taken to be crucified.

The number seven denotes spiritual perfection. God created the seven-day weekly cycle and the seventh-day Sabbath. He gave man seven annual Sabbaths and seven festivals to observe. (If you haven't read our booklets WHICH DAY IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH? and PAGAN HOLIDAYS--OR GOD'S HOLY DAYS--WHICH? please feel welcome to request your free copies.)

The number twelve also has a unique significance; it means organizational beginnings or governmental perfection. The twelve tribes of Israel conducted a physical type of God's Government on this earth. Christ chose twelve apostles as the governmental foundation for His Church.

For additional information on biblical numbers, you may wish to refer to Appendix 10 of The Companion Bible.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning observance of the new moon.

Although there are scriptures which show that some in ancient times did assemble on the occasion of each new moon, the Bible does not command us to do the same today.

Calendars were not available to everyone in ancient Israel the way they are today. Instead, the knowledge of the calendar and its computations was entrusted to the priesthood. It was their responsibility to compute the beginning of each month, the new moon, and make it known to the congregation.

Some form of ceremony took place on the day of the new moon to let the people know that a new month had begun. In this manner, the general populace was kept aware of God's calendar so they could prepare for any approaching seasons, festivals, annual Sabbaths, and the like.

Today, it is not necessary to mark the beginning of each new month with an assembly. Calendars are widely distributed, and anyone can determine the beginning of a new month simply by looking on a calendar having that information.

Thank you again for your question. If we may be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked for an explanation of II Peter 3:10. Was Peter talking about the total destruction of the earth?

Notice what the context tells us: "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition [destruction] of ungodly men" (II Pet. 3:7). This fire is the judgment of incorrigible sinners. This is the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. 20:14), the unquenchable fire that will burn up the unrepentant (Matt. 3:12).

Peter goes on to describe the effects of this unquenchable fire: "In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10).

An unquenchable fire is one that cannot be put out. It burns until it has consumed all combustible material. Then it dies out for lack of anything else to consume. Everything will be burned up except for spirit beings, who are not affected by physical fire.

Peter used the example of Noah's Flood as a type of the future cleansing of the earth by fire: "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (II Pet. 3:6). Just as the earth continued to exist after the Flood, so it will continue to exist after the coming worldwide "Gehenna" fire.

Continuing with the context of II Peter 3, in verse 13 we find that "we . . . look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." In the book of Revelation the new heavens and new earth are mentioned immediately after the account of the lake of fire. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away [by fire]; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven . . . the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them [on the earth]" (Rev. 21:1-3). The earth will still exist (Eccl. 1:4).

The simple explanation of II Peter 3:10, then, is that the surface of the earth and everything physical on it, including the incorrigible wicked, will be destroyed by fire. God will then renew the earth's surface and make it a glorious habitation for Himself and the rest of the God Kingdom (Rev. 21, 22).

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of further assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked what will take place after the 1000-year reign of Christ on this earth.

What will happen after God's plan of salvation has been completed and the earth purged by fire (II Peter 3:10-12) is found in Revelation 21: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle [dwelling] of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God'" (verses 1-3, New King James). At that time, the earth will become the headquarters of God's Government, which will never cease to grow (Luke 1:33; Isaiah 9:7).

God's plan is concerned with eternity. The sons admitted into His Kingdom will be active, dynamic, productive! They will not just sit around idly. Instead, they will continue fulfilling God's master plan. Hebrews 2:6-8 states that God will ultimately put the universe under man's authority. (The words "all things" would be better translated "the universe.")

What is happening now is only the beginning. We cannot begin to fathom the immensity and glory of what we will be doing for eternity. A great deal more is included than meets the eye in the hint given in Revelation 21:5: "Behold, I make all things new. . . ." Whatever the future will be, we know that it will be glorious and wonderful beyond our most imaginative dreams. (See I Corinthians 2:9 and Romans 8:18.)

If you have not read our booklet which explains the Millennium and what happens after that time, please feel welcome to request a free copy. It is titled THE MILLENNIUM AND BEYOND.

Please let us know whenever we may be of further service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning which individual nations of the world are to be identified as the tribes of Israel.

Briefly, Manasseh is dominant in the United States, and Ephraim basically constitutes the English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon member countries of the Commonwealth of Nations (formerly called the British Commonwealth), such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, as well as a part of South Africa.

The tribe of Judah (the Jews) is scattered among all nations, with a large number now living in the modern nation of Israel.

Putting together the information available from biblical and secular history as well as prophecy, we can be reasonably certain that other tribes are located as follows: Reuben--France; Dan--Republic of Ireland and a part of Denmark; Benjamin--Norway and Iceland; Zebulun--Holland (the Netherlands); Issachar--Finland; Gad--Switzerland; Asher--Belgium and Luxembourg; Naphtali--Sweden; Levi and Simeon--scattered among the other Israelite nations. It should be noted that people from many countries have also settled among these nations, especially in the big cities.

Thank you for your interest. If you have further questions, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning visions or dreams.

The Bible reveals that in times past servants of God were given visions and dreams for specific reasons and/or to convey special messages. For example, Jesus gave a vision of the future Kingdom on earth to Peter, James, and John, no doubt as a witness and encouragement both to them and to us (Matt. 17:1-9).

While God has used this means of communication in the past and will do so again (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28), we must realize that He uses it only when the circumstances warrant. Even then, such revelations are ordinarily directed to His ministers and specially chosen servants such as Jacob, Joseph, Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel (see Amos 3:7).

Today God speaks to us through the Bible. Please notice the following passage carefully: "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days [today] spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2, NKJ). Jesus Christ is the living Word of God (John 1:1, 14), and the Bible is the Word of God in written form. God the Father gave it to Christ. Christ, in turn, inspired both the prophets and the apostles, and they preserved it for us. Please see II Peter 1:21, Luke 1:70, and John 16:13. The Father's will, commandments, and specific promises are revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. God, then, is actually speaking to us through His Word, the Bible.

It is not always easy to determine the origin of a vision, dream, or premonition which one might experience. Therefore, we must be very careful about ascribing to God any such communication--even if it is supernatural! We are warned to "test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (I John 4:1, NKJ).

Here is the way we should test the spirits: "When they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony [the Bible]! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:19-20, NKJ). Unless a dream or vision agrees completely with the Bible in its message and content, we can know it is not of God.

Some visions and dreams may simply be caused by mental or physical stress or the pressures of daily life. The Bible reveals that dreams may result from an upset mind (Eccl. 5:3). If one has had a very troubled or busy day, he might be more likely to have vivid dreams that night. Ill health or memories of unpleasant experiences may also cause such dreams.

In situations where an unpleasant dream or vision causes distress, fear, physical sickness, or any such thing, we would advise seeking God's intervention and healing. If Satan bothers us with bad dreams, we should ask God to rebuke him (Jude 9). We should also stay close to God in prayer and Bible study so that Satan cannot bother us (Jas. 4:7-8). God will grant us peace of mind if we walk with Him each day (Phil. 4:4-9; Isa. 26:3).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked what the Bible teaches concerning marriage and divorce.

God instituted marriage when He made a wife for Adam (Gen. 2:18). He instructed that a man ought to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and become one flesh with her (Gen. 2:24). God's will is for marriage to last for life--with each partner loving, honoring, caring for, and cleaving to the other just as Christ loves and cares for His Church. The Bible teaches the sacredness of marital vows.

But, we live in an imperfect world beset by human weakness, "hardness of heart," unfaithfulness, wickedness, irresponsibility, and all such things. People do sin. Divorce occurs even though God "hates putting away" (Mal. 2:16).

What does one do if he or she has already been divorced? When a person repents and is converted, all his past sins are forgiven (Acts 2:38; Ps. 103:1-3, 10-12). Any past divorce would be included, and the person would be free to marry again. .ld

What of those already converted? Paul wrote that those who have been divorced ("loosed") from an unbelieving mate do not sin if they marry (I Cor. 7:27-28).

Paul was also inspired to write that a converted person must not leave or divorce a mate who is pleased to continue the marriage (I Cor. 7:10-13). To divorce a faithful mate and marry another is adultery (Matt. 19:9). Divorce and remarriage are not sanctioned once God has entered the marriage and bound the couple for life (Matt. 5:32).

Although the unconverted world cannot receive Christ's teaching, all who are His ought to obey Him implicitly, not only in refraining from divorce but also in using all their resources to build a truly loving relationship (Eph. 5:22-31; I Pet. 3:1-7). Our earthly marriages ought to picture the great love relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32).

If you have further questions about marriage or divorce, please feel welcome to discuss them with our minister in your area. We will be happy to put you in contact with him if you wish.

It is our pleasure to be of service. Please let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether or not a woman should wear a covering on her head in church.

The Worldwide Church of God teaches that a woman does not need to wear a hat, a veil, or any other type of head covering in order to attend its church services.

There are differing points of view expressed in commentaries on whether the apostle Paul, in I Corinthians 11:5-15, was referring to a woman's long hair or to a veil or other head covering associated with contemporary standards of honor. In either case, it is agreed in the Church of God that this scripture does not enjoin the wearing of hats or veils today.

The Church does recognize, however, that dress styles and matters of honor are not the same in every country or society around the world. Whenever a Christian is a guest of a community in which these standards differ from those of his or her own society, care should be taken not to give any unnecessary offense in the matters of style of dress and deportment.

Thank you for your interest. If we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. We appreciate your continued interest in our literature and thank you for this opportunity to be of service.

You asked for our assistance in obtaining a Bible or Bible reference book. Almost any bookstore will have Bibles in stock that you may purchase, or they can order one for you. Also, your local bookstore or library should have two valuable reference works which will help you locate most published books, namely: Books in Print and Paperbound Books in Print.

We appreciate your desire to learn God's truth. Please feel welcome to write us again whenever we can be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked where the Bible mentions man's having 6000 years of self rule.

Most people have never heard about God's 7000-year master plan for mankind. That great plan is pictured by the seven-day week. As Genesis shows, God refashioned the earth and created all life forms in six days and then rested on the Sabbath. God also gave man six days in which to work, followed by a day of rest (Ex. 20:9-11). On the seventh day, man is to put aside his normal routine of daily activities and worship the true God (Isa. 58:13-14).

The apostle Peter undoubtedly understood that the seven-day week is a pattern which applies to time on a far grander scale. He wrote, "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8, NKJ). The apostle Paul also had this principle in mind when he explained that the seventh day of the week pictures the peaceful time of rest that will follow this present age of human activity (Heb. 4:3-11). The apostle John tells us that this period will occur after Christ's intervention in world affairs and that it will last a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-4).

Since the seventh day of the week symbolizes 1000 years of peace under the rule of Jesus Christ, the first six days of the week represent 6000 years in which man has been allowed to govern himself and work out his own ideas and plans. In other words, each day of the week represents 1000 years of human existence.

Where are we now in this great plan? Charts which list biblical events in time order (these can be found in some Bibles) are accurate enough to show that human life was created about 4000 years before the birth of Christ. History makes it clear that almost another 2000 years have elapsed since then--making a total of nearly 6000 years of human civilization to date. In short, man's "week" is nearly over, and God's great millennial rest will soon be here.

For information explaining God's plan in greater detail, please feel welcome to request a free copy of our booklet A WORLD HELD CAPTIVE. If you would like to know more about the exciting new age soon to dawn, and how you can have a vital part in it, also request our booklet THE WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW--WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of further assistance. It is our pleasure to be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about Matthew 10:28.

In this verse we find these instructions: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28, NKJ).

This verse is not understood by many because the word "soul" has lost its true meaning. Once that is restored, Jesus' statement becomes clear.

The English word "soul" is translated from the Greek word psuche and from the Hebrew word nephesh. Both words mean a living, breathing creature, referring to man or animal.

"Soul" NEVER means something immortal inside of man or animal. The words "immortal soul" appear nowhere in the Bible. In fact, the Bible shows that a soul can perish. Ezekiel twice wrote, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20). The word "soul" pertains to the life of any physical being or creature. "Soul" simply means life.

The word translated "life" in Leviticus 17:11 comes from the same Hebrew word translated "soul." This verse can just as accurately be rendered, "For the soul of the flesh is in the blood." Jesus gave His life (translated from the same Greek word translated "soul") as a ransom for us (Mark 10:45) by pouring out His soul (life's blood) in payment for sin (Isa. 53:12). Again, "soul" refers to the physical life of human beings or animals.

God can destroy the physical body and the soul (life). Matthew 10:28 tells us that no man can do both. Jesus said the same thing at another time: "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell [the lake of fire--the second or final death]" (Luke 12:4-5, NKJ). Man can destroy a physical life. But that results only in the first death (Heb. 9:27).

God, on the other hand, has the power both to impart life and to take it away either temporarily or forever. He is able to resurrect those whom men have killed. He is also able to kill in a way no man can. If God judges a person to be unworthy of His Kingdom, that person will be thrown into the lake of fire to be utterly consumed. This is the second death, from which there will be no resurrection (Rev. 20:14-15; Mal. 4:1). The body and life (soul) of the unrepentant will be destroyed forever.

So, then, what Jesus said was that we should not shape our lives by any threat men may pose against us. We should live our lives in total obedience to God and His laws (see Acts 5:29). If men kill us, it will be only temporary. If God kills us, it will be forever.

For the answers to other common questions on this subject, you may wish to request the following literature: TO HELL AND BACK and WHAT IS MAN? We would be happy to send these to you free upon your request.

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning reincarnation.

Those who believe in reincarnation teach that after death a person's "soul" is reborn in a new body, which may be that of an animal, an insect, or another human being. It is sometimes referred to as the "transmigration of the soul" or metempsychosis.

The immortality of the soul doctrine is basic to the belief in reincarnation. But, that doctrine is false! The Bible plainly shows that one's soul is not immortal. Notice Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust [not another body] shalt thou return."

Also notice Ecclesiastes 3:19-20: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."

Psalm 146:4 states that when a man dies "his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

Our booklet WHAT IS MAN? explains in greater detail the real nature of man and why he does not possess an immortal soul that lives on or "migrates" after death. Please feel welcome to request it.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning pledging allegiance to the flag.

Since the words "one nation under God" are used, we are certainly free to take this pledge. It is then understood that our allegiance is pledged only so far as we are not forced to disobey God's laws.

The Bible commands us to be good citizens of the country in which we live. We know God has set government over all human beings, and every Christian should "be subject unto the higher powers" (Rom. 13:1). This is with the understanding that our greater, higher, FIRST allegiance belongs to God.

A similar question involves saluting the flag. Some believe that saluting the flag is idolatrous. However, saluting is not in itself an act of worship, but merely a matter of showing respect. Through Paul, God commands us to render respect and honor where they are due (Rom. 13:1-7).

We salute the flag, not because it is the symbol of another god, but because it stands for the freedom and blessings which the Most High God has given this nation.

Thank you again for your question. If we can be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the mysterious 1,290 and 1,335 days mentioned in Daniel 12:11-12.

Daniel was told that his prophecies would be sealed until the end of the age, but then God would reveal the meaning to His servants (verses 9 and 10). We are now very near the time when these prophecies will be fulfilled, and God is now revealing what they mean.

These time periods refer to events that will happen to the people of God in this generation. Each period begins with a significant event. And both the 1,290-day and 1,335-day periods end with the return of Jesus Christ. But, we should first notice the main subject of Daniel 12. It is the time of the end.

Daniel wrote, "When the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished" (verse 7, NKJ). This refers back to verse 1, which states that Michael the archangel will stand up for God's people during a time of trouble "such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time."

This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation spoken of by Christ in Matthew 24:21-22. The Great Tribulation and the day of the Lord will last three-and-one-half years--"a time, times, and half a time" (Dan. 12:7; Rev. 12:14).

With these things in mind, look again at Daniel 12:11: "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days" (NKJ). This verse seems to indicate that the Jews in the modern nation of Israel may restore the twice-daily sacrifice (please see Exodus 29:38-39). However, it does not necessarily imply that a temple will be built in our time in Jerusalem. (This verse was fulfilled, at least in type, when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple during his assault on Jerusalem in 167-164 B.C.)

Since this verse also states that the "daily sacrifice is taken away," the indication is that the armies of the "beast" of Revelation 17, upon entering Jerusalem, will ban this ritual.

Should this be the case, there would be 1,290 days, just a little over three and a half years, until the appearance of the Messiah.

Daniel adds, "Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days" (Dan. 12:12, NKJ). This is a blessing pronounced upon the people of God who endure until the 1,335 days, that is, to the period beginning about 1,335 days before Christ's coming.

Since no one knows the day of Christ's coming (Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7), we may not know the exact time when the 1,335 days begin. Apparently, however, at that time, the organized efforts of God's Work to proclaim the Gospel to the world will end.

Forty-five days later, or 1,290 days before the return of Christ, the beast's armies will surround Jerusalem. Those who are worthy will have been warned and taken to a place of refuge God has provided for them (Rev. 12:14-16).

When God's Church is in a place of protection, the 1,260 days ("a time, times, and half a time," or 42 months) of the Great Tribulation will begin. At the end of the 1,260 days, Jesus Christ will return to this earth.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may be of further assistance. It is our pleasure to be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the "souls under the altar" mentioned in Revelation 6:9-11.

Some have claimed that these verses prove the immortality of the soul and that people go to heaven when they die. The Bible itself, however, shows that souls are mortal by nature (for proof, please see our booklet WHAT IS MAN?) and that this entire description is symbolic, not literal.

What did John see? In vision he beheld a book or scroll sealed with seven seals. As Jesus opened each seal (Rev. 5:5), John saw a preview of an event which would take place "hereafter" (Rev. 4:1). John was "in the spirit" while the seven seals were being opened (Rev. 4:2). So, the events he saw were not actually happening then. They were heavenly enactments of what was to take place later on earth.

When the fifth seal was opened, John "saw under [at the base of] the altar the souls of them that were slain" (Rev. 6:9). Because Jesus revealed the meaning of the seven seals when He was on earth, we know that the fifth seal is symbolic of the coming Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:9-28). It is a picture of an event to take place on the earth.

In vision, John was projected forward to our time now, a time when one martyrdom has already happened (during the Middle Ages) and a greater one (the Tribulation) is yet to come. The "souls" (Christians) who "were slain [martyred]" were told to "rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. 6:11). Those who have died are to continue to "rest"--remain in their graves (compare Acts 2:26-27)--until others, like them, are also martyred. Remember, there are no graves in heaven.

The "souls," the dead saints, crying "avenge our blood" (verse 10) is similar to Abel's blood (his life, see Leviticus 17:14) crying to God from the ground (Gen. 4:10). Since neither

blood nor the dead talk (Ps. 115:17; Eccl. 9:5, 10), we know that the meaning is not literal. The "souls under the altar," then, is a symbolic picture of the martyrdom of saints.

For a better understanding of the seven seals and Bible prophecy, please feel welcome to request our literature explaining the book of Revelation. We would be happy to send it as well as the booklet mentioned in this letter without charge or obligation.

If you have additional Bible questions, please feel welcome to let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the so-called "Apostles' Creed," which is commonly recited in many churches.

While the title implies that this creed was written or approved by the apostles and the early Church of God, that idea is completely false. This document is one of many religious frauds, and is a mixture of truth and error. It was composed in its final form about the fifth century A.D.

Smith's Bible Dictionary admits: "The Apostles' Creed is not their [the apostles'] own making."

Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church reports: "The creed, as it stands in its present form, could not be composed in any manner as it is pretended, by the Apostles. The silence of the Acts of the Apostles about any such composition is [an] evidence against it."

Bingham's also says that it was originally called the "Roman Creed" because of the statement "I believe in . . . the Holy Catholic Church."

Apparently, the creed was created in an attempt to give apostolic authority for accepting the many pagan doctrines and customs which were being brought into the professing Christian church in the western Roman Empire.

Thank you again for your question. Please do not hesitate to let us know whenever we may be of further help in your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the origin of steeples and spires.

Such objects long predate Christianity. In fact, they go back to ancient pagan fertility rites. The male symbol of fertility was represented by the pagans as an upright stone, pillar, obelisk, or slender tower.

According to Edward Carpenter, in the book Pagan and Christian Creeds, the lingam (a stylized phallic symbol) occurs all over the world.

The Biblical Cyclopaedia, by McClintock and Strong, says: "Even the spires of churches are symbols retained from the old phallic worship." See article "Phallus," Vol. VIII, p. 55.

Thomas Inman, in his book Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism, states that ancient fertility rites and phallic worship resulted in the setting up of various architectural structures such "as we now see towers or spires before our churches, and minarets before mosques" (p. XXII).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. You asked whether Michael, the archangel, is the individual who later became Jesus Christ.

Michael is not Christ. He is the spirit being, "your prince" (Daniel 10:21; 12:1), sent to serve Israel. Michael and the other princes over the nations are all subject to Christ, who is Supreme Ruler under the Father.

The chief princes among God's created spirit beings have great power and authority over the nations. But what is the limit of their authority? How far does their authority and power extend? In Jude 8 and 9 we read: "These filthy dreamers [evil men] . . . despise dominion [authority], and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil . . . about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord [Christ--who is Michael's superior] rebuke thee."

While evil men have little or no respect for those in authority, Michael, who is an archangel, showed respect to the office of authority of Satan the devil. By this scripture we can see very clearly that Michael does not have greater rank than Satan. If he did, he would have given the devil a command--he could have done the rebuking himself, instead of saying, "The Lord rebuke thee." But Christ does have greater rank.

Matthew 4:10 records Christ's statement to Satan: "Get thee hence, Satan." Christ gave Satan a sharp command. He was in authority over Satan because He created him as the cherub Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:15). Christ is the One through whom the Father created all things (Colossians 1:15-16; John 1:1-3).

It is obvious that Michael could not have been Christ. Rather, he is an angelic being who is in authority over other lesser angelic beings in God's Government. He is one of the leaders among God's faithful angels.

Thank you for your interest. If you would like additional information on the subject of angels, write for our free article entitled "Angels--Servants of God."

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the identity of the "other sheep" mentioned in John 10:16.

Christ said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

"This fold" refers to Judah--the Jews--who were living in Judea. Christ came to His own--to the Jews--and His own received Him not (John 1:11). Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, but the Jews rejected Him saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14).

Who are the "other sheep"? They are the other tribes of Israel. Israel (Jacob) had more than one son--he had twelve sons. The "other sheep" then are the descendants of the other sons of Jacob. Christ referred to them (the other tribes of Israel) as "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). The Jews referred to the other tribes of Israel as "the dispersed among the Gentiles" (John 7:35).

Israel and Judah became two separate nations (houses) during the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. The "other sheep," or the lost tribes of Israel, were not in Judea.

Some have thought that the gentiles represent the "other sheep." Yet, it must be remembered that only the descendants of Jacob (Israel) are referred to as "sheep" in all the Bible. The gentiles can obtain salvation through Christ (Eph. 2:11-13), but nationally they are never referred to as "sheep."

Christ concluded by saying, "And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). When will the house of Judah and the house of Israel be one fold and have one king and one shepherd?

The prophet Ezekiel gives the answer (Ezek. 37:21-28). David will be that king with Christ, the chief shepherd (verses 24-25). Ezekiel 34:23-24 and Jeremiah 30:9 show that David is to be resurrected from the dead and made king. The resurrection from the dead occurs at Christ's Second Coming to this earth

(I Thess. 4:13-15; I Cor. 15:20-23, 50-52). Christ will then establish the new covenant with the house of Israel AND the house of Judah (Heb. 8:8-10; Jer. 31:31-33; 50:4-5).

Thus, the "other sheep" are the other tribes of Israel.

Thank you for your interest. If you have further questions, please feel welcome to write.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether Christians should preach the gospel from door to door.

Some religious groups send their members from house to house engaging people in religious discussions. But is that really what God wants? The reaction of many householders indicates that they do not appreciate such surprise visits. Most people prefer to decide for themselves when and how to become involved in religious studies.

The Bible teaches that it is God who "calls" a person to repentance and the Christian way of life. When God opens a person's mind, the individual becomes interested in receiving guidance from a teacher he knows and respects. God has His own way of calling each person.

Misunderstanding of this subject arises because a number of scriptures are misinterpreted. Acts 2:46 and 20:20 are examples. Please notice what these passages really say: "And they [the twelve apostles and other disciples], continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46). Notice that these people were all in harmony. They continued daily with "one accord." They were all of the same belief (verse 44). This is simply talking about people who ate together in the way one might have close friends over to his or her home. The King James expression "breaking bread" refers to eating an ordinary meal. Acts 2:46 says nothing about preaching to strangers.

Acts 20:20 can be correctly understood by reading it in context, beginning with verse 17. The apostle Paul "sent to Ephesus, and called the ELDERS of the church" and said to them, "I . . . have taught YOU publickly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:17-20). Paul's practice was to teach the leaders of the church in their own homes. He did not go from house to house attempting to teach whomever opened the door. When Paul preached publicly, it was primarily in the synagogues of his day. In Ephesus, after the Jews no longer wanted to listen in the synagogue, he went to the school of Tyrannus and taught there daily (Acts 19:9). In other words, Paul made himself available, teaching the

gospel to those who wanted to listen. He did not try to force himself onto an unwilling audience.

Today, as the gospel is proclaimed on the WORLD TOMORROW program and in our many publications, anyone is at liberty to accept it or reject it. We never attempt to force God's truth onto anyone. Jesus instructed His disciples to avoid giving spiritual information indiscriminately. See Matthew 7:6. (Jesus was not calling people dogs or swine. He used this attention-getting analogy to show that the gospel should not be given to those who are not receptive to it.) God loves all people and will offer salvation to every person (Matthew 18:14; I Timothy 2:4, II Peter 3:9), but He chooses the time to open each person's mind to receive the truth (John 6:44, 65). This is explained in our free booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW?

Thank you for your interest. If you have further questions or would like to receive the above publication, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about Father's and/or Mother's Day.

Neither of these days is fundamentally religious in character in the United States. They are secular holidays of comparatively recent origin. In this world, parents are too often forgotten and neglected in day-to-day living. This world tries to make up for this by a special holiday dedicated to the role of each parent. The Bible, of course, teaches that parents should be honored at all times (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3)

Christians follow God's instructions in remembering and honoring parents. If one also wants to send a card with personal best wishes or telephone parents on Mother's Day or Father's Day, there is nothing wrong with doing so.

Thank you for your interest. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked if the last twelve verses of Mark's gospel are inspired. Yes, they are.

One of the most controversial points in religious circles is whether Mark 16:9-20 is actually part of Scripture. Although it appears in the King James Version, many other translations either label this section as an appendix or leave it in the footnotes, as in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The Moffatt Translation, together with the Goodspeed and others, not only has the long ending found in the King James Version, but it also has another shorter ending.

The longer ending to Mark's gospel is quoted extremely early in church history. Mark 16:19 is quoted as a part of Mark's account by Irenaeus in Against Heresies (Bk. iii, 10, 6) between A.D. 182 and 188. There are allusions to these disputed verses in even earlier writings, although not as true quotations. Not only did Irenaeus accept it as a part of Mark's gospel when arguing with "heretics," but, says Hastings: "No writer before Eusebius is known to have rejected them, and their presence in all later MSS [manuscripts] shows that the successors of Eusebius, in spite of his great authority, did not follow his judgment in the matter." (Eusebius was the court favorite and the church historian in the days of Emperor Constantine.) These facts point plainly to the great antiquity of the longer ending as preserved in the common English versions.

If these last verses of Mark's gospel are left out, the book does not come to an orderly conclusion, as does every other book in the Bible. Human writings are filled with error, but the Bible is complete, inspired and wholly preserved through the power of God. These verses are an inspired part of the Word of God.

Thank you for your interest. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the meaning of the "synagogue of Satan" mentioned in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9.

The word synagogue comes from the Greek word meaning "assembly" or "church." The "synagogue of Satan," then, is an assembly or church made up of the individuals who "say they are Jews, and are not." The term "Jew" is used here in a spiritual sense.

"He is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:29). In this case, it is not one's physical race that counts, but his spiritual condition (Gal. 3:27-29). True Christians are spiritual Jews because Jesus said: "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

Those in the "synagogue of Satan" say they are spiritual Jews--pretend to be real Christians--but are not. This false church was already developing in the days of the apostle John. It masqueraded as God's true Church. It had congregations in the cities of Smyrna and Philadelphia in Asia Minor even at that early time. It and its daughter churches are further described in Revelation 17. For additional information, send for our free literature about the true Church.

Thank you for your interest. If you have additional questions, feel free to send them to us.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. You asked why the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the 144,000 described in Revelation 7.

It is interesting to note that Dan is also left out of the genealogies of I Chronicles 1-9. This historical point of interest helps explain why Dan was not mentioned in Revelation 7:5-8.

The tribe of Dan as a whole was guilty of idolatry--even to the point of stealing the idols they used to practice their religion (Judges 18:14-31). Theirs was the first organized idolatry in ancient Israel, and the longest in duration. It continued "until the day of the captivity of the land," nearly 500 years later (Judges 18:30). Jewish tradition says that Dan was the first tribe to follow Jeroboam into his sin of idolatry. In their literature, the term "Dan" is often used to represent idolatry.

From this summarized history of the tribe of Dan, it becomes obvious why Dan would not be among the 144,000 "servants of God" described in Revelation 7:1-4. Dan thoroughly rejected God's true religion for thousands of years, substituting a continuous tradition of idolatry. The descendants of Dan say, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. 49:1, 18). The vast majority of Danites must wait for salvation until after the sealing of the 144,000.

It is reassuring to know that Dan and all the other tribes of ancient Israel will be saved. (For more information on this subject be sure to request the free booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW?) In fact, Dan is mentioned first in the apportionments of land in the soon-coming Millennium (Ezek. 48:1). The Bible records, "All Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). The 144,000 are only a very small portion of the people of all nations who will eventually be saved.

A related question involves the tribe of Ephraim. Some have thought that this tribe is not mentioned among the 144,000 either. But, in fact, Ephraim is included. You will notice that the tribes

of Manasseh and Joseph are both listed. Ephraim and Manasseh were the two sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:1). Since Manasseh is one of the tribes descended from Joseph--and mentioned by name--the "tribe of Joseph" here must refer to Ephraim (Rev. 7:8). Ephraim, being the leading tribe of the house of Joseph, sometimes bore the name "Joseph."

If you have additional questions, please feel welcome to let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked about the ANTICHRIST.

The term "antichrist" is found only in I and II John. Notice I John 2:18: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

There were many antichrists in the days of the apostle John. They pretended to be part of God's true Church. John wrote, "They went out from us, but they were not of us" (verse 19).

What is an antichrist? The key is found in II John 7: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." An antichrist is a deceiver. But how does an antichrist deceive us, and what does it mean, "who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"?

The phrase "is come" in the King James Version is somewhat obscure. The Williams translation renders it more clearly as "continues to come." Christ not only came once in the flesh, but by the Spirit of God dwelling in us, which is also in Him, He continues to come into us even at the present. In other words, Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh right now by living His life in His people. In I John 3:24 we read, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him [Christ], and he [dwells] in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

Christ abides or lives in us through His Spirit. That is exactly what the apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is Christ in us, "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). God actually works IN US "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

On the night before His crucifixion Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM" (John 14:23).

This would be impossible without God's Spirit working within us. God's Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). And just what is the love of God? "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

The spirit of antichrist is lawlessness. An antichrist is one who denies that Jesus Christ actually comes into our flesh through His Spirit, and lives the very same life He did when He was on earth--a life of obedience to the law of God. Therefore, an antichrist is one who is against Christ--against His law and way of life. Such a spirit of antichrist (lawlessness) was widespread in Paul's day: "For the mystery of iniquity [the original Greek means LAWLESSNESS] doth already work . . ." (II Thess. 2:7).

Thank you for your interest. If you have further questions, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the proposed establishment of a reformed calendar.

The most commonly proposed new calendar is one known as the World Calendar. It portends some far-reaching effects for those who observe the Sabbath!

Notice how this calendar would change the weekly cycle, which has been constant from Creation. To make each quarter of the year contain the same number of days, it is proposed, among other things, that December 31 be made a "World Day." That is, it would be a world holiday and would be outside the weekly cycle. It is further proposed that each quarter begin with a Sunday and end with a Saturday. Consider the effect these changes would have.

Suppose this calendar were in effect now and today was Saturday, the weekly Sabbath, and that it happened to be December 30. Tomorrow would be called "World Day." (There would no longer be a December 31.) The next day, which would actually be Monday in our present calendar, would be called "Sunday." Tuesday would be called "Monday," etc. Thus the week for the entire next year would be one day off. The weekly Sabbath would be called "Friday." It would be a normal work day to all except those who observe God's Sabbath.

Each following year would also end with a World Day and change the Sabbath still further! In addition, every four years June 30 would also be declared a World Day. In such years, the Sabbath would be changed an additional day after the end of June. The Sabbath would coincide with "Saturday" only every five or six years.

It does make a difference whether or not the weekly cycle is preserved! The reasons are discussed in our free booklets HAS TIME BEEN LOST? and WHICH DAY IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH? We encourage you to write for your free copies.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TRACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked for an explanation of the names of the days of the week and the months.

According to the Encyclopedia International article "Week," the days were names for the sun, the moon, and the five visible planets, all of which were associated with pagan deities. The names of the days of the week and their meanings are as follows:

<u>DAY</u>	<u>CORRESPONDS TO</u>
SUNDAY	The sun, in honor of the sun god.
MONDAY	The moon, in honor of the moon god.
TUESDAY	The planet Mars, in honor of the god Mars. The Saxons named this day after their god Tiw and called it Tiw's day. "Tuesday" comes from the name of this Saxon god.
WEDNESDAY	The planet Mercury. Later named in honor of the Teutonic god Wedn or Woden.
THURSDAY	The planet Jupiter. Later named in honor of the Teutonic god Thor.
FRIDAY	The planet Venus. Later named in honor of the Teutonic goddess Frigg or Freia.
SATURDAY	The planet Saturn, in honor of the Roman god Saturn.

But how did this planetary week come to be so commonly used in the professing Christian world?

Hutton Webster, in his book Rest Days, provides the answer: "The early Christians had at first adopted the Jewish seven-day week with its numbered weekdays, but by the close of the third century A.D. this began to give way to the planetary week. . . . The use of planetary names by Christians attests the growing

influence of astrological speculations introduced by converts from paganism. . . . Thus, gradually a PAGAN INSTITUTION was engrafted on Christianity." Emphasis added. See pages 220-221.

This planetary week with its days named after pagan deities is not of God. God Almighty did create the week with seven days. But He merely numbered the days one through seven (Gen. 1; 2:1-3). The only day He named was the seventh day. He called that day "Sabbath" (Ex. 16:22-26; 20:8-11). The names of the months and their meanings are as follows:

MONTH FROM THE LATIN

JANUARY Januarius, in honor of the Roman god Janus.

FEBRUARY Februarius, in honor of the Roman festival of general expiation and purification.

MARCH Martius, in honor of the Roman god Mars.

APRIL Aprilis, which was derived from aperio, a Latin verb meaning to open. So called because it is the month when the earth opens to produce new fruits.

MAY Maius, in honor of the Greek goddess Maia.

JUNE Junius, in honor of the Roman goddess Juno.

JULY Julius, in honor of Roman emperor Julius Caesar.

AUGUST Augustus, in honor of Roman emperor Augustus Caesar.

The remaining months--September, October, November, December--are derived from the Latin words for the numerals 7, 8, 9 and 10. They were the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th months of the old Roman calendar. For further information about the calendar, please request our free booklet HAS TIME BEEN LOST?

Thank you for your interest. We would enjoy hearing from you again.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the 24 elders mentioned in the book of Revelation.

Some falsely teach that the 24 elders are taken from among saved mortals. This assumption is primarily based on a mistranslation of Revelation 5:8-10. According to the original inspired Greek, the last half of verse 9 and all of verse 10 should read: ". . . for thou wast slain, and has redeemed them [the saints, not us, the 24 elders] to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them [not us] unto our God kings and priest: and they [not we] shall reign on the earth."

These "elders" are powerful SPIRIT BEINGS--not men--who assist God at His throne in heaven. On the other hand, the resurrected saints will reign on earth! See Revelation 20:4.

We know that the 24 elders are not redeemed human beings because no man except Jesus Christ (John 3:13) has ascended to the heaven of God's throne. All saved human beings--those who are Christ's true servants--will be given immortality at Christ's coming--when He returns to the earth to rule and reign (I Cor. 15:22-23).

The 24 elders, then, are a part of the created heavenly host. They are created spirit beings and have been given positions of responsibility in the government of God, through which He rules the universe.

Thank you for your interest. If you have further questions, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the proper care of a woman's hair.

We read in the Bible that "if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her" (I Cor. 11:15). Something that is a glory should be given special care and attention. Hair should be groomed and worn in a tasteful and attractive manner. If left on its own, it would soon become very unattractive.

At the same time, one ought to keep proper modesty in mind. Some have gone to extremes out of vanity, which, of course, is certainly not God's will. In I Timothy 2:9-10 we find these instructions: "In like manner also, the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (NKJ). Please also see I Peter 3:3. The "braided hair or gold or pearls" Paul mentions refers to a popular hairstyle of his day in which women piled their hair in an overdone, immodest set of braids interwoven with expensive jewelry.

Because Paul mentioned long hair, some have been afraid to cut or style their hair at all. Notice, however, that the text does not read "uncut hair"; it reads "long hair" (I Cor. 11:15). The Bible nowhere prohibits tasteful cutting, curling, styling, or setting of a woman's hair. Any length is appropriate if the hair is long enough to be a covering. Any style is all right as long as it is modest and looks feminine.

If we can be of further service to you in the future, please do not hesitate to let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning what the Bible teaches about personal adornment, such as wearing jewelry or using cosmetics.

God's Word teaches that Christians should exemplify modesty and discretion in their personal attire and adornment. Used in this manner, jewelry has its place and is mentioned favorably in such passages as Ezekiel 16:11-13, Genesis 24:53, and Luke 15:22.

Two New Testament scriptures mention adornments. They are I Timothy 2:9-10 and I Peter 3:3-5. Neither of these texts prohibits tasteful use of jewelry and adornment. But going to extremes--being obviously motivated by personal vanity--is condemned.

The "plaited" or "broided" hair mentioned in these passages in the King James Version refers to elaborately interweaving the hair with gold ornaments, jewelry, or even wreaths. It is showy display that is wrong, not the use of gold or jewelry.

The overall Bible principle regarding the use of jewelry or cosmetics, then, is that we practice modesty and tastefulness, rather than draw attention to ourselves. Our character, instead of our appearance, should be the most memorable quality about us.

Thank you for your question. If we can be of further service, please let us hear from you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked whether a Christian may sell dogs and tithe the income from them.

According to the Bible, it is certainly all right.

Some have misunderstood Deuteronomy 23:17-18 to say that the price of dogs ought not be brought into God's house. Notice: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God."

The Hebrew word for "dog" in this verse means "a male prostitute." (See Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary to the Old Testament, by Alexander Harkavy, page 294). The Moffatt and other modern versions make it clear that this verse is speaking of sexually corrupt humans.

Also notice Revelation 22:15, "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers . . ." This refers to various categories of unrepentant and degenerate humans who will not be able to enter God's Kingdom.

Literal dogs, on the other hand, are merely a part of the animal creation, which God has given man dominion over (Gen. 1:26). To tithe the income from the sale of a dog or any other animal is in accord with God's tithing laws and principles.

Thank you for your inquiry. If you have other questions, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question. You asked whether a minister should be addressed by the title "Reverend."

When we look into the Bible, we find the word "Reverend" refers only to God--not once is it applied to man. In Psalm 111:9 we read: "He [God] hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and REVEREND is HIS NAME."

God alone has a name worthy of REVERENCE. No man, including any minister, has a name worthy of such respect or worship.

The use of religious titles, such as "Reverend," began when the great apostasy set in at the close of the first century. Ministers put themselves "in the place of Christ." Hence they took upon themselves the attributes and titles of divinity. God's true ministers have never done so.

Since some ministers might take offense were they not addressed by some title, perhaps "Pastor," "Elder," "Bishop," or "Evangelist" could be used instead. See Matthew 23:8-10.

Thank you again for your interest. If you have further questions, please let us hear from you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. You mentioned that you would like to receive a list of the books of the Bible in their original inspired order.

The King James Version contains 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Originally, the number of books in the Bible was 49. There were 22 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. You will find a complete list on the reverse side.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may be of help in your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question regarding jury duty.

The Bible teaches that Christians should not involve themselves in judging others (Matt. 7:1). God's people ought to decide matters within the Church (I Cor. 6:1-5), but they should not sit in judgment of those outside the Church (I Cor. 5:12-13). Notice that on one occasion even Jesus refused to make a judgment when asked to settle a dispute over an inheritance (Luke 12:13-14).

Those who are converted to God's way of life are called ambassadors for Christ (II Cor. 5:20). Paul wrote that we are "citizens of heaven" (Phil. 3:20, NEB). As ambassadors and citizens of the Kingdom of God, true Christians must not be a part of the affairs of this world (Rev. 18:4).

Man's judgments are mainly concerned with the letter of the law and usually do not take into account repentance and other spiritual factors. In contrast, God looks on one's heart and is concerned with the spirit and intent of the law. Jesus taught that Christians must be willing to forgive others (Matt. 6:14-15).

The Constitution of the United States establishes and protects each person's rights to his religious beliefs. Those whose deeply held religious convictions do not allow them to serve on a jury will usually be excused once they make their belief known to the proper officials. Simply writing "My religious convictions prevent me from service, and, therefore, I request to be excused" on the jury duty notice is normally all that is necessary. Also attaching a short statement giving the biblical reasons for one's convictions is a good idea. Of course, the form should be returned within the specified time.

Thank you for your interest. It has been a pleasure serving you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TRACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent request for information about Simon Magus.

Simon was the Samaritan sorcerer who professed conversion to Christianity and sought to buy an apostleship. The Bible records this historic event in Acts 8:9-24.

In spite of Peter's stinging rebuke (verses 20-23), Simon presented himself as an apostle. He invented a new religion by blending his own version of the doctrine of grace with elements of the old Babylonian mysteries and attaching Christ's name to it. This false religion swept the world and became the visible "Christian" church--incredible as that may seem.

There are veiled references to Simon's false Christianity in the New Testament. Jude 4, for example, is rather pointed against Simon's principal doctrine--the heresy that one does not have to obey God's laws after conversion. John, the apostle who completed the Bible, placed great emphasis on Christians keeping God's commandments (I John 2:3-6).

John's phrase about those "which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie" (Rev. 3:9) clearly identifies Simon's Samaritan counterfeit of true Christianity. Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, mentions that it was the Samaritans who falsely claimed to be Jews when they thought it was to their advantage to do so (Antiquities IX, 14, 3; XI, 8, 6).

Additional information about Simon Magus can be found in these reference works: The eleventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica; Schaff's History of the Church; Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Church; Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible; Dictionary of Christian Biography; and the Encyclopaedia Biblica.

We appreciate this opportunity to be of assistance. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Nicolaitans, mentioned in Revelation 2:6 and 15.

"Nicolaitan" means "a follower of Nicolas." It comes from two Greek words--nikos and laos. Nikos means "conqueror" or "destroyer," and laos means "people." The original Nicolas was a conqueror or destroyer of the people! That was Nimrod--the original archrebel, who conquered the people and founded a man-made civilization within two centuries after the Flood!

While he was alive, Nimrod put himself in the place of God. When he died, his admirers continued to worship him as a divine hero. They called him "Baal," a name found throughout the Old Testament, meaning "master" or "lord."

Nimrod also had other names. One, commonly used throughout Asia Minor, was "Santa." (See Lempriere's Classical Dictionary.) "Santa Claus" is but a shortened form of "Santa Nicholas" or "Saint Nicholas."

Many unknowingly honor this Nicholas even in our day by observing customs associated with December 25th. Christmas originally was the "Saturnalia" or birthday of Nimrod. Of course, these customs handed down from ancient paganism have been renamed and made to appear innocent and good!

Our booklet entitled THE PLAIN TRUTH ABOUT CHRISTMAS explains this subject in greater detail. It is sent free upon request.

Thank you for your interest. If you have further questions, please let us hear from you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent request for information about birth control.

To correctly understand this often-misunderstood subject, we must look to the One who created the human body. The Bible reveals that God holds parents responsible for providing for their children (I Tim. 5:8). A couple should not have more children than they can care for and support in every way in deep concern and love. This, of course, means that each couple will likely need to consider the use of some form of birth control.

A further consideration is the welfare of the mother. A woman's health can be severely affected by having too many children too closely together. Husbands ought to have a proper concern for the health of their wives (Eph. 5:25).

The Bible does not describe the various modern methods of birth control. This is a physical matter, and God expects us to investigate and evaluate the information available and come to a responsible conclusion. It should be noted that some methods are less reliable, some may be permanent, and some may have undesirable side effects. Each couple should take into account their particular circumstances when evaluating which method is best for them.

Several books on the subject of birth control methods are listed here for your convenience; you may be able to locate them in your local bookstore: The Commonsense Guide to Birth and Babies, by the editors of Time-Life Books (Holt, Rinehart and Winston); The Ovulation Method of Birth Regulation/The Latest Advances for Achieving or Postponing Pregnancy--Naturally, by Mercedes Arzu Wilson (Van Nostrand Reinhold Company); The Complete Handbook of Pregnancy, by George B. Feldman, M.D., with Ann Felshman (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York); Enjoy Sex in the Middle Years, by Christine E. Sanford, M.D. (Arco Publishing Inc.); and Conception, Birth and Contraception--A Visual Presentation, by Robert J. Demarest (McGraw-Hill Book Co.; it is our understanding

that this book is currently out of print, but it can be found in many libraries). These books and others contain information on each type of contraception available today and describe the advantages and disadvantages.

We hope this information is helpful.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the outcome of the lawsuit begun in January 1979 against God's Church by the California attorney general.

While many sensational charges were circulated in court and in the media, no wrongdoing was proved on the part of the Church or its personnel. Thorough audits by Arthur Andersen & Co. revealed that Church finances are in order and record keeping is meticulous.

The attorney general dropped all charges and dismissed the case on October 15, 1980.

In a related action, the California Court of Appeals issued a ruling. The language contained in the ruling was significant and served to completely vindicate the Church.

"We are of the opinion that the underlying action and its attendant provisional remedy of receivership were from the inception constitutionally infirm and predestined to failure. It follows that the burden of the ill-conceived litigation, including the expenses of the receivership and . . . fees for procuring that receivership should not be borne by the prevailing party--the Church."

Thus, as the Church said all along, the action was unconstitutional from the beginning and should never have been started. We are grateful that God has given us victory and complete vindication.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked for information about "cults."

There has been much discussion of so-called "cults" in recent years, mostly since the Jonestown tragedy. The word "cult" has come to mean different things to different people. Today it seems to be used mostly as an insult in reference to various religious organizations that are small, different, or generally despised by larger, more "mainstream" groups.

The New Testament Church of God undoubtedly would have been classified as a cult by most of the people who use the term today. The Church was widely spoken against by the religious establishment of that day (Acts 28:22).

We believe it is best to look to the Bible itself for guidance in seeking out and proving which is the true Church described in Scripture. Once one knows which Church is indeed the one God raised up, then there is no danger of being lured into the various man-made religions of this world.

If you do not yet have our printed material pointing out the Bible teaching about the true Church and how to identify it, please request that literature.

Thank you for your interest and inquiry. Whenever we can be of help in your study of the Bible, please feel welcome to let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances," as mentioned in Colossians 2:14.

Some have used this (and other misunderstood passages) to claim that God's laws have been done away. This, however, simply was not Paul's intent.

The "handwriting of requirements," as the last part of this phrase is translated in the New King James Bible, simply refers to the debt each of us owes for our sins (Rom. 6:23; I John 3:4).

Our individual, personal sins separated us from God and demanded the death penalty (Isa. 59:2). This debt of sin is what Paul said was "against us" and "contrary to us" (Col. 2:14), because it would prevent us from being in God's Kingdom.

Paul's point in Colossians 2 is that Christ's sacrifice alone is all that is necessary. Nothing else--no work of man, no ritual, no angel, no principality--can save us. Christ is our Savior, and Christ in us is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27). Only Christ, with His sacrifice, is able to nail every person's spiritual debts to the cross.

If you have any questions concerning the subjects of repentance and Christ's sacrifice for us, please request our booklet WHAT IS A REAL CHRISTIAN? It is free upon request.

If we may be of any further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the biblical laws regarding the land Sabbath and the jubilee year.

God said, "When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the Lord" (Lev. 25:2, NKJ). Following verses explain that each seventh year was to be a land Sabbath, during which no crops were to be sown or harvested. But whatever produce grew by itself could be used for daily food by the farmer and the poor of the land (verse 6). See Exodus 23:10-11 also. Debts incurred by the poor during the previous six years, and that had come due, were also to be canceled at the end of the seventh year (Deut. 15:1-11).

After seven cycles of sabbatical years (49 years), the fiftieth year was proclaimed a jubilee (Lev. 25:8-12). Again the land was to rest from cultivation (verse 11) and all families that had become poor and had mortgaged their land could return to their possession (verse 13).

These were major economic laws given by God. They were meant to prevent undue wealth gotten through acquisition of farm land from accumulating in the hands of the rich while the poor become further impoverished. God emphasizes over and over that people are not to oppress one another (Lev. 25:14, 17). Deuteronomy 15 states emphatically that following these economic laws would bring God's blessing (verses 4, 6, and 10). God wants people to learn to be generous and compassionate--to have the "give" attitude rather than the "get" attitude.

Today's world, however, is characterized by materialism and greed. Farmers driven by economics try to milk the last bit of production from their tired soil and livestock. Economies collapse in wrenching depressions--or major recessions--and great hardship affects the world's economy approximately every fifty years. People practice selfishness and oppression of others.

God's land Sabbath and jubilee were intended to prevent this hard-hearted attitude and the economic curses that naturally result. Man was to willingly forego his crop in the sabbatical year and the jubilee by letting the land rest. He was to

acknowledge God as the true owner of the land and be thankful for God's generosity. And he was to share the good things of the earth with others. The rest from tilling the land provided opportunities for education, travel, community service, and spiritual reflection.

God promised to perform a miracle in granting abundant crops in the sixth year of the cycle so that the bounty would suffice until a new crop came in two or three years later (Lev. 25:20-22). This would be a continuing witness of God's power as Provider, just as the manna in the wilderness had been.

The question naturally arises, then, how can a Christian apply these laws of God now? Obviously, an individual cannot observe all the details of these laws, since that would require national legislation. An individual cannot release his own debts, and there is no divinely appointed inheritance for each family today. But these laws are all for man's good, so we ought to observe them to the extent that this can be done in the present system. Even where a law cannot be practiced in the letter, it should be kept in the spirit.

We must not oppress anyone in our dealings, and we must strive to be generous, kindhearted, patient, and forgiving. A farmer who owes money to banks probably cannot let all his land rest every seven years, since he owes mortgage and other loan payments that must be made each year. In such a case, it is suggested that the land be rested in rotation so that each field receives its rest sometime during a seven-year period. If one is able to rest the whole farm at once, so much the better. He can reckon his seventh year from the time of his baptism or from the time that the knowledge comes to him regarding the land rest. (Note that the Jews in the state of Israel observe their sabbatical years in the sequence 1979-1980, 1986-1987, 1993-1994, and so on.) God does want us to take care of the soil and to recognize that we are merely tenants on His land, responsible for maintaining its fertility. Virtually all agricultural colleges know the benefits of crop rotations and of "resting" land by putting it in pasture or cover crops periodically. Good soil conservation measures should also be practiced.

God is concerned with how we use the resources He allows us to manage. He is judging each of us by how we deal with and treat our fellowman (I Pet. 4). Thus, His laws and instructions are not archaic or quaint customs! They are living laws to be observed by God's people!

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked how to understand the scripture, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever . . ." (Rev. 14:11).

Notice that verse 8 gives the time setting of Revelation 14:11. It concerns the impending fall of "Babylon."

Verses 9 and 10 state, "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark . . . he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone . . . in the presence of the Lamb" (that is, at Christ's Second Coming).

Those who have a part in this system of "Babylon," and who receive this frightful punishment from Almighty God, have "no rest day nor night" as long as they remain in that land falling under God's wrath. They will either have to flee that area and seek God's mercy or be tormented by sulphurous fumes till they perish.

This passage does NOT say these individuals are being tormented forever in an ever-burning hell. Verse 11 says, "The SMOKE of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

The Bible plainly teaches that flesh and blood is subject to combustion and death. Malachi 4:3 says that in the end the ashes of the wicked will be under the feet of the righteous. The wicked will be DESTROYED and will die that death--the second death--from which there is never to be a resurrection (Rev. 20:6, 14).

Thank you for your interest. Whenever we may be of further service, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked about Revelation 20:10.

Some misunderstanding of this verse has resulted from a translation error in the King James Version of the Bible. You will notice that the word "are" is in italics. This means that the word was supplied by the translators and is not in the original Greek.

According to the chronology of Revelation itself, both the Beast and the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire at the beginning of God's thousand-year reign on the earth (Rev. 19:20). By merely using God's explanation of what happens to human bodies when they are cast into fire, we find that they will be burned up (Ps. 37:20). Therefore, the phrase in Revelation 20:10 should be translated "where the beast and the false prophet WERE."

In Matthew 25:41 Jesus said, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Jesus here plainly shows that the everlasting fire was prepared for Satan and his angels. Yet He goes on to say that human beings who are ultimately judged unfit for eternal life are also to be cast into this very lake of fire. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment" (verse 46).

When these people are cast into the lake of fire, it is by God's definition "the second DEATH," from which there is no resurrection. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Thank you for your interest. We appreciate the opportunity to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning the origin of the cross.

History shows that the cross was used centuries before Christ. For example, in the British Museum is a statue of the Assyrian king Samsi-Vul, son of Shalmaneser. Around his neck is an almost perfect Maltese cross. On an accompanying figure, that of Ashur-nasir-pal, is a similar cross.

The ancient Greek goddess Diana is pictured with a cross over her head, in much the same way the "Virgin Mary" is represented by many medieval artists. Bacchus, the Greek god of wine, is often pictured wearing a headdress adorned with crosses. Different types of crosses were used in Mexico centuries before the Spaniards arrived. The Egyptians used cross symbols in abundance, as did the Hindus.

The surprising thing is that the Christian use of the cross did not begin until the time of Constantine, three centuries after Christ. Archaeologists have not found any Christian use of the symbol before that time. According to one writer (W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, article "Cross"), the cross as a "Christian" symbol was taken directly from the pagans.

The New Testament does not specifically describe the instrument upon which Christ died, though Acts 5:30; 10:39; and 13:28-29 refer to it as a "tree." The Greek word xulon, translated "tree" in these verses, can mean a stick, club, tree, or other wooden articles.

There is absolutely no evidence that God's true Church ever used the cross symbol for any purpose. Nowhere does the Bible command its use. It surely would if God expected this of Christians.

Thank you for your interest. It is a pleasure serving you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about the 19-year time cycle. A brief comparison of the Gregorian and the Hebrew calendars will help us understand this important subject.

The calendar commonly used today is of Roman origin. It is based on the solar year. That is, it contains about 365 1/4 days. And though the word "month" means "moon," the months are not governed by its phases. They are of arbitrary beginning and length.

On the other hand, the Hebrew calendar is based on both the sun and the moon. The length of the year differs significantly, and the months are directly related to the phases of the moon.

In the Hebrew calendar, 12 lunar months result in a year that has about 354 days (about 11 days shorter than a solar year). Such common years, as they are called, are regularly balanced by leap years, which contain 13 months each. Leap years are about 384 days in length (about 19 days longer than a solar year). Notice how these lunar months are related to the solar year.

Every 19 solar years the moon revolves around the earth 235 times. In other words, 235 lunar months equals about 19 solar years. This remarkable astronomical relationship makes it possible to combine 12 common Hebrew years (of 12 months each) and 7 leap years (of 13 months each) together every 19 years. This means that the solar (Roman) calendar and the lunisolar (Hebrew) calendar very nearly coincide as the sun, moon and earth return to their approximate position of alignment with each other every 19 years.

Nineteen-year patterns can also be seen in history. For example, ancient Israel spent 38 (19 x 2) extra years wandering in the wilderness (Deut. 2:14; Num. 14:33-34).

We hope you will find this information helpful. If you have any further questions, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 8:22.

The context of Christ's statement reveals that He offered this man an opportunity to participate in His ministry and become a teacher of the way that leads to eternal life (see Luke 9:59-60). When this man said that he had to first go and bury his father, Christ told him to let the "dead" (those unaware of spiritual matters) bury their dead.

Was Christ telling this man not to attend his father's funeral? No, that is not what Jesus meant. A funeral usually takes only a short time, and Christ continually showed that Christians are to have compassion and show proper respect for our dead others. You may wish to read the short account of His having met a funeral procession during his ministry (Luke 7:11-15).

Why, then, did Christ answer this man in such a manner? He realized that the man was only making excuses. Probably, the young man's father was an elderly man with not much time left to live. This man, leaning on his father's condition, tried to put off the responsibility that was offered to him. Obviously, the man's priorities were not based on faith and serving God first (Matthew 6:33). Had the young man wanted to, he could have found a way, without showing any disrespect, to have his father cared for and still serve God. That is why Christ told him to let the spiritually dead (those who were not being called, Ephesians 2:1) continue to live their lives as seemed best to them.

This account illustrates how we should not let undue concern over physical matters distract us from serving God once He has called us to do His Work (John 6:44, 65). You may wish to read again the parable of the sower in Mark 4, verses 14 through 20.

Thank you for your inquiry. If we may serve you in any other way, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your interest in the gospel message God's Church is proclaiming! We sincerely appreciate your questions, and we wish to be of service. However, more than ten thousand people write to us each day. As you can imagine, our staff is not always able to respond with a personal reply immediately.

Any literature which we felt was pertinent to your question has been sent separately. Hopefully, we will be able to answer those questions not covered by our literature as we process our backlog.

We appreciate your understanding and patience.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked for an explanation of the terms B.C. and A.D.

B.C. is an abbreviation of the words "before Christ" and is used in reference to the time before the birth of Jesus. A.D. is an abbreviation of "anno Domini," a Latin term meaning "in the year of the Lord." A.D. applies to the time since Christ's birth.

Christ's birth is commonly used as the central point from which the years are counted. Starting with A.D. 1, we count forward until we reach the present year. Years B.C., starting with 1 B.C., are counted backward in time. For example, 100 B.C. refers to the time 100 years before the birth of Jesus.

Actually, Jesus was born earlier than the starting point of this system by approximately three years. In terms of the existing system, Jesus was born in the year 4 B.C. But, that was not understood when the B.C./A.D. system was established in the Middle Ages.

The Jews count time from 3761/3760 B.C. The sacred calendar, which sets the Holy Days, is based upon this date.

Thank you for your interest. It is our pleasure to help you in your study of God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about human life spans before and after the great Flood of Noah's day.

According to the Bible, people once lived for hundreds of years. Adam lived 930 years. Methuselah lived the longest of any person mentioned. He died at 969 years of age (see Genesis 5). Shortly after the Flood, however, we find people living much shorter life spans. Abraham, for example, lived 175 years (Gen. 25:7). A few generations later, Joseph lived "only" 110 years (Gen. 50:22). We are told in the Psalms that 70 years is considered to be a good long life (Ps. 90:10). David died at that age and was described as being an old man full of years (I Chron. 29:28). That was about 1000 B.C.

There have been many speculations concerning the great shortening of human life spans. The Bible, however, does not directly explain how or why this came to be. Possibly, God simply determined that about 70 years is sufficient time for a person to fulfill his purpose. Those who are called can prepare in that length of time to receive immortality at the return of Christ. Those not yet called can learn that the ways of man do not bring satisfaction or fulfillment. Thus, when they arise in the judgment they will be able to choose God's way.

Our booklet titled IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW? discusses the resurrections. The purpose for human life is explained in our booklet WHY WERE YOU BORN? If you would like to receive these free publications, please feel welcome to request them.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the modern-day descendants of the ancient Chaldeans or Babylonians.

The Chaldeans descend from Arphaxad, who is also the ancestor of Abraham and Israel. Chaldeans were associated with Babylon and the city of Ur because they settled near Babylon and in Shinar. However, some Chaldeans settled farther north, around Lake Van--about halfway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Caspian Sea. There they came to be called "Chaldians" and, more often, the people of Van. (Haran, the ancestor of Lot, Abram's nephew, also settled in northern Mesopotamia, south of Lake Van.)

History records that some of the "Chaldians" were driven northward out of the Near East by the Assyrians and Medes prior to 610 B.C. (An Encyclopaedia of World History, by William L. Langer, p. 38). From the shores of the Black Sea they turned to southeastern Europe, then headed west into the Roman Empire. They settled in northern Italy, southeastern France, and parts of Spain and northern Africa. The ancient Chaldeans of Babylonia were also sent into exile to Syria in the Greek period of rule over Babylon. The Latin Romans often bought these people as slaves; afterward their descendants were freed. Wherever the Chaldeans are mentioned in Bible prophecy, the reference is to these people in central and southwestern Europe.

Thank you for your interest. If you have other questions about any of the subjects we cover in our publications, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the giants mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible indicates that men of great size lived both before and after the Flood (Gen. 6:4; Deut. 2:10-12, 20-23). The giants who lived after the Flood were some of the offspring of Canaan, one of Ham's sons. These descendants of Ham were living in the land of Canaan when the Israelite spies went through it. The size of those men made the spies feel like they were grasshoppers in comparison. See Numbers 13:1-2, 32-33.

When the Israelites conquered the lands east of the Jordan, they encountered Og, King of Bashan. He was the last of the giants on that side of the river (Josh. 12:4; 13:12). His death dispelled the legend that those giant warriors were invincible (Deut. 1:28).

Three chiefs of the giants lived in Hebron until Caleb took the city (Num. 13:22; Josh. 15:13-14; Judges 1:10). After the conquest of Canaan by Joshua (Josh. 11:21-22), remnants of the giants were still living in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. The most famous of these was Goliath, who lived during the time of King David (I Sam. 17). A later encounter by David's "mighty men" with four other giants is recorded in II Samuel 21:18-22 and I Chronicles 20:4-8.

These giants terrorized Israel periodically from the time of the entry into Canaan until late in the reign of King David. The Bible says nothing further about giants from that time (about 1000 B.C.) on.

Thank you for your interest. Whenever we may assist you with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked us to recommend a good Bible commentary.

We know of no commentary which elaborates on the Bible perfectly. Nonetheless, a number of useful ones are available. Often the choice depends on one's personal needs and preferences.

Single-volume commentaries include Harper's New Testament Commentary, the New Century Commentary, The New International Commentary, the New Bible Commentary, Revised, and Tyndale's Bible Commentary.

Multivolume commentaries are the Expositor's Commentary, Clarke's Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Critical and Experimental Commentary, and the Soncino Commentary (Old Testament only).

We trust this information will help you in making your selection. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD -

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked us to recommend a good Bible concordance.

There are a number of useful concordances available. The choice depends on one's personal preference and needs.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible is useful to the student wishing to carry out extensive research. The term exhaustive in the title means that it lists every word of the Authorized and Revised Versions of the Bible. It also contains brief dictionaries of Hebrew and Greek words, helpful additions for Bible students. One minor drawback is its size--it is a rather large and bulky volume.

Cruden's Complete Concordance, in contrast, is compact. It is not exhaustive, nor does it contain Hebrew and Greek dictionaries. Nonetheless, it is quite helpful as a quick reference in locating any word or verse in the Bible. An inexpensive version of this work is available in paperback. It is titled Cruden's Handy Concordance to the Bible.

Another concordance you may wish to consider is Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible. Along with the basic concordance, it contains brief lexicons to the Old and New Testaments. Like Strong's, this is a larger, more expensive volume.

We trust this information will help you in making your selection. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning obtaining a pen pal.

Because we maintain the policy of keeping our files strictly confidential, we are not able to arrange a pen pal service for our interested subscribers. We know you may be disappointed, but hope you will understand.

While we cannot give out names and addresses, we here in the Personal Correspondence Department would be happy to help you with any of your Bible questions. We would also like to encourage you to continue sending for our free literature as you see it offered. If you are not already receiving the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, please feel welcome to request enrollment as a student.

It is a pleasure to serve you. We look forward to hearing from you again soon.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry as to whether Christians should swear by an oath.

The answer is that they should not! The Bible is very clear on this point: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not . . . but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12).

Jesus Himself said, "I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:34-37, New King James).

This scriptural instruction is not meant to imply that oaths by themselves are sin. To emphasize that we mortal human beings are often powerless to fulfill even our strongest intentions, God commands us not to swear by His name in any oath. Failing to fulfill an oath would be taking God's name in vain.

Therefore, a Christian should simply say "Yes" or "No," according to what one honestly believes to be true, even in legal matters. The law of the United States permits affirmation; that is, saying "Yes" or "No"--without raising the hand to swear.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning Christ's life between the ages of 12 and 30.

At the time Herod ordered all the young boys in Bethlehem to be slain, Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled into Egypt. When the danger was past, they returned to their own country and settled in a town in Galilee: "And he [Joseph and his family] came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene [one who comes from Nazareth]" (Matt. 2:23).

From Nazareth they would all travel to Jerusalem each year for the Passover. On one of those occasions, when He was 12, Jesus stayed behind in the Temple. Afterward, "he went down with them [His family], and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them" (Luke 2:51).

So, Jesus evidently spent most of those years in Nazareth. Otherwise, He would not have been known as a Nazarene.

After He was 30, Jesus preached in the synagogue in His home town: "And he came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up" (Luke 4:16). Notice the reaction of the townspeople: "And all . . . wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" (verse 22). The people knew Him! This is confirmed when, on a similar occasion, in astonishment they said, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?" (Matt. 13:54-56). The people knew His whole family. This was Jesus' own country (verse 54; Luke 4:24).

The Bible evidence is that Jesus spent most of those 18 years between ages 12 and 30 in Nazareth. That was where He was trained and where He studied.

There is no biblical evidence that Jesus traveled the world or studied with the Essenes. We do know, however, that the Essenes did not agree with His teachings.

We appreciate your interest in understanding God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11.

No one now knows who the two witnesses are. But when they do appear, we will know that the return of Christ is not far away.

The two witnesses are two human beings who will be given extraordinary power for 3 1/2 years just prior to Christ's return (verse 3). If anyone attempts to harm them before they complete their ministry, "fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies" (verse 5, NKJ). Note the similarity between this and the power given to Elijah (II Kings 1:9-15). They will also have power to produce drought and famine, as did Elijah (Luke 4:25; I Kings 17:1-7), and to smite the earth with plagues (Rev. 11:6).

The mission of the two witnesses will be to give one final warning to the governments of this world. They will be martyred because of their message, and the whole world will rejoice as they view their dead bodies, lying unburied in the streets of Jerusalem (verses 9-10). But, those same people will be struck with great fear when they see the two witnesses come to life again and ascend into the sky in a cloud (verses 11-12).

Your interest is appreciated. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry as to whether Jesus was nailed to a cross or to a stake.

The Romans, the ones who crucified Christ, are known to have used instruments of various shapes. Some were just upright timbers, others had crosspieces attached either at the top or just a little below the top.

The word "cross" in the New Testament comes from the Greek word stauros. The study of word origins shows that stauros simply means stake or pole. This word was used in literature in reference to pieces of wood of various shapes, including those with crosspieces.

There is no description in the Bible of the specific stauros on which Christ died. If it were important for us to know its shape, God would have provided us with additional information. The important thing is Christ's sacrifice for us--and what He is doing now--not the exact shape of the wood on which He died. But, the mere fact that the traditional cross figures so prominently in pagan religious custom ought to give us pause for thought.

We appreciate the opportunity to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the Ten Commandments being listed differently in our literature from the way millions have always been taught.

This is an important question, and the answer is clear when we are guided by God's Word. There is no doubt as to the number of the Commandments. There are ten (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4). It is their content which is of vital concern.

It was not until the fourth century A.D. that this confusion even began to exist. It was then that Augustine (Catholic bishop of Hippo in North Africa) devised a new way of presenting the Ten Commandments in order to allow the use of images and statues in religious worship. He dropped the Second Commandment altogether, divided the Tenth into two "commandments," and then renumbered his revised list of ten.

Dropping the Second Commandment makes it appear that there is only one commandment against idolatry. But, there are two kinds of idolatry--and two distinct commandments prohibit these two major sins. The First Commandment forbids worship of anything in the place of God (Ex. 20:3). The Second Commandment is altogether different and forbids bowing down to, serving, or otherwise using statues in the worship of God (Ex. 20:4-6).

As mentioned above, in order to retain the correct number of commandments, Augustine made two "commandments" out of the Tenth (Ex. 20:17). According to Augustine's mistaken idea, the Ninth Commandment is: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife," and the Tenth is: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house."

Notice how a New Testament servant of God was inspired to quote five of the Commandments--including the Tenth. Paul wrote: "For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not COVET,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Rom. 13:9, NKJV).

Unlike Augustine, Paul made no distinction between coveting

a neighbor's wife and a neighbor's house. Paul elsewhere wrote, "For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet'" (Rom. 7:7, NKJV). Clearly, only one principle is involved, and only one commandment governs it.

The King James Version of the Bible contains two complete lists of the Commandments. They are found in Exodus 20:1-17 and in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. This is the way you will find the Ten Commandments listed in our literature.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance in your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked what the Bible says about the use of instrumental music accompanying singing in Church services.

The Bible shows very plainly that the use of musical instruments is proper when praising God.

We read in Psalm 150:3-4: "Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs." In the days of King Hezekiah, the king "set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps . . . for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets . . . And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded" (II Chron. 29:25-28).

Some claim that the teachings in the Old Testament do not apply to the Church today. However, that argument is false! Jesus Himself said that man ought to live by every word of God (Matt. 4:4). He revealed that the entire Old Testament is God's Word (Luke 24:44). Paul wrote that the Scriptures (referring to the Old Testament) are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:15-17).

Furthermore, the New Testament itself reveals that God is praised in heaven with instrumental music (Rev. 5:8 and 14:2-3). Revelation 15:2-3 tells us that the resurrected saints will praise God to the accompaniment of harps.

These and other scriptures prove it is perfectly proper to praise God by singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments or by musical instruments alone.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry as to whether the saints who rose from their graves shortly after Christ's resurrection were made immortal.

The Bible records a number of resurrections to human life; I Kings 17:17-24, Luke 7:11-17, and Acts 20:9-10 are examples. The passage you asked about is the only record in the Bible of a multiple resurrection. Notice the incident again: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection [Christ's] resurrection . . . and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52-53). These saints were revived to a normal, physical life. And, like all those humans before and after them, they all died once again.

Christ is the only one ever resurrected to immortal life. The Bible reveals that no one will follow Him into immortality until the resurrection at His second coming (I Thessalonians 4:13-17; I Corinthians 15:50-53).

Your interest is appreciated. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry as to whether Jesus was a Jew. We are pleased to be of service.

The word "Jew" is a shortened form of the old English word "Judean," referring to the descendants of the patriarch Judah. In the New Testament genealogies, both Mary and Joseph are listed as descendants of Judah, through the line of David (Matt. 1 and Luke 3). Jesus was not only a descendant of Judah--He was not only a Jew--but He was of the Davidic--the kingly--line of Judah. Numerous verses refer to Jesus as the son of David.

The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda" (Heb. 7:14). In Revelation 5:5, Jesus is called the "Lion of the tribe of Juda." Long before His birth, it was prophesied that Shiloh--the Messiah, the Prince of Peace--would come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10).

In His conversation with the woman at the well, Jesus said, "Ye [Samaritans] worship ye know not what: we [Jews] know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Jesus used the pronoun "we" and clearly considered Himself to be a Jew. But the Jews rejected Him--He came "unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

Paul wrote about God's sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). Christ took on the flesh and blood of His physical parent Mary (Heb. 2:14). Jesus was born as a human being by a divine begetting into the nation, area, and family of Judah. Jesus was a Jew!

If we can be of further help in your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning Christians' praying for the dead. The Bible is very clear on this point.

Prayers on behalf of the dead have no meaning. God's Word shows that those who have died no longer have any physical or mental activity (Ps. 146:4; Eccl. 9:5, 10). Each person who dies sleeps in his grave in unconsciousness until the resurrection (John 5:28-29; Dan. 12:2; Job 19:25-26; 14:12-14). Clearly, prayers should be for the living, not the dead.

Prayers for the dead are based on the false teaching that man possesses an immortal soul. Some believe that at death a wicked person's "immortal" soul is tormented in hell. Friends and relatives then pray that the departed "soul" be spared some of its suffering. But the Bible says that the soul itself can die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; also, compare the last parts of verses 7 and 17 of Genesis 2). There are absolutely no biblical grounds for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. (You may wish to write for our booklet titled WHAT IS MAN?)

God promises to resurrect those who have died and offer them salvation. You may be surprised to learn that most of humanity has not yet had any opportunity to be saved. This is clearly explained in our booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW? We would be happy to send any of our literature to you free upon your request.

Thank you for your inquiry. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning Jesus' being called the "Son of man."

Christ was not referred to as God the Father's Son (except in prophecy--see Psalm 2:7 and II Samuel 7:14) until His human birth (Heb. 5:5-8; Luke 1:32). Likewise, God the Father was not referred to as the Father before that time. In fact, the Father's existence was not clearly revealed until after Christ's coming (Luke 10:22; Matt. 11:27).

Not until He was born of a human mother, Mary, was Christ given the title "Son of man." Christ's divesting Himself of His glory in order to become our sacrifice was a vital part of God's plan, and was necessary in order for Jesus to become a fully understanding and compassionate High Priest (Heb. 4:15).

So, this title designates a very important attribute of Christ. In the Old Testament, Christ had many different titles. Since that time, the title and attributes of "Son of man" have been added to them.

If there is some additional way we can be of service, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to help you with your study of God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the differences between Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

These two chapters, both giving genealogies of Christ, at first appear to be contradictory. Actually, however, they complement each other.

The genealogy in Matthew 1 is clearly that of Joseph, Mary's husband. Matthew recorded it for legal purposes. He was writing to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah; and the Jews' custom in keeping records was to trace descent through the father. Legally, the Jews of Jesus' day looked upon Jesus as a son of Joseph (John 6:42).

Also, Joseph's lineage was given to emphasize the fact that Jesus had been born of a virgin. Because of a curse that God placed on one of Joseph's ancestors, Christ could never sit upon the throne of David if Joseph had been His natural father.

Jechonias (Matt. 1:11-12), called Coniah in Jeremiah 22:24-30, was so evil God cursed him and his descendants and said, "Write this man down as childless . . . for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah" (verse 30, New King James Version). Jechonias, as his name is spelled in the Old Testament, had children (I Chron. 3:17) but was childless as far as having any descendants on the throne of David, ruling the separate nation of Judah.

How, then, could Christ be a descendant of David and qualify to sit on the throne? Enter the genealogy in Luke 3.

This genealogy is actually Mary's. According to Jewish usage, Mary's genealogy was given in her husband's name. The original Greek merely says Joseph was "of Heli" (Luke 3:23). In fact, since Joseph's father was Jacob (Matt. 1:16), Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli.

Unlike Joseph's lineage, there was no block to the throne of David ruling over Judah in Jesus' genealogy through Mary.

Her ancestor was David's son Nathan, not Solomon or one of David's other children (Luke 3:31). To fulfill His promise to establish David's throne forever, God honored Nathan by making him the ancestor of the promised King who would sit on David's throne through eternity (Luke 1:31-33).

But how could Mary transmit David's royal inheritance--the right to the throne--to her son, since all inheritances had to pass through male descendants? According to Israel's law, when a daughter was the only heir, she could inherit her father's possessions and rights if she married within her own tribe (Num. 27:1-8; 36:6-8). Mary had no brothers who could be her father's heirs. Joseph became Heli's heir by marriage to Mary, and thus inherited the right to rule on David's throne, even over Judah. This right then passed on to Christ.

Both genealogies had to be recorded to establish Christ's right to rule on David's throne. Joseph's genealogy shows that Christ was a legal descendant of Jeconiah and thus legally could not sit on the throne of David in the nation Judah by inheriting the right solely through Joseph.

Further, the genealogies prove the virgin birth: The curse on Jeconiah's line would have passed on to Christ if He were Joseph's natural son, but He wasn't--He was begotten by the Holy Spirit and was the Son of God.

Jesus was Mary's son descended from Nathan. Jesus can inherit rule over Judah because of Mary's marriage to Joseph, whose genealogy shows he was Heli's son-in-law.

Thank you again for your inquiry. Whenever we may be of additional assistance to you in your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding what the Bible teaches about insurance.

The question of insurance has perplexed many. Some believe it would be showing a lack of faith to be "protected" by insurance.

But, as you know, insurance does not prevent accident, injury, fire, or death. It merely compensates one's family in the event of such a loss so that one can regain economic stability. God does not promise Christians, under any and all circumstances, a life free from early death, all hazards, and disasters. In fact, Scripture shows we should expect to have to cope with many and varied problems (Acts 14:22).

The Bible does teach us the principle of protecting ourselves by taking early precautions, before calamity strikes. Solomon tells us, "A cautious man sees danger and takes cover: a simpleton strolls on--and pays for it" (Proverbs 27:12, Moffatt). The Bible often warns us to guard against the day of evil. Insurance is simply a way of saving or laying up for the future--an important biblical principle (Proverbs 6:6-8). It is a kind of pool of resources in which people save and share the burdens of one another.

Insurance is a means by which a breadwinner can provide for his family in the event of his death or disability (please read I Timothy 5:8 and II Corinthians 12:14). There are also various types of insurance which protect others. God's law clearly shows that it is our responsibility to compensate persons who are harmed or caused to suffer loss because of our negligence or carelessness (see chapters 21 and 22 of Exodus). Having liability insurance helps us avoid possible financial collapse and provides for someone else who may be harmed by our actions.

Other types of insurance are required by law or in the course of doing business. Liability coverage is necessary to register an automobile in some states. Fire insurance on

a dwelling may be required by lenders who finance mortgages. Professional people and businesses may need insurance to protect themselves. Where such laws or regulations do not contradict God's higher laws, we are to obey the laws of the land (Acts 5:29; Romans 13).

In conclusion, it is neither a lack of faith nor unscriptural to carry various kinds of insurance. Rather, insurance can help us properly love God, our neighbor, and ourselves in a true Christian manner. As in any decision, one should use prudence and wisdom in deciding the amounts and kinds of insurance to carry.

Thank you again for your interest. Please let us know whenever we can be of further assistance with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD R.I.P.

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning Canaan's being cursed for a sin committed by Ham.

Notice the incident: "And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him" (Gen. 9:24). An illicit sexual act is indicated. Noah was drunk and did not know what was occurring.

The difficulty is one of grammar. A similar problem exists elsewhere. Notice: "And he [Moses] was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, and the ten commandments" (Ex. 34:28). It appears that "he wrote" refers to Moses, but from Exodus 31:18 and Deuteronomy 9:10 it is absolutely proved that God wrote the Ten Commandments on the stone tables.

Armed with this example, we can now solve the problem in Genesis 9. Begin with verse 22: "And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his [that is, Ham's] younger son [some versions have 'youngest son'] had done unto him And he said, Cursed be Canaan . . ." (verses 22-25).

The emphasis is on Canaan's being Ham's son; he is so mentioned twice in the account. The pronoun "his" properly refers back to Ham, not to Noah. Was Canaan really the youngest son of Ham? The answer is found in Genesis 10:6: "And the sons of Ham; Cush and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan." Canaan is put last in time order of birth. That is, Canaan was the youngest son of Ham.

Canaan was not punished for something Ham did. Canaan was punished for his own sin.

Thank you for your interest. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question. You asked whether it is wrong for Christians to observe birthdays.

In the past, the Church made an administrative decision to forbid birthday celebrations in an effort to protect members from the wrong attitudes and conduct that can occur during worldly birthday celebrations.

A worldly birthday celebration is one in which someone's birth date is used as an excuse for expecting gifts or, for adults, as a means to promotion in one's job. Among teens, birthday parties often end in drunkenness or other immoral conduct under the guise of a "party spirit." Any celebration that accepts, endorses, or promotes the above types of conduct is sinful in God's eyes (I Pet. 4:1-4). So is any birthday celebration that focuses on selfish ideals, greed, vanity, strife, or a wrong spirit of competition.

The Church, however, has come to appreciate the other side of the question too--that members need to make judgments on their own (in cases where the Bible does not speak or the Church chooses not to speak), especially in cases where they know for certain that their participation in a birthday celebration (of a family member, a friend, or a distant relative) will produce God's type of closeness and unity. For many families, a birthday is a natural time to reminisce about a person's life, and his or her impact on loved ones. It can also be a fitting time to show appreciation for someone as an individual, and to remind the person that he or she is cared about and loved. This can be especially fitting for a child, or for an elderly person.

Any celebration that expresses God's standards is wholesome, and the Church does not denounce it. This includes birthday celebrations, anniversaries, national holidays, and many personal occasions, such as celebrating one's graduation or holding a bachelor party. For this very reason the Church always permitted simple acknowledgments or congratulations on birthdays.

The same principle would apply to a Christian's decision to attend a non-Christian's birthday celebration. If it will be an honorable activity, there is no wrong in participating discreetly. But, God's spiritual principles cannot be compromised. When a wrong spirit pervades any kind of celebration, the Christian cannot be a part of that environment.

With reference to birthdays themselves, the Church neither encourages nor discourages their observance. It condemns all sinful acts and encourages all activities that will enrich a member's life with the unity of purpose, the family spirit, and the attitude of service that are amply depicted in the Holy Scriptures.

As a guideline, the Church encourages its members who might wish to commemorate a birthday to keep it as basically a private, family-oriented activity.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in points of Christian living, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD R.C.P. DEPT.

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus in the transfiguration.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each record this event (Matt. 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36). Notice the instructions given to the disciples as they descended the mountain; Jesus said, "Tell the VISION to no man" (Matt. 17:9). A vision is not a material reality; it is a SUPERNATURAL scene observed in the "mind's eye."

Moses was dead and buried long before this event (Deut. 34:5-6). So was Elijah (see our free article "Where Are Enoch and Elijah?"). The disciples saw these men only in the glory of the resurrection--an event which will not actually occur until the Second Coming of Christ (Heb. 11:39; I Thess. 4:13-17).

The account of the transfiguration in Matthew 17 also explains Matthew 16:28: "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Since God's Kingdom has NOT yet been established here on earth and the disciples did all die, the obvious meaning is that some of the disciples were to be shown the splendor of the Kingdom in a vision. And so they were, through the transfiguration.

We appreciate your interest. It is our pleasure to help you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. We are happy to have this opportunity to help you with your study of the Bible.

Many wonder when they read Genesis 17:10 whether circumcision is necessary: "Every man child among you shall be circumcised." The ordinance of circumcision was an outward, physical sign of one's willingness to obey God and be one of God's chosen people.

Under the new covenant, God is calling a spiritual nation composed of individuals converted and begotten by His Holy Spirit. God's people now are all to be "circumcised" spiritually. Physical circumcision is no longer necessary for religious purposes. It was only a forerunner or type of what God really wanted—circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4). Notice Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter."

Spiritual circumcision is a process of conversion. That Christ circumcises us spiritually is made plain in Colossians 2:10-11: "Ye are complete in him [Christ], which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

That is why the assembled apostles and elders of the New Testament Church declared circumcision to be one of the physical requirements of the Old Testament which is not necessary for Christians (Acts 15:24, 28).

It is for entirely nonreligious reasons that many physicians recommend physical circumcision by a competent surgeon. It is to promote cleanliness and health.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about cremation and the proper disposition of one's remains.

Various cultures, ancient and modern, have practiced cremation, although biblical examples show the Hebrews who lived at the time of Christ favored burial without embalming (a simple burial compared to customs of today).

However, the Bible, taken as a whole, teaches that the mode of a person's burial is not of great importance. Jacob was embalmed, and the Bible states that he will sit with Abraham and Isaac in the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:28). Christ was not embalmed, but He was resurrected to become the first-born of many brethren. Jonathan, son of Saul, was cremated. Others who were martyred received no burial. Some were torn asunder by wild beasts. They, too, are promised a place in the Kingdom.

Scripture shows that it was the custom of the Jews merely to wrap and bury those who died (John 19:40). Christ was buried according to that custom. Death, burial, and resurrection are likened to the process a seed undergoes when it is planted (John 12:24,25; I Cor. 15:35-37, 42-44). But, regardless of whether a person becomes dust or ashes, the Bible promises that he or she will be resurrected (Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:12-14).

You may wish to write for our booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW? It is free upon request.

We appreciate the opportunity to help you with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. We appreciate the opportunity to help you with your study of the Bible.

You asked about wearing clothes made of mixed fabrics. Many wonder about this when they read Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:11. It seems strange to us today that God would be concerned with such things as the kinds of cloth used in making garments, the kinds of seeds used in planting, and the breeding of cattle.

Ordinarily God would leave such matters to man's judgment. In ancient times, however, idol worshippers made perverted uses of these things in various religious rituals, and God wanted to protect His people from defiling themselves.

The setting of Leviticus 18, 19, and 20 is made clear by the following verse: "You must not imitate the practices of the land of Egypt in which you lived, nor imitate the practices of the land of Canaan to which I am about to bring you" (Lev. 18:3, Today's English Version). God did not want His people to copy the religions of the peoples around them because they were riddled with sensualism and perversion and even involved the use of seeds and threads of mixed kinds in vain fertility rites.

Today, making a garment from cloth of mixed kinds of thread or sowing different kinds of seeds together has nothing to do with religion. Therefore, these practices are no longer of spiritual concern. It is not sin to wear a garment made of mixed fabric or to plant different kinds of seeds together.

Some of the things mentioned in Leviticus 19:19 and related passages, however, are inherently wrong--such as mating different kinds of animals together to pique some perverse sexual interest, coupling humans with animals, and incest. These were included in the hideous religious ceremonies conducted at pagan temples, and God, both here and elsewhere, warned against contaminating oneself with them. They were sinful then, and they still are.

The primary message we are to derive from passages like Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:11 is that God's people should keep themselves pure and not participate in any of the evil customs

of society. Notice I John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (New King James).

Thank you again for your inquiry. If there is some additional way we may be of service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. We appreciate this opportunity to help you with your study of the Bible.

You asked for an explanation of Romans 14:5-6, which seems to say that it makes no difference to God which days we keep holy.

Actually, these verses do not concern any days which must be kept holy. This is proved by the context of the entire chapter.

Paul admonished the saints at Rome to receive the "weak in the faith" and not to sit in judgment of them (verse 1). Some of those recently converted, not yet having grown strong in the faith, refused to eat meat and subsisted mainly on vegetables.

Paul explains why in another one of his letters. Most of the available meat had been offered to idols. Some gentiles who had been converted and had come out of idolatry still held some superstitious beliefs. They thought that idols actually had power over their lives. Therefore, "some with conscience of the idol" ate meat "as a thing offered unto an idol" (I Cor. 8:7).

But why did Paul break into his dissertation about eating meat or refraining from eating it and mention "day"? Notice the answer in the New King James translation of this passage: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks" (Rom. 14:5-6).

Not only were there weak converts who were afraid of eating meat offered to idols, but there were others who customarily abstained from a particular food--they practiced a semifast or abstained from foods on certain days. Others regarded all days alike as far as eating was concerned.

The whole matter involved abstention on particular days. The question was, "To eat or not to eat!" It was merely a question of the days upon which many voluntarily abstained from certain foods. Paul was not referring to God's Holy Days, and there is nothing here referring to the Sabbath.

Jesus said that we should fast before God and not be seen or let it be known by others unnecessarily (Matt. 6:16). But Jews and gentiles both practiced semifasts on particular days of each week or month. The Jews customarily fasted "twice in the week" (Luke 18:12). They also fasted during certain months (Zech. 7:4-7). The Jews were divided on the matter. The gentiles also were divided over when to abstain from certain foods. These things are mentioned in Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.

In God's sight, it does not matter when one abstains or fasts--but it does matter that we do it with a right heart. Paul wanted the brethren to live at peace with one another and not argue or judge each other over their human opinions.

The Bible elsewhere teaches very plainly which days God made holy and commands us to keep holy. For further information, please write for our free booklets WHICH DAY IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH? and PAGAN HOLIDAYS--OR GOD'S HOLY DAYS--WHICH?

Thank you for your interest. If we can be of further assistance, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. We appreciate this opportunity to assist you with your study of the Bible. The question of proper dress for women has been of interest to many.

Actually, God's guidelines with regard to clothing and dress are very general. God expects Christian women to dress in "modest apparel" (I Tim. 2:9)--that is, in clothes which are not flamboyant and garish. A Christian woman should not be an "exhibitionist" in attracting undue attention to herself by wearing clothing which is provocative or outrageous.

By the same token, this does not mean that Christian women should be drab, colorless, or tasteless dressers. A Christian is to be a light to the world, an example of balance and good taste. We should not be so out of step with the fashions of society that we stand out like the proverbial "sore thumb." Clothes can be fashionable without being immodest or peculiar. Apparel should be appropriate for the occasion--decent swimsuits for the beach, jeans for yard work, and usually a dress or other nicer outfit for special occasions. A Christian woman should especially strive to look nice for her husband.

In the Old Testament, God gave this law: "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God" (Deut. 22:5, NKJ). This refers to transvestism. It does not refer to a woman's wearing pants which were designed for women.

The "meek and quiet spirit" of a truly converted Christian woman will be reflected in the kind of clothing she selects (I Pet. 3:4). She will wear what is appropriate and stylish for any given occasion--but with proper modesty and decorum. And God will look on the heart of such a woman with approval.

Thank you for your interest. If we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked whether it is right to have pictures or statues of Christ.

The Second Commandment prohibits the use of anything which represents God or could easily become an object of worship: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Ex. 20:4). Since Jesus Christ is God (Heb. 1:8), this would directly prohibit any picture or likeness of His person.

In addition, so-called pictures or statues of Christ have no similarity whatever to the way Jesus Christ really looked. Christ inspired the apostle Paul to write: "Doth not even nature [the inborn quality of a man as contrasted to that of a woman] itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (I Cor. 11:14). Yet, these pictures invariably show a man with long hair, soft feminine features, and a sentimental, sanctimonious look in his eyes. This is NOT the Christ of your Bible.

Jesus was undoubtedly very masculine in appearance. As a young man, He was a carpenter--working outdoors (Mark 6:3). In fact, He continued to spend most of His time outdoors even during His ministry. He was not womanish in appearance, but rather had short hair like a man should have.

Christ inspired the prophet Isaiah to describe His human appearance in this way: "For he [Jesus] shall grow up before him [the Father] as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2). As a human being, Jesus was a normal, healthy, perhaps somewhat "outdoorsy"-looking young Jew.

Therefore, most crucifixes, pictures, and images of Jesus are in total opposition to every description given of Him in the sacred Word of God. They give a false impression of the true Jesus Christ in every respect.

If we think of Jesus' appearance at all, we should think, in general terms at least, of the way He looks today. He inspired John to describe His present appearance in these words: "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire" (Rev. 1:14). Christ, through John in the book of Revelation, tells us that His overall countenance is as the sun shining in its full strength (Rev. 1:16).

Thank you for your inquiry. We appreciate the opportunity to assist you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked that we explain the apparent contradiction between Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18. Did Judas Iscariot, after betraying Christ, hang himself or just swell up and burst open?

We should first understand that God had His Word recorded in such a way that it could be misunderstood. Through one of the prophets we find that the Bible is written "here a little, and there a little" (Isa. 28:10). Each part is true, but the whole truth about a particular subject may not be found in any one verse or chapter. This is one reason Paul said that the Word of God must be rightly divided (II Tim. 2:15).

By putting the two accounts of Judas' death together, we get a clearer idea of what happened. Both events are true. But both events did not happen at the same time.

Matthew wrote that Judas "hanged himself" (Matt. 27:5). Luke explained what happened later--AFTER Judas' body began to decompose. The corpse slipped from the rope and burst when it fell.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning Garner Ted Armstrong, son of the late Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

Garner Ted Armstrong was formerly associated with and employed by the Worldwide Church of God and appeared on our television programs.

Since the spring of 1978, Garner Ted Armstrong has had no affiliation with the Church or its associated institutions, including the WORLD TOMORROW television program and the PLAIN TRUTH magazine.

Ted Armstrong has since started a church of his own in Texas. He has published literature which shows that he disagrees with certain teachings of the Worldwide Church of God.

If there is some additional way we may be of service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. It is our pleasure to be of service.

You asked whether there is any biblical prohibition against using the symbol of the heart, since it is often associated with the pagan observance of Valentine's Day.

We should remember that it is God who made the heart. Reference is made to it many times in the Bible. God uses this organ as a symbol of our attitude and thoughts, for example.

The pagans merely adopted a stylized drawing of a heart as a symbol in their worship, as for Valentine's Day. In fact, a number of other objects in God's creation have been treated in a similar manner. But, the misuse of an object by this or that group, even if the people are atheistic, should not prohibit a Christian from putting it to a proper use. Based on this principle, it is not wrong to use the heart shape in jewelry, pillows, or other items.

There is one other factor to consider--conscience. If a person feels that the heart symbol is "tainted," so to speak, because of its connection with Valentine's Day, then it would be wise to avoid its use. The Bible tells us, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

Thank you again. If we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. It is our pleasure to be of service.

You asked about The Urantia Book.

The Urantia Book contradicts the Bible. It calls the creation week a legend and the Flood of Noah's time a lie devised by a Jewish priest during the Babylonian captivity. It states that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a myth, that Adam and Eve ate from the tree of life, that Jesus Christ and Michael are one and the same, and that Jesus was not tempted in the wilderness for forty days.

These are but a few of the ways in which The Urantia Book disagrees with the Bible. The Bible tells us that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16). God does not contradict Himself. From this we can conclude that The Urantia Book is not inspired by God. In fact, our observation is that it would tend to confuse and deceive.

Thank you again. If we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. It is our pleasure to serve you.

Many have asked about Mr. Tkach's name and how it is pronounced.

The name "Tkach" is said in two parts. Both the "T" and the "K" are spoken. The second part is accented and rhymes with the word "watch." It is pronounced "Tuh-katch."

The "W" in Mr. Tkach's name stands for William.

If we can be of additional assistance in some way, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Viewers of The WORLD TOMORROW telecast and readers of The PLAIN TRUTH ask us from time to time about fossils such as dinosaur bones and those termed "human" or "early man." Scientists often date these thousands, tens of thousands, or even millions of years before the creation of Adam.

Although we can understand the interest generated by this subject, it is not our primary duty to enter a field that properly belongs to geologists, paleontologists, and anthropologists.

God's Church has been commissioned primarily to announce the good news of the soon-coming Kingdom of God to the human family now on earth--descended from Adam, who the Bible shows was created nearly 6000 years ago. As a part of that message, we explain that the modern creationists and flood geologists are totally wrong in explaining fossil and geological evidence. They overlook completely the fact that there was a previous world of immense duration (revealed in simplest form in Genesis 1:1-2) over which angels were given rule. See Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:11-16. Also note that Isaiah 45:18 states clearly that God did not create the world a chaotic wasteland, "he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" But the previous world ended in chaos and destruction because of the rebellion of the angels (Gen. 1:2 and Jude 6). See our booklet DID GOD CREATE A DEVIL? for further information.

At the present time, we have no literature which describes in detail the characteristics of the earth and the physical creation over which the angels ruled and which geologists and prehistorians study. It is possible, however, that information on this subject may appear in future issues of The PLAIN TRUTH magazine. In the meantime, you may wish to investigate this ancient period if you are so inclined. Whatever forms of breathing, physical life, including hominids, that existed then would have died in the waters that covered the earth (Gen. 1:2). Then followed a week of re-creation (Ps. 104:30). On the sixth day of that week man was created and endowed by God with human spirit. Any accurately dated fossils older than 6000 years would consequently be pre-Adamic.

The Bible is God's revelation of knowledge that man cannot discover by himself--primarily spiritual knowledge concerning the purpose of life and the origin of creation. Basically, the Bible deals with the plan of God for the descendants of Adam and has only sketchy glimpses of what occurred before--or what shall come after this period. None of the facts discovered by science contradict the Bible, though certainly many of the theories proposed by scientists to explain their facts are at odds with God's Word!

From the Bible we know that Adam and Eve were the first humans to be made in the image of God and offered eternal life. Adam and Eve were created for the purpose of enlarging the Family of God. This is the important knowledge about human life--the incredible human potential--which can be learned only from God's revelation, not from the fossil record.

Thank you for your inquiry. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Many have wondered about the origin of the American Indian.

By comparing the table of nations in Genesis 10 with secular histories and genealogies, we can trace broadly the descendants of the sons and grandsons of Noah. From his offspring stem all the nations and peoples on earth today.

We know, for example, that the children of Ham very early settled in portions of Africa, the Middle East, and in India. Likewise, the sons of Shem established themselves in the Middle East and in Western Europe. And, we can identify the descendants of the sons of Japheth with major nations and peoples in Eurasia--except for his seventh son, Tiras. There is little historical mention--and no biblical mention apart from Genesis 10 and I Chronicles 1:5--of Tiras. His descendants are the only people whose identity is not clearly verifiable in Middle Eastern history.

At the same time, the American Indian has long been a puzzle to many historians and genealogists. We should therefore ask ourselves, could there be a link between the American Indian and the biblical Tiras, son of Japheth?

Shortly after the Flood, as the families of mankind spread out over the known world of that time, most of Tiras' descendants apparently moved completely beyond the customary boundaries of early civilization. That would explain why there is no clear reference to Tiras and his people in the literature of antiquity. At the same time, ethnologists have established that the American Indian is closely related to groups of Asiatic peoples in eastern Asia, who descended from Japheth.

It should also not be surprising that we find the name "Tiras" or derivations of it preserved among various New World Indian tribes: Tauri, Taras, Turas, Dures, Dorasques, and

atures (The American Race, by Daniel G. Brinton). Thus, the conclusion that the American Indian is descended from Tiras is biblically reasonable.

The people of Tiras had been separated from the sphere of most of civilization for so long that when the European explorers first came upon the American Indian they reported that they had discovered a "new man." But they simply may have come across the most isolated branch of Noah's grandsons--Tiras.

Yet another revealing link is that of language. Certain American Indian tribes are closely related linguistically to peoples of northeastern Asia.

We trust that this information is helpful to you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. We appreciate this opportunity to be of service.

A widely circulated rumor has it that Procter & Gamble's trademark is a satanic symbol and that the company supports satanism. None of that is true.

Procter & Gamble will be happy to send you a brochure explaining the origin and history of their trademark, which has evolved over the past 130 years. It began as crude cross marks painted by dockhands on crates of candles in order to identify them. Those marks developed into stars. Then a moon face was added about 1859. The present trademark was commissioned in 1930 and depicts the "man in the moon" looking over thirteen stars representing the thirteen original states.

In its own defense with respect to the other aspects of this rumor, Procter & Gamble simply points to the public record. No Procter & Gamble official appeared on TV and no contributions were ever made by the company to the Church of Satan.

Procter & Gamble sued six of the people named as sources of this rumor. These cases were settled out of court by having those individuals make public apologies. The company has also worked to inform the public of the facts. Despite all of this, the same rumor continues to be circulated. It has been kept alive largely by various religious groups reacting to hearsay without looking into the truth of the matter.

Any use of Procter & Gamble or any other products, for that matter, ought to be based on, among other things, how well they work, not on gossip.

Whenever we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the contents of the ark of the covenant.

I Kings 8:9 and Hebrews 9:4 do seem to contradict each other. One verse says that only the two tables of stone (inscribed with the Ten Commandments) were in the ark. The other verse lists several additional objects which apparently were also in the ark. But, God's Word does not contradict itself!

The original Greek word translated "wherein" in Hebrews 9:4 is hou. From Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible and other sources, we find that hou means "at which place." Hou is a general word which does not necessarily mean "wherein," "within," or "in." It simply means "in the same location as."

With this in mind, notice Deuteronomy 31:24-26: "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book [not the Ten Commandments which God had written on two tables of stone, but the civil law which Moses had written in a book--the law of Moses], until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."

Notice that the book of the law was not placed inside the ark, but "in the side of" ("by the side of," RSV; "beside," NKJ) the ark. That is why the book of the law is not mentioned in I Kings 8:9 as being in the ark. The book of the law, along with the pot of manna (Ex. 16:33-34) and Aaron's rod, was kept by the side of the ark, not in it. All of these items could properly be described as being hou--in the same place as--the ark.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may be of additional assistance in your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked who the "elect lady" was the apostle John wrote of in his second epistle.

The Bible does not identify the "elect lady" directly. John sent his letter to a particular person. However, he may also have been referring to the Church symbolically.

Although church history does not say to whom John wrote, his letter was probably addressed to Mary the mother of Jesus. Mary's unique role and the special association between herself and John would make it unlikely that he would have referred to any other person in that manner. As Jesus hung dying on the cross, He charged John with His mother's welfare (John 19:26-27). We also know that Mary had several children in addition to Jesus (some are mentioned in Matthew 13:55-56) and a sister (John 19:25). This is in accord with II John 1 and 13. Symbolically, the "sister" congregations were those of the Greeks and the Israelites.

It would not have been out of place for John--while writing the letter specifically to Mary--to have addressed the Church as a very special lady. As shown by the contexts of Ephesians 5:32 and Revelation 12, the Church is sometimes referred to as a woman. At the time John wrote, false Christianity was on the increase, and God's "children" needed a mother's--the Church's--spiritual guidance and protection more than ever. Compare with Galatians 4:26.

While there is a natural curiosity to know the meaning of the "elect lady," we should remember that it is really of no great significance as far as day-to-day living is concerned. The important thing to keep in mind is that this letter is a part of the inspired Scriptures and contains a vital message for Christians today.

Whenever we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning whether or not Abraham was a Jew.

The answer is that he was not. Notice who the Jews were and where they originated.

The word Jew is a nickname for the Israelite tribe of Judah. It was first used in the Bible in II Kings 16:6 (King James Version), a time long after that of Abraham.

The tribe of Judah descended, as the name indicates, from the man named Judah. This man was one of the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob (Gen. 35:23). Jacob, as you know, was a son of Isaac (Gen. 25:26). Isaac, in turn, was a son of Abraham (Gen. 21:3). We can see, then, that Judah, the progenitor of the Jews, was a great-grandson of Abraham. Thus, Abraham was not a Jew, but an ancestor of the Jews. Abraham is properly referred to as a Hebrew.

Whenever we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question regarding the use of the word "amen."

It is true that an Egyptian god was called Amen (the supposed personification of air or breath and represented by a ram or a goose). But, we can find no evidence to link the Hebrew word amen--meaning "truth" or "so be it"--in any way to this or any other pagan deity.

What we do find is that the inspired writers of the Bible were led to use this Hebrew word frequently. Surely that is endorsement enough. But, there is more, as we will see shortly. First, however, what about the claim that those who wrote the Bible got this word from the Egyptians?

It would appear that if anyone "borrowed" this word from another people, the Egyptians got it from what was once the pure language spoken by everyone prior to the building of the tower of Babel. Was this a deliberate counterfeit? In the Bible we find that Jesus Christ is called "the Amen" (Rev. 3:14).

How does the Bible define this word? Notice again the passage just cited. Jesus is "the Amen, the faithful and TRUE witness." Its use here, directly connected with the word true and emphasizing the truth for which Christ stands, shows conclusively what its meaning is as used in the Scriptures.

If our own use of the word is based on the Hebrew, we need not fear that we are sinning when we use it. Of course, if we attribute existence or power to some mythical god in our minds as we use it, we are using it wrongly and not the way those who wrote the Bible did. See Romans 14:23, last part.

Jesus Himself included the word amen as part of the model prayer He gave for all Christians (Matt. 6:9-13).

Whenever we may be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about obtaining a high school diploma by mail.

The only correspondence courses we offer are designed for the study of the Bible. We provide lessons for various grade levels up to high school. Those in the ninth grade and above are offered the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course.

If you are seeking a regular high school academic course by mail, you may wish to contact American Schools. This is an old and reputable organization which does offer high school diplomas by correspondence. American Schools has helped thousands complete their basic education by mail. Their address is 850 East 58th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637. They will send full information upon request.

There are a number of other reputable correspondence schools you could investigate. Information may be obtained from the National Home Study Council, 1601-18th Street Northwest, Washington, DC 20009.

Whenever we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked for guidelines concerning studying stage acting and drama.

As you no doubt realize, it is not the thing which is wrong, but the misuse of a thing which makes it unsuitable. This would apply to stage acting and drama. Acting, as such, is not wrong. It depends upon what is being acted out and whether or not it is beneficial and uplifting. The students at Ambassador College occasionally perform skits and musicals. A drama class may teach certain public speaking skills which could be beneficial.

Practically speaking, however, morality is rarely a consideration in acting and drama classes. From time to time, those studying acting would likely be asked to portray thieves, murderers, and the like, and to use foul language. They might also be instructed to act out adulterous or licentious situations. A person should also consider the fact that performances of plays often conflict with the Sabbath.

Because of these drawbacks, we encourage people to carefully weigh all the relevant factors when making their decision about taking drama and acting classes.

Whenever we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry.

Regrettably, we are unable to offer you the legal assistance you requested. We know you will be disappointed, but we trust you will understand.

We would, however, suggest that you contact the Legal Aid offices nearest you or a lawyer referral service (listed under "Attorney Referral Services" in the yellow pages). These organizations are dedicated to helping people who have legal problems and who need to obtain qualified legal advice or representation.

Most of all, we encourage you to seek God's guidance and deliverance. God is certainly able to intervene and bless us when we come to Him for help (I John 5:14-15; Matt. 7:7-11).

The confidence you place in God's Work is greatly appreciated. It is our pleasure to serve you in the things of God.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning the existence of poisonous snakes and spiders and why animals devour each other.

There is a reason the world--including the animal kingdom--suffers strife and violence. In chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis, we see that in the beginning, before sin entered the world, God's creation had been one of total harmony and peace! God offered our first parents a way of life which would lead to every blessing imaginable and, ultimately, to eternal life.

However, they rejected God's way and chose the way of Satan the devil instead. Because of their disobedience and rebellion, God told Adam and Eve the earth would come under a curse (Gen. 3:17-19). The result of sin is misery, suffering, violence, and death. This is why even the nature of most wild animals was changed, becoming fierce and hostile toward man and each other. Instead of assisting man during his lifetime, the earth became a hostile environment in which to live.

Thankfully, Jesus Christ will soon intervene in the affairs of mankind and establish God's Kingdom on earth. When this occurs, there will be a "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). God's creation will be restored to its original state before sin entered the world. Then the nature of animals will again be gentle and tame. You can read of this in Isaiah 11:

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (verses 6-9).

When Jesus Christ establishes God's Government on the earth, the cause of sin will be removed. The nature of the animals--including poisonous snakes and spiders--will be changed, and the entire earth will experience peace and prosperity undreamed of by man!

For additional details about the prophesied world ahead, please refer to our free book THE WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW--WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE.

Whenever we can be of additional service, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. You asked about Ezekiel 13:18-23.

This chapter concerns the time just before the day of the Lord (verse 5). It deals with the false religious leaders of the present-day house of Israel--the United States and Britain.

The first part of Ezekiel 13 (verses 1-16) mentions the false prophets, the men who are deceiving the people. But, we find that more and more women are becoming preachers and missionaries. This prophecy would not be complete if it did not include the ever-increasing group of "false prophetesses."

These false prophetesses prophesy (or, as the meaning should be, "preach") out of their own hearts (verse 17). They are NOT preaching God's message, neither has God sent them. What kind of message are they preaching which causes God to denounce them? It is exactly the opposite of the message God's true ministers are preaching. God has commissioned His ministers to lift up their voices like a trumpet and show Israel (our people today) their SINS (Isa. 58:1). The message of God's ministers is one of impending doom and destruction IF the people will not respond and repent of their sins (Ezek. 3:19; 4:2-3; 5:2-4, 8-10, 12-17; 6:11-14; 12:10-16).

Though all false ministers are an abomination in God's sight, the fact that women choose for themselves the office of religious leadership--usurping authority over men--is particularly distasteful to God (I Cor. 14:33-35; I Tim. 2:11-12).

If we examine the message of these false ministers, we will be able to understand the message of the false prophetesses--because they both preach the same thing. They refuse to show the people their sins. They have "daubed the wall with untempered mortar." In other words, Ezekiel is saying they have "whitewashed" the people and have failed to convict them of their sins. Because of this, the wrath of

God will be poured out upon these false ministers. They have preached a message of peace, when there is no peace! (verse 10).

These false ministers are actually "hunting for souls" (verse 18). They traverse the far reaches of this earth in their missionary efforts to "save souls." But God asks them: "Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?" In other words, they will not have the power to save them from the destruction which Almighty God has decreed will come (Jer. 14:12-14) and which they say is not coming.

The reference to "pillows" and "kerchiefs" is obscure. Some believe "pillows" is better translated "fillets" or "headbands," and that "kerchiefs" refer to "long veils." A long veil held by a headband describes quite well part of the garments worn by members of some female religious orders. Others feel that "pillows" and "kerchiefs" are symbolic of the soft, feminine nature of the religion preached by these false prophetesses.

However, a number of commentators believe the Hebrew indicates that these terms are not literal--that the "pillows" actually refer to a figurative covering these women try to place over God's hands to conceal His power to rebuke sin, and that the "kerchiefs" represent the veil of spiritual blindness they place over their followers. Some Hebrew scholars argue against the translation "magic bands" found in some modern English versions, saying that this is not at all supported by the original language.

In their activities these women actually pollute God among the people with (the Hebrew can be translated either "for" or "with") "handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread" (verse 19). This can mean that they either use food to attract "converts" or actively solicit donations for their preaching. But, they do not teach their followers that the cause for their plight lies in their failure to keep God's laws. God reveals His severe punishment on these false women religionists (verses 20-23).

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning "baptism for the dead."

The practice of being baptized for those who have died is based upon a wrong understanding of I Corinthians 15:29.

The inspired New Testament Church did not follow this practice, and the apostle Paul did not teach it. This custom was introduced into the professing Christian world about A.D. 150 by Marcion, a man who created his own religion and established his own church in Rome in A.D. 144.

The Bible clearly shows that before a person may be baptized, he must first repent (Acts 2:38) and believe (Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31, 33). The dead are not able to repent or believe, because "the dead know not any thing" (Eccl. 9:5). Baptism is for the living. Baptism is a symbol whereby the living acknowledge their sins, figuratively die with Christ in a watery grave, and rise out of that watery grave to live a new (righteous) life through Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:4; 8:9; Gal. 2:20).

Baptism is also a symbol of the resurrection. To rise up out of the watery grave is to acknowledge belief in the resurrection of the dead (Rom. 6). To surrender one's life to Christ now, to crucify the self now, to be baptized--all this is foolish unless there is a resurrection of the dead. If there were no hope of the resurrection, life could be summed up this way: "Let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die." Please compare I Corinthians 15:32.

I Corinthians 15:29 now becomes clear. The subject of the entire 15th chapter is the resurrection. Paul cites the example of those who were baptized as one proof of the resurrection. Their actions symbolized their hope that they would live again. The resurrection is the hope of the dead. "Why were they baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?" seems to be Paul's question in the King James Version. But, this verse is not correctly translated from the original inspired Greek.

Paul is not talking about being baptized "in the place of" the dead, or "on behalf of" the dead, or "for" the dead. The Greek word translated "for" is huper. This word has several meanings and can be translated "above," "over," "instead of," "for the realization of," or "for the hope of," depending upon the context in which it is used. Notice the following example.

Paul declared, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The Greek word translated "of" in this verse is huper, the same word used in I Corinthians 15:29. In Philippians 2:13, huper cannot mean "instead of." It would be senseless to say, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do instead of His good pleasure"! Correctly translated, this verse says, "God worketh in you both to will and to do for the realization of His good pleasure." This is the translation given in The Analytical Greek Lexicon. What is God's "good pleasure"? "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," declared Jesus (Luke 12:32). God works in us "in the hope of" giving us His Kingdom!

Thus, the Greek word huper in I Corinthians 15:29, according to the context, should be translated "for the hope of." Notice the verse again: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the hope of the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the hope of the dead?"

What is the hope of the dead? It is the resurrection! Paul is writing about baptism; baptism illustrates the hope of the resurrection. Baptism--arising out of a watery grave--is a symbol of the hope of the dead, which is the hope of the resurrection. This verse, then, has nothing to do with the false doctrine of baptism on behalf of the unbaptized dead.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may be of additional assistance in your study of God's Word. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning the marginal references in the King James Version of the Bible.

Those references have been compiled over the years by various individuals and revised by the different publishers. The marginal references in the Bibles published by the Oxford press and by the Cambridge press were probably created by the divinity schools of each of those universities.

Certainly, those references, even though they are often helpful, are not inspired by God. They are only aids devised by men and are subject to error. Therefore, one should use marginal references and notes with caution, evaluating them by the Scriptures themselves.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance in your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the psychic abilities of Edgar Cayce.

We must honestly tell you that we cannot agree with the idea that Edgar Cayce was a servant or prophet of God. For one thing, the doctrine of reincarnation which he espoused is contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

There is another explanation for the ability some have of viewing or remembering the past and looking into the future. This has to do with communication with evil spirits. Those spirits have been around throughout human history and are able to pass on the details of past events. They also have some knowledge of the future--though they often lie or are mistaken about many things.

In any event, God's command is clear that we are not to be involved in any way with such spirits or those who consult them. The following verses will show you how strongly God warns against any contact with them: Leviticus 19:31, Deuteronomy 18:10-11, Isaiah 8:19-20.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you very much for your letter. You asked how you should figure your tithe.

The Bible reveals that we are to tithe on the increase we receive, that is, the result of our productive effort (Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 14:22). Therefore, a person working for wages would tithe one tenth of the total amount of his pay--before income tax, social security, or other deductions are removed.

Tithable income also includes such sources as capital gains from investment property, dividends from stocks, and interest from bank accounts. It does not include social security benefits, welfare pensions, inheritances, gifts, food stamps, or loans that must be repaid.

A farmer or a person in business should tithe on the income from his business or crops after operating expenses (but not personal living expenses or personal taxes) are deducted. Also, the value of products used out of the garden or field should be included in figuring total income, because we must not omit paying tithes on that part (Matt. 23:23). The value of garden produce should be figured according to the wholesale price, the price you would receive if you sold it.

If you have any special problems figuring your tithe, please feel free to write us about them. We will be happy to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry about the second tithe.

The second tithe is an additional tithe of one's income and is saved by the individual each year for use in joyously observing God's Holy Days. Instruction concerning this tithe is found in Deuteronomy 14:22-26: "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat [of the tithe] before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, . . . And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set His name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money . . . and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after [desires] . . . and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household."

God's Holy Days are outlined in Leviticus 23. The Worldwide Church of God observes these feast days somewhat differently today because additional meaning has been revealed through the New Testament. Our booklet PAGAN HOLIDAYS--OR GOD'S HOLY DAYS--WHICH? explains the meaning and importance of observing these Holy Days and is available upon request.

The Feast of Tabernacles is held in the fall for eight days at various locations throughout the United States and around the world. This is the one Festival during which the whole Church comes together to worship and rejoice before God. The other annual Holy Days are observed in the local church areas. (If you would like a calendar giving the dates of the festivals, please write for one.)

Brethren who have more second tithe than they will use for their own expenses may wish to give the excess to others who are in need. Or, they may send it to Pasadena for distribution. Any excess sent to Pasadena should be clearly labeled as second tithe so that it will be used as intended.

Should you have further questions concerning the second tithe or the seven annual Holy Days, our minister in your area would be happy to discuss them with you. His name and phone number will be sent upon request.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry about the third tithe.

In ancient Israel, God instructed His people to set aside a special tithe to assist those in need such as orphans, widows, strangers, and Levites (Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-15).

Today, God's Church meets its Christian duty toward its needy brethren through the third-tithe program. This is an additional tithe, entirely separate from the first tithe which supports God's Work of preaching the Gospel. Like the first tithe, the third tithe is a full ten percent of a person's increase. While the first tithe is paid year by year, the third tithe is paid only on the increase earned during the third and sixth years of a seven-year period.

A person should begin counting the third-tithe years soon after the knowledge is gained. Since most members of the Church learn about this tithe just prior to baptism, they count their third-tithe years from either the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles, whichever is closer to the date of their baptism.

In some cases the individual may give his third tithe to a near relative. A widowed mother, sister, or daughter, for example, would qualify under the guidelines set out in Deuteronomy 14 and 26. Orphans in a similar category would also qualify. However, you should discuss the matter with your local pastor before making personal arrangements for giving the third tithe.

We encourage our members to send their third tithe to the Church for distribution, since this tithe supports many needy widows at this time. When sending your third tithe to the Church, please indicate that it is third tithe. Checks or money orders should be made payable to "Worldwide Church of God."

The third tithe is God's way of taking care of those who are in need. Many have told us that they have learned by experience that God blesses those who faithfully follow His instructions.

If you still have questions regarding this special tithe, please feel welcome to contact us again. It is our pleasure to serve you in this way.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

We appreciate your interest in obeying God's laws in your own life, and we are happy to answer your questions about tithing.

God's law tells us that we should tithe the "increase" we receive (Deut. 14:22). "Increase" means the adjusted gross income that comes to us as a result of our own productive efforts. In other words, it is income that we earn ourselves.

Therefore, unearned income such as social security, old-age assistance, unemployment compensation, pensions, gifts, disability, and the like, need not be tithed. But, of course, you are certainly free to tithe or give offerings if you wish. One should not, however, give offerings or tithes from any income received from public assistance, because that is usually against their regulations and may result in penalties.

If you need further assistance in determining what income you should tithe or if you should have other Bible questions, please let us know. We would be happy to be of assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about the building fund.

This is a special fund which was established many years ago in order to provide for the construction of College and Church facilities. Donations to the building fund are special offerings, and each individual should decide for himself or herself what he or she is able to give. We must continue to pay the obligations we incurred when our present buildings were constructed, so there will be a need for the building fund for several years to come.

If you send money to support the building fund, please indicate that the money is for this fund each time you send it. If only part of what you send is for the building fund, please remember to tell us how much. Separate checks are not necessary.

All contributions to the building fund, as well as tithes and other contributions, should be made payable to "Worldwide Church of God" and then mailed to: Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, CA 91123. Contributions are tax-deductible and acknowledged by receipt.

If you have further questions, feel welcome to contact us again.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry about determining your third-tithe years.

The point from which to start counting one's third-tithe years has largely been left up to the individual to determine. However, one should begin counting soon after learning about this tithe. Since most members of the Church learn about the third tithe just prior to being baptized, they count from either the Passover or the Feast of Tabernacles, whichever is closer to their baptism. But, any convenient date is acceptable as long as that date is used consistently.

Each person should keep track of these years to the best of their ability. One point to keep in mind is that the third-tithe years are the third and sixth years out of each set of seven years following one's baptism.

If you still have questions about this subject, please feel welcome to ask your local minister about it.

We appreciate this opportunity to be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Lilith, who is said by some to have been Adam's first wife.

There is no mention of anyone by the name of Lilith anywhere in the Bible. The book of Genesis records that EVE was created from Adam the same day he was created (Gen. 1:26-28). God brought Eve to Adam, and they became husband and wife before sunset that very evening (Gen. 2:18-25). Eve got her name from the fact that she was the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20). No other individuals then existed.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary says the following of Lilith: "1: a female figure who in RABBINIC LEGEND is Adam's first wife, is supplanted by Eve, and becomes an evil spirit; 2: a famous witch in medieval demonology" (emphasis ours).

We do not believe there is any validity or authority to this rabbinic legend and aspect of medieval demonology. God's inspired Word, the only inspired record of this event, says clearly that Adam's "first wife" was Eve, not a legendary "female" demon named Lilith!

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Zechariah 8:19.

The fasts mentioned in this verse were of human origin. They were instituted to serve as reminders of four sorrowful events which befell the Jewish nation during the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

The "fast of the fourth month" was observed during the month of Tammuz; it commemorated the time the city of Jerusalem was broken up (Jer. 52:6-7). The "fast of the fifth" was observed on the tenth of Ab, when the Temple and the houses were burned (Jer. 52:12-13). The "fast of the seventh" refers to the third of Tishri, when Gedaliah was slain by Ishmael (Jer. 40:8; 41:1-3, 15-18). The "fast of the tenth" was kept on the tenth of Tebeth, when the king of Babylon turned against Jerusalem (Ezek. 24:1-2). This information can be verified in the Jewish Talmud.

As verse 19 of Zechariah 8 shows, these humanly appointed fasts will be turned into feasts or occasions of gladness when God restores all Israel to His way of life. At last, the people will seek God (verses 20-23) and will be greatly blessed. They will no longer wish to perpetuate the memory of tragic events.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning God's being a jealous God.

The verses which make reference to God as a "jealous God" are often misunderstood. The reason is that we are accustomed to jealousy referring to envy or bitter resentment. However, this is not the intended meaning of the word jealous when used in reference to God. A better translation, then, is zealous.

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary has this as one of the definitions of jealous: "vigilant in guarding a possession." This is the proper sense in which we should understand this word as applied to God. Please compare Exodus 20:5 with Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning The WORLD TOMORROW program being aired on Sunday and not on the Sabbath.

Members of the Worldwide Church of God assemble each week for services on God's Sabbath. The WORLD TOMORROW program, on the other hand, is not a church service and need not be broadcast exclusively on the Sabbath. Notice too that Jesus Himself taught in the Temple every day of the week (Matt. 26:55).

The WORLD TOMORROW program is aired worldwide at the best times available to us. In the United States it is broadcast over most stations on Saturday and Sunday.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning women working.

The primary responsibility of all married women should be the home and family, even if they also have outside jobs. We especially recommend that mothers of young children do not work away from home. As you are perhaps aware, Titus 2:4-5 tells us that young women should be taught to be "discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands."

Nonetheless, there may be times when the husband is unable to provide adequate support because of illness or other calamity. It might then be necessary for the wife to get a job for a time to support the family.

However, the happiness and security that results from a woman being a wife and mother should not be sacrificed for a little extra money and a few material possessions. The principle to bear in mind is that any outside work which would hinder a woman from properly discharging her responsibilities in the home is not worth the monetary gain she may receive in return.

For further information, you may wish to request a copy of our article "Women and God's Plan." There is no cost or obligation, of course.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the difference between kosher and nonkosher wines.

The term kosher means "sanctioned by Jewish law." It refers to food being fit for ritual use according to the traditions of the Jewish religious community. Other than this religious significance, there is no distinction between wines labeled kosher and those which are not.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning voting.

Those who are converted to God's way of life are ambassadors for Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:20). As ambassadors and citizens of the Kingdom of God, Christians are no longer to be involved in man's systems of government.

Notice: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20, NKJ). Christ taught that His Kingdom was not of this world. Consequently, His servants have no part in, but, rather, are called out of this world. See John 18:36 and Revelation 18:4.

The Bible reveals that it is God who sets up rulers and removes them according to His will (Dan. 4:17). The governments holding power do so only as long as God allows. While they do, Christians are instructed to be subject to them (Rom. 13:1). If, however, there should be a conflict between the laws of God and the laws of man, then, of course, we are to obey God rather than man. See Acts 5:29.

Jesus Christ said He will return to set up God's Kingdom, a world government with righteousness and justice. We are admonished to pray for His Kingdom to be established on the earth (Matt. 6:9-10), because then and only then will this world's problems be solved.

For further information, please see our publications WHY HUMANITY CANNOT SOLVE ITS EVILS and THE WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW--WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE. Copies are available free upon request.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about keeping the Sabbath in the arctic.

God has not made it impossible for His people to obey His laws. God's law is spiritual and is intended for all people, wherever they live on earth. But His law is also practical and workable.

In the far northern latitudes, the days are divided in the following manner: About the beginning of summer, the sun almost touches the horizon once every 24 hours. When it reaches its lowest point, one day ends and another begins. About the beginning of winter, the sun comes up to, or almost up to, the horizon once every 24 hours. This also divides the days. The effect is that near the beginning of summer the seventh day is from midnight to midnight. Over the next six months, the beginning of the days drops back rapidly until near the beginning of winter the seventh day is from noon until noon. The sun touching, or almost touching, the horizon corresponds to sunset in both cases.

The July 30, 1951, issue of LIFE magazine contains a series of pictures which illustrates this principle. Possibly you could see that issue at your local public library.

It should be noted, then, that God revealed the Sabbath commandment to people living in the temperate zone, where He defined the proper observance as being from evening to evening. But in extreme latitudes where farming is not a factor and thus daylight is not associated with work, this rule is not practical or reasonable. Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NKJ). For this reason the Church has made a judgment based on the spirit of the law. Brethren living in areas crossed by or above the 60th parallel (parts of Alaska, Canada, and Sweden are examples) have been advised that it is proper to begin observance of the Sabbath at 6 p.m. in cases where the actual sunset time varies extremely.

Whenever we may assist you with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Unidentified Flying Objects or UFOs.

There has been much speculation on the subject of UFOs, commonly referred to as "Flying Saucers." In 1947 the United States Air Force began an investigation of UFO sightings in a study known as Project Blue Book. This investigation was officially terminated in December of 1969. During its span of operation, more than 12,000 UFO sightings were examined. Most of the reported phenomena were shown to have a definite, physical explanation. But, about 700 were totally unexplainable. They were classified as bona fide Unidentified Flying Objects.

Although many theories have been advanced in an attempt to explain UFOs, none is really satisfactory. And we should discount any wild speculations, such as UFOs being spacecraft piloted by physical beings from another solar system.

Numerous articles and a number of books have been published on this subject. One such book, coauthored by Gordon I. R. Lore, Jr. and Harold H. Deneault, Jr., is titled Mysteries of the Skies--UFOs in Perspective. Our mentioning this book does not mean we necessarily agree with everything the authors have written. The staff of your local library, no doubt, could help you find other sources of information.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TRACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning donating organs or being the recipient of an organ transplant.

The Bible does not comment upon medical procedures such as donating or receiving organs. The question of how to care for one's body is essentially a personal one which must be answered by the individual. We do not offer medical advice. For any need along that line, we recommend consultation with the most qualified health practitioners one can afford. We also recommend living by sound basic health practices such as eating a balanced diet, getting proper rest and exercise, maintaining a tranquil mind, and so forth. These and other basic general health measures are discussed in our free booklet PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHFUL LIVING.

The Bible does, of course, have much to say about faith and about God's ability to heal afflictions. Such faith does not conflict with physical remedies (including medical procedures) which can help to alleviate an affliction. You may wish to request a copy of our booklet THE PLAIN TRUTH ABOUT HEALING.

It would certainly be advisable to pray about any serious health situation and ask for God's guidance and direction before making important decisions. God will give us wisdom, discernment, and faith if we ask Him according to His will (I John 5:14-15).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the use of chewing tobacco or snuff.

As you no doubt realize, tobacco contains certain poisonous substances. While perhaps not being publicized as being as unhealthful as smoking cigarettes, chewing tobacco or using snuff is thought to increase the chance of certain cancers and other illnesses.

The use of tobacco in any form does not reflect the proper respect and care we should have for the human body. The apostle Paul was inspired to write, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Cor. 3:16-17). Thus, a Christian must break free of these harmful habits (see Romans 6:16).

Although chewing tobacco or using snuff may be a difficult habit to overcome, it is, nevertheless, possible to do so. You may wish to request a free copy of our article titled "How to be an Overcomer," which many have found to be helpful in this struggle.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for asking about Mrs. Tkach and her health.

Mrs. Tkach's illness has been a very complex one. Over 20 years ago, she was injured in a train accident while traveling from Pasadena to Chicago. At the same time, she was suffering from severe hypoglycemia aggravated by the onset of menopause. Combined, these conditions brought about a nervous breakdown, and Mrs. Tkach was essentially bedfast for several years.

Throughout her illness, Mr. Tkach has personally cared for his wife at home, with occasional help from some of the deaconesses. When his responsibilities became quite heavy, he employed part-time help. A retired nurse who is a member of the Church assists in caring for Mrs. Tkach.

Mrs. Tkach is able to do some housework and prepares a meal occasionally. She goes outdoors for walks and often spends time with her son and daughters and their families. She does not speak much, although she may engage in short conversations with family and close friends. She also faithfully watches the Sabbath services here in Pasadena on a television monitor at home.

Mrs. Tkach's condition is most uncommon. She does not have Alzheimer's disease and is not growing senile. The nurse stated that she has never seen anyone with a similar condition. Satan may have known in advance that Mr. Tkach would be called to his present position. It is probable that Satan was trying to discourage Mr. Tkach and prevent him from fulfilling his calling. However, Mr. Tkach always kept in mind God's plan and the fact that Jesus Christ is the source of strength and help in every need. While the Bible shows that God allows Satan to accuse people before His throne and sometimes to cause injury and affliction (see Job 2:7), God still gives His servants the strength and power to persevere and carry out the commission to the Church (Matt. 24:14).

Mr. Joseph Tkach, Jr. has mentioned that he and the entire Tkach family continually pray for God to heal their mother's memory and restore her to the vigorous health and mental acuity she once enjoyed.

Please continue to pray for the Tkaches. Mr. Tkach has remarked to the Church how strengthening and encouraging it is to know that God's people pray for them regularly.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about Mr. Tkach. It is our pleasure to be of service.

Joseph W. Tkach is pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God and publisher of the PLAIN TRUTH magazine. In addition to his administrative duties as leader of the Church, Mr. Tkach serves as chancellor of Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas, and is chairman of the Ambassador Foundation.

An experienced administrator, Mr. Tkach succeeded the late Herbert W. Armstrong in January, 1986. Since assuming his present position, Mr. Tkach initiated the development of a comprehensive five-year planning system for the Church's operations in the United States and abroad.

He has also overseen the consolidation of the academic operations of Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas. As part of the consolidation, the College's theology-based liberal arts program has been broadened to include majors in business administration, management information systems and home economics. Following Mr. Armstrong's death, Mr. Tkach also began an extensive program of traveling to visit Church congregations around the world to meet and speak with as many Church members and families as possible.

A member of the Worldwide Church of God since 1957 and an ordained minister since 1963, Mr. Tkach helped establish and pastor several congregations in the United States. He attended Ambassador College for three years, studying theology and Church doctrines.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Mr. Tkach was named director of the Church Administration Department in 1979 and was appointed to serve on the Church's Board of Directors in 1981.

After serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II, Mr. Tkach was employed by a manufacturing corporation before resigning to assume a full-time role in the Church's ministry.

Married since 1951, Mr. Tkach and his wife Elaine have one son, two daughters and several grandchildren.

Thank you for your interest. Whenever we may be of additional service, please feel welcome to let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning servile work on the Sabbath.

The word "servile" is specifically mentioned in connection with the annual Holy Days, with the exception of the Day of Atonement. Servile work is that work done by an individual to gain his livelihood. God commands us not to work in our regular occupations on His annual Holy Days.

However, since all the annual Holy Days except the Day of Atonement, which is a day of fasting, are "feast" days, food may be prepared on them. Thus, God inspired the word "servile" to be mentioned in connection with these Holy Days so we know that, even though food may be prepared on them, we must not engage in any work for gain.

The other Holy Day on which we are not to labor is the weekly Sabbath. Most heavy cooking for Sabbath meals should be done prior to the Sabbath. Therefore, the word "work" used in connection with the weekly Sabbath does not need to be qualified by the term "servile."

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning a husband and wife having sexual relations on the Sabbath.

When we consider the very first marriage, we see that Adam was created on the sixth day of the week. It was only after he had named the animals and found that there was no suitable companion for him that God created a woman to be his wife. No doubt they were united in marriage late on that sixth day.

This means that the first day of their "honeymoon" was the weekly Sabbath! God intended them to become "one flesh." See Genesis 2:24. The Bible elsewhere shows that becoming one flesh refers directly to coitus. Interestingly enough, God's first recorded command to the first couple was "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

In short, except for sickness, menstruation, or special times of fasting and prayer agreed upon by mutual consent, the Bible places no restriction as to when sexual intercourse may take place between a husband and wife. See Leviticus 15:19-25; 20:18; and I Corinthians 7:3-5.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry in which you asked about greeting one another with a "holy kiss," as is mentioned several times in the New Testament.

In the days of the apostle Paul, it was common in some areas for people to greet one another with a kiss. It was neither a law nor a command from God; it was merely a customary method of salutation. You will find this explained in Smith's Bible Dictionary, under the article "Kiss." A kiss on the cheek or even on the lips is still a form of greeting in some countries.

In today's society, it is more acceptable to greet one another with a hand shake. Shaking hands in greeting is the equivalent of the "holy kiss."

We hope you will let us know whenever we may be of additional assistance. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning teaching children at home. It is our pleasure to assist you.

As you know, from time to time God's Church mentions some of the problems of today's educational system in a general way. Even so, it is not our intent to discourage people from sending their children to public schools.

It is the parents' responsibility to choose a method of education for their children. For those considering teaching their children at home, we suggest weighing the pros and cons carefully before deciding.

Teaching children at home is not the panacea many may believe it to be. It requires skills that many people have not developed. Even those who have developed those skills may not have the time or the perseverance to do a proper job. Professionally prepared correspondence courses can certainly be helpful in this regard. In fact, in many states, unless the parents are certified teachers, the law requires that such courses be used to teach children at home.

These courses are available from several sources. We do not officially endorse any of them, but, for your own information, one of the largest suppliers of correspondence courses is American Schools. Their address is: American Schools, 850 East 58 Street, Chicago, IL 60637. You may also obtain information from the National Home Study Council, 1601 18 Street Northwest, Washington, DC 20009.

Calvert School, founded in 1897, is one of the oldest and most widely accepted organizations offering home-schooling courses for students from kindergarten through eighth grade. They can be contacted for more information by writing: Calvert School, 105 Tuscany Road, Baltimore, MD 21210.

Even with these courses, however, it is not enough for a parent to hand the child a lesson, expecting him to do it on his own while the parent does other things. Most children require a great deal of supervision, particularly

younger children.

Another consideration is the lack of social development which may occur in home-taught children. Unless children have other balanced outlets for social interaction, they may be missing out on some important aspects of personality development.

Even so, some parents may consider the extra work and personal rewards of educating their children at home worth the effort. Most, however, choose to send their children to a public school and compensate for any deficiencies and worldly influences by carefully teaching spiritual truths and moral values at home. Each family must make this decision for themselves based upon their particular skills, abilities, and circumstances.

Thank you for your interest and concern. Please feel welcome to contact us again whenever we can be of help in your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent request for proof that Jesus was born in the autumn, not on December 25.

There is much evidence available. Of course, no one knows the exact date of Christ's birth. It appears that God does not want people to celebrate that event.

One clue to the season of Christ's birth is found in Luke 2:8. The sheep were still in the fields at night. In those days, winters were more severe in Palestine, with frequent snowfall. Flocks were kept in shelters from about mid-October to mid-March. For details, see the note on Luke 2:8 in Clarke's Commentary.

Another clue is the fact that John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26-27, 36). We know that John was conceived about mid-June and was therefore born in late March because John's father, Zacharias, was serving in the temple during the priestly course of Abia when the angel appeared to him (Luke 1:5). Thus, Jesus' birth must have occurred in early autumn.

Additional evidence is the fact that Jerusalem and the surrounding towns were very crowded with visitors at the time Jesus was born--His parents had to take accommodations in a stable. People filled Jerusalem at the time of the annual Holy Days. The autumn festivals occur in the seventh month of the sacred year (see Leviticus 23), corresponding to our September-October. This was also the time of year when taxes were collected (Luke 2:1-5). We find in Luke 2:41 and John 7:1-10 that it was the custom for Jesus' parents to travel to Jerusalem for the annual Holy Days.

So, we see that there are a number of convincing proofs that Jesus was born in the early autumn, not in the dead of winter when the pagans celebrated the "birth" of their sun god!

Whenever we may help further, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning II Chronicles 30. Some have attempted to use this chapter to prove that Ephraim and Manasseh were not taken captive by the Assyrians.

The Passover mentioned in this chapter, however, took place before the general captivity. It is only natural that these two tribes would be there. A brief rehearsal of what happened will make this clearer.

The Temple was restored and cleansed in the first month of the first year of Hezekiah's reign (II Chron. 29:3-36). The Passover was observed in the second month of his first year (II Chron. 30:2). Now let's ask, When did the general captivity of Israel take place? Answer: Years later--not until Hezekiah's sixth year! See II Kings 18:10.

II Chronicles 30:11 might make it appear that the whole tribe of Manasseh humbled itself to God. But, this verse does not say that. We find that only a few humbled themselves. In the King James Version, the word divers is used. Any good English dictionary shows that it means "various." The reference is not to the entire tribe.

Similarly, verse 18 does not show that all of Israel attended the Passover. It merely refers to those who were there. And, they did not remain in Judah, but returned to their own homes (II Chron. 31:1). Remember, again, all of this took place before the captivity.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the meaning of the letters cir. found in the margin of your Bible.

This is an abbreviation of the word circa, which simply means "approximately" or "about." It is used with dates or figures to indicate that they should not be considered exact. This word is also abbreviated as ca. or c. in various types of literature.

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning a copy of the Ten Commandments suitable for hanging in one's home.

At this time, we do not produce that type of poster or plaque.

We suggest that you try to locate a suitable copy through a store which deals in religious books and materials. Most cities and many smaller towns have at least one such shop.

If you do not have a copy of our booklet titled THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, we would be happy to send you a copy free upon your request. Each of these basic precepts of God's spiritual law is thoroughly expounded.

Thank you for your interest. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning the Bilderbergers and the Trilateralists, who are said to be manipulating world economics and politics to increase their own wealth and power.

There are many such conspiracy theories. They allege that the bankers or the Jews or the CFR or the Trilateral Commission or the Illuminati or the Bilderbergers or The Order--or any of a number of other groups--are conspiring to take over the world.

We have examined the various conspiracy theories and have found them to be flawed and misleading. We do not believe a person will benefit from studying deeply into such conspiracy writings or theories. These theories contradict both Bible prophecy and historical facts. They appear to be the devices of Satan. By offering supposed "hidden" knowledge, people are led away from God's truth.

Indeed, "power centers" do exist within business and political organizations which have a strong opinion-shaping influence. Nevertheless, concrete PROOF that a secret conspiracy exists is lacking. Those who teach such theories take the discoverable facts and weave into them a set of alleged motives.

Biblical prophecies clearly indict ALL SEGMENTS OF OUR SOCIETY--the common people as well as the leaders, whether political or religious--as being responsible for our national woes, sicknesses, and immorality. The only great master power behind it all is the diabolical deceiver, Satan the devil--whose goal it is to thwart the plan of God.

The Bible, however, clearly reveals that Satan will NOT succeed and that God is in complete control of the outcome of world events. You can find out what the outcome will be by reading our booklet WORLD PEACE--HOW IT WILL COME. A more

detailed account is available in our free book THE WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW--WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE. We would be happy to send either one or both of these to you upon your request.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance in your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry concerning exercising one's legal rights.

Although the Bible mentions court action, it does so mostly in a negative light. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for going to court to settle differences between brethren (I Cor. 6:1-6).

Disputes involving those who are not members of God's Church, of course, must be settled elsewhere. In the world, that is usually in a court of law. Romans 13 shows that God has allowed the governments of this world to maintain law and order and to punish crime. Matters involving the laws of this world, therefore, can be settled in the world's courts. It is not wrong to use the protection of the law.

Even so, Jesus gave us some words of wisdom concerning lawsuits. For example, if we have wronged someone or have caused someone to be injured, we are advised to settle the issue fairly before we get dragged into court and a judgment is rendered against us (Matt. 5:25-26). Obviously, if we cannot settle a matter and a suit results, we must defend ourselves legally. If the final judgment is against us, we are counseled not only to pay the penalty, but to do so in a nonbegrudging manner (Matt. 5:40). We must not have a hard-bitten, quarrelsome attitude of resistance and griping, as is common in this world. Rather, we are commanded to guide our lives by the law of love.

Most of the time, a person who applies the teachings of the Bible will be able to settle any differences without going to court. God looks on our hearts and is concerned with the attitude we have in these matters--whether of love toward others or of selfishness and concern only for ourselves.

God offers wisdom and guidance to those who seek Him and obey His Commandments (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; Jas. 1:5-7). Certainly, one ought to pray wholeheartedly for God's help in resolving difficulties peaceably. God is able to make

even our enemies to be at peace with us if our ways please Him (Prov. 16:7).

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance to you in your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the hour of Christ's crucifixion.

This can be confusing because of the different methods of reckoning time used by the Jews and by the Romans during that period of history. But, there is no real problem once we have the key.

The Jews began the numbering of the 12 hours of night from sunset; the 12 hours of day were numbered from sunrise. The Romans began their count from midnight and again from noon, the way we commonly do today. Of the four gospel accounts, only the book of John uses the Roman reckoning.

In modern terms, Jesus was crucified about 9 a.m. To the Romans this was nine hours from midnight. To the Jews it was three hours from sunrise, hence it is called the "third hour" in Mark 15:25. Darkness covered the land at about 12 noon (to the Romans, 12 hours from midnight; to the Jews, six hours from sunrise, Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44; Matt. 27:45). The darkness lasted until 3 p.m. (three hours from noon in Roman reckoning; nine hours from sunrise to the Jews).

John 19:14 also mentions the "sixth hour." This is the Roman reckoning and here refers to the time around sunrise. This, of course, was about three hours before the crucifixion.

So, there is no contradiction. Each gospel account adds to the others when we understand how they were written. Please see Isaiah 28:9-13.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance in your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27.

Notice the following quotation from Halley's Bible Handbook:

"The Captivity, which was then drawing to a close, had lasted 70 years. Daniel is here told by the angel that it would yet be '70 weeks' till the coming of the Messiah [see verse 24].

"The '70 weeks' is generally understood to mean 70 weeks of years, that is, 70 sevens of years, or seven times 70 years, that is 490 years. As if the angel were saying, The Captivity has been 70 years; the period between the Captivity and the Coming of the Messiah will be seven times that long.

"Seven, and cycles of seven, sometimes have symbolic meanings; yet the actual facts of this prophecy are most amazing, as follows:

"The date from which the 70 weeks was to be counted was the decree to re-build Jerusalem [see verse 25]. There were three decrees issued by Persian kings for this purpose The principal one of these was 457 B C [the one given by Artaxerxes].

"The 70 weeks is subdivided into 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week [see verses 25 and 27]. It is difficult to see the application of the '7 weeks'; but the 69 weeks (including the 7) equal 483 days, that is, on the year-day theory, Ezek 4:6, which is the commonly accepted interpretation, 483 years.

"This 483 years is the period between the decree to re-build Jerusalem and the coming of the 'Anointed One,' [see verse 25]. The decree to re-build Jerusalem, as noted

above, was 457 B C. Adding 483 years to 457 B C brings us to 26 A D, the very year that Jesus was baptized and began his public ministry. A most remarkable fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, even to the year.

"Further, within 3 1/2 years Jesus was crucified, that is, 'in the midst of the one week' 'the Anointed One' was 'cut off,' 'purged away sin and brought in everlasting righteousness,' [see verses 24, 26, and 27]."

We must make one slight correction in Mr. Halley's figures. His overall calculations are correct, but he did not account for the one year which is gained in making the transition from B.C. to A.D. dates. Because there is no year 0, one year is gained and must be added to the A.D. date. It was A.D. 27 when Jesus was baptized and began His ministry--not A.D. 26.

The following statement is found in our booklet THE RESURRECTION WAS NOT ON SUNDAY: "It is significant that in Daniel's prophecy of the 'seventy weeks' (Dan. 9:24-27), Jesus was to be cut off 'in the midst of the week.' While this prophecy has the application of a day for a year, so that this 70th week became a literal seven years, Christ being 'cut off' after three-and-a-half years' ministry, as He was, yet it is significant that He was also 'cut off' on the middle day [Wednesday] of a literal week" (page 10).

We hope you will let us know whenever we can be of additional assistance in your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry about Deuteronomy 33 and why Moses did not pronounce a blessing on the tribe of Simeon when he blessed the other tribes.

A possible reason is that Jacob (Israel) had long before excluded Simeon and Levi from a direct inheritance because of their tendency to cruelty. Notice Jacob's pronouncement:

"Simeon and Levi are brethren [a pair, Moffatt version]; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations [Hebrew: weapons of violence their kinship]. . . . Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel [a clear reference to the incident recorded in Genesis 34:25-29]: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Gen. 49:5-7).

This was fulfilled by the intermingling of the Simeonites in the inheritance of Judah (Josh. 19:1) and by the dispersion of the tribe of Levi among the other tribes (Josh. 14:3-4).

Of course, we should realize that Simeon was not cursed. It was simply a matter of not being qualified to receive a separate blessing like the other tribes.

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning a Christian man wearing an earring.

The Bible does not speak directly about the matter of men wearing earrings. However, we find guidelines in God's Word to follow in such matters. For example, we read where the apostle Paul says that even nature (common sense) should teach us that "if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him" (I Cor. 11:14). When considered in context, it is obvious that Paul was saying it is shameful for a man to look like a woman.

This, then, is a basic guideline. Men and boys should appear obviously masculine and not easily mistaken as feminine. Or, said another way, men and boys should not look like women and girls.

Another point to remember is that a Christian attitude should be one of modesty, humility, and service to God and neighbor. Making a male look like a female or vice versa, or going to extremes--being motivated by personal vanity--is condemned. Our character, rather than our outward appearance, should be the outstanding and memorable quality about us.

In the case of men wearing earrings, there are several things to consider. In keeping with the culture and customs of this nation--and Western culture in general--men and boys who wear earrings on an everyday basis have been looked upon as unmanly, abnormal, or rebellious. This, of course, varies depending on regional customs, setting, and circumstances.

According to the Word of God, however, a Christian is not to appear strange or outlandish, either in his actions or attire. The Bible does not encourage us to call undue attention to ourselves, and it certainly speaks against rebellion (see Romans 1:28-32 and II Corinthians 12:20). Instead, we are to avoid "all appearance of evil" (I Thess. 5:22). Even the women, who normally dress more fashionably than men, are admonished in God's Word to dress modestly (I Tim. 2:9; I Pet. 3:3-5).

A Christian is further exhorted to live at peace with his neighbors as much as possible (Rom. 12:18) and to be a light (Matt. 5:13-16). In short, God wants us to be good citizens and to set a clean and wholesome example of modesty and right behavior based on His law. Therefore, we ought to consider how our appearance will affect our relationship with others.

It should be added that we are not referring to men who wear earrings in those cultures where it is customary and acceptable. Some societies have longtime traditions which make it quite normal for them.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning the use of slang expressions such as "gosh" and "gee."

Such words are known as euphemisms. According to the Random House Dictionary of the English Language, a euphemism is "the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be offensively harsh or blunt."

Many common expressions such as "gosh" and "gee" are used as substitutes for the names of God the Father and Jesus Christ. They are thinly disguised expressions of strong profanity and are actually blasphemous.

God's instruction is to "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29). This certainly applies to any careless speaking or using slang expressions or euphemisms which would profane God's name.

We are not able to provide a list of euphemisms and their derivations. For that type of information, we suggest going to your local library. The librarian should be able to help you locate a dictionary of slang expressions which will state plainly what a euphemism is really saying.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning the Common Market in Europe.

At present the EC or European Community, as it is usually called, is made up of 12 member nations: Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and West Germany.

We hope you will continue to look for articles about the political union of Europe and the prophesied revival of the Holy Roman Empire in future issues of The PLAIN TRUTH magazine. Developments in Europe are covered regularly.

Please let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning the subject of "mercy killing."

There has been a great deal of controversy about this practice. Euthanasia, as it is called in medical circles, according to the Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia, is defined as "easy or painless death brought on to end a lingering, hopeless, painful disease."

Few, it seems, look to the Bible to see what God says. When we do, we find that from the beginning God intended that each human being live out a productive and fulfilling life in preparation for eternal life with Him in His Kingdom. We also find that the giving and taking of life is a prerogative which belongs only to God, the Giver of life (Ps. 36:9; John 6:35).

While God has authorized man's governments to end the lives of those who have committed murder and the like (see Romans 13), there is no support in Scripture for ending the life of an innocent person simply because of sickness, old age, or disease. In fact, God's Word shows that the weak are to be cared for, not murdered. See I Thessalonians 5:14.

On the other hand, the idea that heroic measures must be taken to keep a terminally ill person alive as long as possible is not biblical either. There is no sense prolonging a person's dying. Many righteous people in the Bible knew when they were dying, got their affairs in order, gathered their families to say good-bye, and simply died. It is not wrong to ask God in His mercy to allow a suffering person to peacefully die.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You mentioned your concern over the question of beginning a pregnancy in view of the sobering and frightening state of affairs in the world today.

Certainly, in the light of present world conditions, every parent or potential parent has cause for concern. Bible prophecies indicate that the end of this age is near. Jesus did warn that the Great Tribulation would be more difficult for those who have very young children (Matt. 24:19). Little children require a lot of care, and parents are naturally more anxious for their welfare in difficult times.

While the time may be approaching soon when it will be inadvisable to plan for more children, the Church has in no way urged people to forego this joy. Many brethren are still planning to start or increase their families. We simply encourage all members to consider the times in which we are living and prepare to cope with the difficulties which lie ahead. At some point, many couples will undoubtedly decide for themselves that it is time to limit additions to their families.

Whenever we can be of additional assistance, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the command not to "seethe a kid [young goat] in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19). This command is also found in Exodus 34:26 and Deuteronomy 14:21.

The setting of each of these verses is the proper observance of God's Holy Days. God did not want His people borrowing customs from the pagans to use in worshipping Him (Deuteronomy 12:28-32).

According to Peake's Commentary, the pagans practiced a fertility rite which involved boiling a young goat in the milk of its mother and sprinkling the broth on their fields and gardens. They believed that doing so was a magic charm which would insure and increase the yield of their crops. God warned Israel not to pollute His Holy Days by following this pagan custom.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the strange sights described in the first and tenth chapters of the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was among the Jewish captives by the river Chebar in Babylon. There he was given "visions of God" (Ezek. 1:1).

Ezekiel saw a great whirlwind (verse 4) in the midst of which were four angelic creatures (verse 5) carrying a platform which looked like glass or crystal (verse 22). On that expanse of beautiful, crystalline material (which was probably gold so fine it was transparent, Rev. 21:21) was a throne! (verse 26).

Ezekiel saw God seated on the throne. He described God's glory this way: "I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. . . . This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel 1:26-28; also see Revelation 1:13-16). These verses clearly reveal that what Ezekiel saw was the throne of God.

What about the cherubim and the wheels under the throne? Their function is to transport God wherever He wishes to go (Ezek. 1:24-25). The Bible shows elsewhere that God does not always remain in His heaven, but has at times come down to the earth (Ps. 18:10; Ezek. 10:1-22). When He comes in all His glory, He comes sitting on His throne, and the angelic creatures under the throne carry Him about at lightning speed (Ezek. 1:13).

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry. You asked about participating in games of chance.

The many questions which we receive on this subject might best be expressed in the following general question: "Are all forms of gambling or games of chance sin?"

The Bible defines sin as the transgression of God's spiritual law--the Ten Commandments (I John 3:4). One of these commandments is that we must not covet (Ex. 20:17). Therefore, any activity that is based upon covetousness is sin.

Jesus explained that the second greatest commandment is that we are to love our neighbor as ourself (Matt. 22:39). This cannot be done when we are competing in a coveting attitude for another man's possessions. A Christian should not desire to increase his own wealth by depriving someone else. When the attitude of greed is present, the activity is wrong regardless of the value of the wager. The Bible says that those who have this attitude will not inherit the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:10; Eph. 5:3-5), and I Timothy 6:9-10 warns against falling into the trap of lusting after riches.

Cards, dice, games of chance, and the like, are not inherently wrong. God's Church has long understood that it is not the thing that is wrong, but the wrong use of the thing that results in sin. For example, a card game or bingo game played for fun is not wrong even if poker chips, peanuts, or other items are used. In such cases, coveting is not involved. Thus, every such activity should be viewed from the standpoint of this principle: When an activity causes us to break one of God's Ten Commandments, it is a sin.

It is, of course, not our intent to try to spell out or address every possible kind of activity which may involve putting up something of value for the chance of winning

a reward. We should simply keep in mind the scriptural principles mentioned previously when making our decisions.

God holds each of us responsible for how we live. If we are truly yielded to Him and are seeking His Kingdom and righteousness first as Jesus instructed, God will give us the wisdom to make the correct choices in our lives.

We appreciate your question and hope you find this letter helpful. Please let us know whenever we can be of any further assistance to you in your study of God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning bankruptcy.

God's laws regarding debtors and creditors are found in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15. God's Word shows that if a man becomes poor or unable to cope with his financial obligations, others were to help him get back on his feet (Lev. 25:35-38). They were to lend him "sufficient for his need" (Deut. 15:8). It is good to note that one's need may differ substantially from his wants. If a man were unable to pay off his debts before the seventh year RELEASE came, his creditors were to nullify the debt at that time; that is, they were to cancel it completely. Debts and financial obligations were released every seventh year (Deut. 15:1-3). This was God's method of dealing with bankruptcy in His nation.

A person should pay his debts if at all possible. Often an extension of time can be arranged if one is acting in good faith. Creditors will usually be understanding if they are properly approached. However, there are cases in which people, due to unforeseen circumstances, have gotten themselves into such overwhelming debt that their bills greatly exceed their ability to pay. In such cases, it might be wise to declare bankruptcy. If a person finds it necessary to do so, he could consult an attorney who is familiar with bankruptcy procedure. Such an attorney would be able to help work out the best arrangements for proper settlement for all concerned.

Declaring bankruptcy should not be taken lightly. It is a very serious matter. One should always do his best to pay off his debts rather than declare bankruptcy. He should take that step only if circumstances necessitate such action.

You may wish to request our three booklets which explain the seven laws of success, God's revelation about financial laws, and how to get out from under debt. Their titles are: THE SEVEN LAWS OF SUCCESS, ENDING YOUR FINANCIAL WORRIES, and MANAGING YOUR PERSONAL FINANCES. There is no charge or obligation, of course.

If a person faithfully applies the principles outlined in this literature, he need not fear falling into a bankrupt condition. Even though a person may seem hopelessly bogged down in debt today, he can become prosperous in the future. If an individual takes God as his partner and really yields to and obeys Him, God will see that he is blessed accordingly (Deut. 8:18). God has not promised that His children will not have problems and trials--but He has promised to supply all their needs if they seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about commercially-produced gelatin products.

We understand that the manufacturers of gelatin desserts, including the makers of JELL-O and Royal, get their gelatin from clean and unclean animals. Among the letters we have on file is one from General Foods Kitchens. In part, they wrote, "The gelatin used in JELL-O gelatin is extracted from the skins of food animals--beef, calf and pork."

Since these desserts might contain either beef or pork gelatin, each person must decide whether to include them in his or her diet. An orthodox rabbi has certified JELL-O gelatin as kosher. This is because many authorities believe that during the manufacture of gelatin the composition of the original material changes so much that its source becomes unidentifiable. Also, the U.S. Federal Food and Drug Administration does not consider gelatin to be a meat product.

Nevertheless, the Bible tells us never to eat or drink or do anything that defiles our conscience (Rom. 14:23). If someone believes that eating gelatin that manufacturers might have derived partly from swine skins is wrong, then he or she should not eat it. Those who believe that eating such gelatin is acceptable should not eat it in the company of those who find it offensive (Rom. 14:21 and I Cor. 10:27-29).

Of course, what we eat can affect our health, and it is right to care properly for our bodies. Some people may wish to avoid certain gelatin products because of the artificial dyes and other chemicals they contain.

Whatever a Christian's belief, he or she must not judge those who do not share the same view (Rom. 14:3-4). The apostle Paul explained, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink" (Rom. 14:17). That is, concern over food must never replace the central role of Jesus Christ in the life of a Christian.

For those who desire to make their gelatin desserts rather than buy them ready-made, there are two unflavored gelatin products

on the market. They are Emes Gelatin and Three Star calf gelatin. Also, there are some vegetable-derived gelatin substitutes available. Health food stores usually carry these items.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may help you with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent inquiry.

While we would like to be of service, we have no information available for distribution on the genealogical records you mentioned. Perhaps your local librarian could be of assistance. A book you may find interesting is The Royal House of Britain--An Enduring Dynasty. This book includes a chart of the royal line of David.

A number of years ago, we obtained a copy of that chart from The Covenant Publishing Co. Ltd., 6 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6JP, UNITED KINGDOM. The last time we checked, the price was \$3.00.

We hope you let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Genesis 49:10.

Although several alternative translations for the phrase "until Shiloh come" have been suggested, the one found in the King James Version best fits the Hebrew construction. Until modern times, the majority of both Christian and Jewish scholars translated this passage the same way and also applied it to the Messiah.

The traditional understanding is that Shiloh comes from the root word peace. With this in mind, the passage could be phrased to read, "until the man of peace comes." Please compare this with the last part of Isaiah 9:6.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about Genesis 30:37-43.

This account is somewhat vague in the King James Version because the translators did not fully understand what Jacob did. Verses 41 and 42, however, indicate clearly that Jacob was practicing selective breeding.

Evidently, Jacob built pens or corrals around the watering troughs using rods made by peeling poplar, hazel, and chestnut limbs. Instead of driving the animals together, he just waited until they came to drink and then penned them in. Verse 38 is poorly translated and does not mean Jacob put the rods in the watering troughs.

Jacob separated the weaker males from the breeding flock, leaving the stronger ones to produce offspring. God then miraculously intervened on Jacob's behalf and caused the offspring to have the coloring Laban had promised to Jacob. In other words, Jacob did his part by seeing to it that the stronger males bred the herds and flocks in order to produce strong offspring. God rewarded Jacob by causing the newborn animals to have the proper coloring.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ROYAL GATE

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the identity of Germany in Bible prophecy.

Referring to the Germans in his Classical Dictionary, Smith states, "There can be no doubt that they . . . migrated into Europe from the Caucasus and the countries around the Black and Caspian Seas" (article "Germania," page 361). This, of course, is the area of ancient Mesopotamia.

Then, around 550 B.C., Syllax, writing in his "Periplus," his "Pe about the southern shores of the Black Sea, states, "The coast . . . of the Black Sea . . . is called Assyria." From there the Assyrians moved north. This is brought out by the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder--several centuries later. Herodotus later declared that the "Assyriani" were then (about the time of Christ) dwelling north of the Black Sea (Natural History, IV, 12, p. 183). But the Assyrians did not remain there. They are not there today. They migrated into Central Europe, where the Germans live today.

Further evidence lies in the ancient German tradition claiming that their oldest city, Trier (in Southern Germany), was founded by Trever or Trebeta, a son of Ninus, king of Assyria. Notice what one historian wrote: "The inhabitants of Trier maintain that their city is the oldest in all Europe. . . . Trier was founded by Trebeta, a son of the famous Assyrian King Ninus. In fact, one finds . . . in Trier the inscription reading, 'Trier existed for 1300 years before Rome was rebuilt'" (from In Deutschen Landen, p. 69, Josef K. L. Bihl).

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you with your study of the Bible. We are pleased to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the location of Golgotha.

The most likely site is a rock cliff located just outside the northern wall of the Old City of Jerusalem, to the west of Herod's gate and overlooking the Garden Tomb. This cliff is the highest point of the mountain ridge which extends from the area of the City of David, in the south.

When Abraham was instructed to offer up Isaac, he was told to go to the "land of Moriah" and offer him on "one of the mountains" there (Gen. 22:2). The land of Moriah included the hills of Jerusalem. Solomon later built the Temple on Mount Moriah (II Chron. 3:1). It seems entirely possible, even likely, that this was the same mountain on which Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac. Golgotha was the highest point on that mountain ridge, and, therefore, the most logical place for a sacrifice.

God permitting Christ to be sacrificed for the sins of the world was foreshadowed by Abraham's sacrifice. Apparently, the two events took place at the same location!

By the time of the Romans, a major highway between Jerusalem and Damascus existed near this area. Many people passed by this spot daily in their travels to and from the city. Typically, the Romans crucified criminals in conspicuous places as examples to others.

Although many people believe that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built on the site of the crucifixion, there is more reason to accept the hill above the Garden Tomb as the biblical Golgotha, "the place of a skull" (Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17).

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD - CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Jonah 1:17.

The original Hebrew wording of Jonah 1:17 is accurately translated in the King James Version as "a great fish." The Old Testament translation produced by the Jewish Publication Society also refers to this creature as "a great fish."

Some controversy arises over the King James translation of Matthew 12:40. This verse says Jonah was "in the whale's belly." But, this was only an assumption on the part of the translators. The New King James Version correctly renders this phrase as "in the belly of the great fish."

Smith's Bible Dictionary makes the following comments about the word whale: "Probably the fish which swallowed Jonah was some large kind of shark, or fish especially provided." The evidence from the Scriptures supports this conclusion--that it was some kind of large fish, and not a whale, which swallowed Jonah.

If we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (REV.)

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Jewish holiday known as Hanukkah.

Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, is observed in honor of the rededication of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus in the second century B.C. It is an eight-day festival in which candles are lit, one on the first evening, two on the second, and so on until eight are lit on the last evening, symbolizing that the light of faith is certain to grow.

Jesus, a Jew by human birth, was present at the Festival of Dedication (John 10:22). We learn from Christ's example that it is not wrong to acknowledge certain national holidays, as long as they are not derived from paganism and do not violate God's law. Thanksgiving, an American holiday, is an example.

Modern Hanukkah observances are similar to Christmas celebrations. Many Jews, especially in the United States and Canada, have adopted Christmas customs and attached them to the celebration of Hanukkah.

Our free booklet PAGAN HOLIDAYS--OR GOD'S HOLY DAYS--WHICH? explains in detail the God-ordained Holy Days that picture God's awesome plan, and which true Christians are commanded to observe. We will be happy to send a copy of this booklet to you upon your request.

The reference to God as the "Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17) has no connection with the observance of Hanukkah.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question regarding vaccinations or immunizations.

This subject has been a concern of many. However, neither the Bible nor the Worldwide Church of God teach that immunization is a sin. In fact, the Church as a spiritual Body neither approves nor disapproves any of the many medical procedures extant today.

On the other hand, the Bible does teach us to be subject to civil authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-15), many of whom require certain immunizations. For some people, however, being immunized may be a violation of conscience.

The apostle Paul explained this principle this way: "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:21-23, NKJ).

So, while the Worldwide Church of God teaches that being immunized is a medical matter and is not sin, it also does not judge those who, because of conscience or personal choice, choose not to be immunized. In either case, it must be a personal decision made by the individual.

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD, INC. CH. OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning whether or not eating rare meat is a violation of God's prohibition against eating blood.

The command in Leviticus 17:10-11 prohibits eating blood as such; it does not refer to the juices which remain in the meat. If the animal is allowed to bleed freely at the time it is butchered, God's requirement has been fulfilled, and we may eat the meat without misgivings. We need not be concerned about any other juice, whether reddish colored or black, which remains in the meat.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the ultimate fate of Satan the devil.

Satan and his demons are spirit beings, created with inherent immortality (see Luke 20:36). They cannot die.

Paul wrote that Jesus Christ would "destroy" the devil through His sacrifice (Heb. 2:14). Paul, however, was not saying that Christ will kill Satan or completely blot him out of existence. According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, the word "destroy" can also mean "neutralize" or "make subject to a crushing defeat." The original Greek word, katargeo, translated as "destroy" in this verse, means "to render inactive" or "idle." Notice I John 3:8: "For John 3:8: this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the WORKS of the devil."

Revelation 20:10 reveals that God will condemn Satan to the lake of fire after the Millennium. Notice that this verse does not say that Satan will remain there forever. It says only that his torment will last forever. The lake of fire will end when the new heavens and new earth are established (Rev. 21:1). But, the punishing of Satan and his demons will continue through eternity.

The Bible gives us only a clue as to the nature of Satan's punishment. Jude describes some as being "wandering stars [stars are symbols of angels], to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (verse 13). Apparently, God will banish Satan and his demons from the universe. They will never again associate with or influence the glorified inhabitants of God's realm.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD/JRCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning hypnotism.

Hypnotism is the inducement of a sleeplike state during which an individual remains responsive to outside suggestion. In other words, a person under hypnosis temporarily loses full control over his thought processes and his actions.

Christians ought never to be involved in any such practices! The Bible says, "Gird up the loins of your mind" (I Pet. 1:13). We are to control our every thought so that no thought it is in obedience to Jesus Christ (see II Corinthians 10:5). This would be impossible to do in a trancelike condition during which one's mind can be manipulated by outside suggestion.

Rather than purposely allowing our minds to become blank and giving control to others, we are told to fill our minds with those things that are true, honest, pure, lovely, and of good report (see Philippians 4:8). God gives His people the spirit of a sound mind (II Tim. 1:7).

You may wish to request our booklets WHAT SCIENCE CAN'T DISCOVER ABOUT THE HUMAN MIND and HUMAN NATURE--DID GOD CREATE IT? They explain why it is so vitally important that we remain vigilant in controlling our every thought, emotion, and attitude. We would be happy to send either one or both of these important booklets to you free upon your request.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD OR CH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the casting of lots.

God gave ancient Israel the system of casting lots as a means of determining His will in doubtful matters (Num. 33:54; I Sam. 14:42; I Chron. 24:5). God would guide the outcome so as to reveal His will. This method was still in use in the time of Christ. The disciples used casting lots in determining whom God was selecting to fill the office vacated by Judas (Acts 1:15-26).

After the eventful Pentecost of A.D. 31, no further mention is made of casting lots. The apostles depended upon direct guidance by the Holy Spirit, which, among other things, was to guide God's people into all truth (Acts 2 and John 16:13). Please also notice Acts 6:1-8; 13:1-3; 15:19, 28; and 16:6.

Today, as in early New Testament times, God uses the power of His Holy Spirit through His chosen ministers to reveal His will in important matters of concern to the Church on which the Scriptures give no definite command.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD / CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

PHONE 941-1111

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry as to whether Jephthah kept his vow and sacrificed his daughter.

The earliest Christian and Jewish commentators accepted the account of Judges 11 at face value. They believed, as some scholars still do today, that Jephthah carried out his vow and killed his daughter. The medieval Jewish commentator David Kimchi was apparently the first to put forth the idea that Jephthah simply kept her a perpetual virgin. Many modern writers agree with his theory. They cannot believe that one of God's servants could have killed his daughter. But, putting the opinions of men aside, what does the Bible say? ~~the Bible says~~

The Hebrew of Judges 11 indicates that Jephthah did not indeed keep his vow and sacrifice his daughter. But, would God have required him to do that? Was God pleased with his action? Absolutely not! The Bible reveals that human sacrifice is abhorrent to God: "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart" (Jer. 7:31). Please also see Jeremiah 32:35. Human sacrifice is totally contrary to God's will.

Of course, Jephthah did not make his vow with his daughter in mind. In Judges 11:31, we read that he said, "Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me . . . I will offer it up for a burnt offering." It was common at that time for houses to have enclosed courtyards where animals were kept. Jephthah incorrectly assumed that the first creature to meet him upon his return from battle would be an animal.

Jephthah made a very rash and foolish vow. He further compounded his error by keeping his vow (Judg. 11:39). That, no doubt, was greatly displeasing to God. Nevertheless, Jephthah is mentioned among the faithful listed in Hebrews 11.

(see verse 32). This leads us to conclude that--like other servants of God--he ultimately realized the error of his own ways, repented, and received God's forgiveness.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether or not the Jews are God's chosen people.

The Bible makes it clear that God chose Israel--not just Judah--to be His nation (Deut. 7:6). He made a covenant with them when He brought them out of bondage in Egypt. See chapters 9 through 24 of Exodus. Israel was to be an example to all nations of the blessings brought by obedience to the laws of God. They were His chosen people--not His favorite. For His God has no favorites (Acts 10:34).

Yet, Israel failed. They rebelled constantly and constantly sinned. They split into two nations--the house of Israel and the house of Judah. God sent Israel into Assyrian captivity about 720 B.C. They became lost in history. He later sent Judah into Babylonian captivity, starting about 604 B.C. Their territory was occupied and the people transplanted en masse to Babylon in 587 B.C.

Seventy years later Judah began to return, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple was begun. However, the Jews again misapplied God's commandments. They added many of their own laws under the influence of the Pharisees (Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13).

Jesus said the Kingdom would be taken from them and given to others--to spiritual Israel, that is, to the Church (Matt. 21:43). The Church now comprises God's chosen people (I Pet. 2:9). All who are converted are reckoned to be children of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). The Church is to marry Christ as His chosen bride at His return from heaven in this generation (Rev. 19:7-9).

Nonetheless, God has not given up on national Israel! Prophecies in Hosea 2, Ezekiel 36, and Zechariah 12-14 show that the people of Judah and Israel will repent and reunite and again become God's people. They will be the leading nation in the world tomorrow (Zech. 8). Of course, the Church will then be immortal and under Christ will rule the physical nations (Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).

In summary, Israel, that is, the house of Israel and the house of Judah united, will again be God's chosen nation. In the world tomorrow they will fulfill the job God called them to do 3500 years ago.

We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning John 3:5.

Jesus here spoke of a literal birth--the entrance into the Family of God as a spirit being, and the process by which one attains that goal. Both water and God's Spirit are involved.

What does the Bible say about being "born of water"? The apostle Peter explained that upon repentance one should be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism pictures the washing away of past sins and the burial of the old self (Rom. 6). In addition, Ephesians 5:26-27 and John 15:3 show that Jesus Christ is sanctifying and cleansing His Church with the "washing of water by the word [the Bible]". Why? So He might present it to Himself as a Church without any spiritual blemishes.

The crowning glory of each person's life will be his resurrection. Then the saints will be changed from mortal to immortal to become children of God (see I Corinthians 15:51-54).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RUP OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent request for an explanation of John 10:30.

Jesus here revealed that there is one Godhead, or one God Family, and that its members work together with one mind and purpose.

That Family, however, is presently comprised of two individuals, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is clearly stated in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The "Word" or "Spokesman" was the One who later became Jesus Christ (see verse 14).

Hebrews 1 also shows conclusively that Christ was and is now God: "God . . . Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:1-3). God says of Christ, "Let all the angels of God worship him" (verse 6). Only a member of the God Family is worthy of worship.

But, the God Family is not limited to God the Father and Jesus Christ: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Hebrews 2:7-8 shows that man, like Christ, was made for a while "a little lower than the angels," but that he is to be crowned "with glory and honour." Everything will be put "in subjection under his feet," but "now we see not yet all things put under him" because the resurrection to immortality has yet to occur.

The Family of God, then, will eventually be expanded to include all who choose God's way. Christians "now are . . . the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). Paul adds, "This mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53). This

plainly says that resurrected Christians, like Christ, will be immortal. When we are changed, our mortal bodies will become spirit bodies like His (Phil. 3:20-21).

The Father and Christ are one--one united, holy Family. At the resurrection, we will be become one with them.

If we can be of further assistance, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD BROTHERHOOD OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning I John 5:16-17.

This passage reads: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he [God] shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."

Broadly speaking, there are two types of sin. The first is that which is "not unto death." This is any sin which is forgiven upon repentance. James, writing of the effectiveness of prayer, explains that "if any of you do err from the truth, and ye shall one convert him [cause him to repent]; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:17-20).

The second type of sin which John referred to is a "sin unto death." John tells us not to pray on behalf of someone who has committed this kind of sin, because there is no repentance, and this sin cannot be forgiven. This is the unpardonable sin. For a complete explanation, you may wish to request a copy of our free article titled "What Do You Mean--'The Unpardonable Sin'?"

If we can be of further assistance, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ACH OF GODS

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Star of David.

Contrary to what some think, the Star of David or, in the Hebrew, Magen David (literally, "Shield of David") does not have its roots in paganism. Although it was adopted in the Middle Ages as a magical symbol, it was originally a purely decorative geometric design exclusive to no particular culture or religion.

Nonetheless, since it has now come to be associated with the modern nation of Israel and/or Judaism, one should exercise discretion in wearing this symbol. In other words, it is a national emblem which can identify the wearer with the nation of Israel, Judaism, or both.

For further information and background, we suggest seeing The Jewish Almanac. You could probably locate a copy in your local library.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (I.C.C.)

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning eating animal fat and kidneys.

The Bible specifically prohibits eating animal fat (Lev. 3:17 and 7:23). In addition, the Levitical priesthood was instructed to remove the two kidneys and "the caul above the liver" and burn them upon the altar along with the fat (Ex. 29:13; Lev. 3:3-5, 9-11).

The New King James Version translates the "caul above the liver" as the "fatty lobe attached to the liver above the kidneys" (Lev. 3:4). The "caul" of an animal is defined in Unger's Bible Dictionary as the "liver-net, or stomach-net, which commences at the division between the right and left lobes of the liver, and stretches on the one side across the stomach, and on the other to the regions of the kidney." In other words, the "caul" is the fatty membrane surrounding the liver and the kidneys.

Since the priests never ate the fatty membrane or the two kidneys, the indication is that we would also do well to not eat those parts.

If we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ROY OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning I Kings 17:21, where it is recorded that Elijah prayed for God to "let this child's soul come into him again."

The word soul in this verse is translated from the Hebrew word nephesh. According to Bagster's Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, the word nephesh means "breath" or "anything that breathes."

Man is a living, breathing creature--a nephesh--whose nostrils is the breath of life. Elijah asked God to restore this "breath of life" to the child who had died.

For a complete explanation of what the Bible teaches about the soul, may we suggest that you ask for our booklet WHAT IS MAN? We would be happy to send you a copy free upon your request.

It is our pleasure to serve you. Please let us know when we may help you again with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ROYAL OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning II Kings 16:2 and 18:2.

Although these verses seem to indicate that Ahaz was only 11 years old when his son Hezekiah was born, they really tell us something else. Using these verses and secular history, we can notice what was really recorded here.

During that period it was common for the kings of Judah to assume their sons into partnership in the government. An example of this is Jotham, the father of Ahaz.

In II Kings 15:33 we read that Jotham reigned 16 years in Jerusalem. We know from other historical sources that Jotham's sole reign ended in 735 B.C. He then reigned jointly with his only son Ahaz for an additional four years.

In verse 2 of chapter 16 we read that Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign. We understand, however, that this is referring to his age at the beginning of his four-year joint reign with his father, Jotham (735 B.C.). Ahaz began his sole reign in 731 B.C. His rule ended 16 years later, in 715 B.C.

Ahaz was about 40 years old when he died. He was probably 15 years old when Hezekiah was born. Fathering a child at such a tender age would not have been unprecedented in the life of a young prince of Judah.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (CHURCH OF GOD)

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the availability of our literature in a language other than English.

At the present time, The PLAIN TRUTH magazine is available in French, Norwegian, Dutch, German, Spanish, and Italian. If one of these would be of more help to you than the English version, please feel welcome to request that edition. Many of our other publications are also available in these languages.

We are happy to provide The PLAIN TRUTH free of charge to all who wish to receive it. We ask, however, that requests be limited to a subscription in just one language.

An exception can be made where more than one language is regularly spoken in the home. If this is your situation, please let us know.

Thank you for your interest. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning nonfood products that contain leaven.

As you know, during the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are to have no leaven or leavened products in our homes (Ex. 12:15; 13:7). This includes any agent that produces fermentation and causes dough to rise--yeast, baking soda, baking powder, and the like. Items such as bread, cake, crackers, cookies, and prepared cereals and pies which contain leavening, of course, must be put out. Doing so is symbolic of putting both the visible and the hidden sins out of our lives.

It is true, however, that leavening agents are also found in a number of products other than baked goods. Among these are beer, wine, and antacids, and some medicines, bath powders, toothpastes, and dog foods. Even fire extinguishers contain forms of leavening agents. But, all these need not be discarded.

For any use of leaven other than that of causing dough to rise, it is a matter of personal conscience between the individual Christian and God as to whether the product should be thrown out. If having any of these or similar products in your home during the Days of Unleavened Bread defiles your conscience, it would be best to get rid of them during the Festival (Rom. 14:23).

We hope you will let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD IRCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about Leviticus 19:23-25.

This passage concerns a principle in the care of our fruit trees that still applies today. As these verses show, we should not use any of the fruit which is produced during the first three years of the tree's growth. This allows the tree to become established. Often very little or no fruit would be borne at this young age anyway. These three years pertain to the age of the tree itself--from the time it came up, or was rooted--not to the number of years it has borne fruit.

In the fourth year--after the tree has grown for three years--the fruit is to be used in praising God. In ancient Israel such fruit, as well as any tithe, was given to the priests and Levites for their personal use. Today, we praise God with the fruit by giving it to one of God's ministers or by sending an offering equivalent to its wholesale value to the Church.

In the fifth and following years the fruit produced belongs to the individual (verse 25). Of course, we should not forget to tithe on the increase from our fruit trees during this fifth year and onward.

This law concerns only those trees that bear fruit and does not apply to shrubs, bushes, grapevines, or olive trees. These types of plants, having a production cycle different from that of fruit trees, are classified in the Bible with field crops. This is shown in the law of gleaning (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22) and in the law of letting the land rest (Lev. 25:3-5; Ex. 23:10-11). A clear distinction is made between these two types of produce.

God promises to bless the increase of our trees--make them more productive--if we obey this command. With this and proper care in their management, God will cause fruit trees to provide us with good crops for many years.

Whenever we may be of additional assistance in your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (RCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Jesus telling His disciples to buy swords.

Jesus clearly referred to literal weapons (Luke 22:36). But, was He implying that His disciples should use violence in defending themselves? This would have contradicted His earlier instruction against hurting others (Matt. 5:38-39).

Christ answers this question for us in Luke 22:37. Notice this verse in the Fenton translation: "For I tell you, that which was written must be completed in Me: THAT HE WAS ALSO RANKED AMONG THE OUTLAWS; for indeed, what has indeed been written about Me will have fulfillment: 'Love fulfillment'."

The only reason Christ instructed His disciples to obtain swords was to make sure that the prophecy He quoted from Isaiah would be fulfilled. He was to be reckoned as an outlaw (Isa. 53:12). Christ was not sanctioning the use of such weapons for self-defense or harming others in any way. In fact, when Peter did use a sword, Christ immediately rebuked him for it and healed the man who had been struck (Luke 22:51). Jesus Himself said, "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9:56).

We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD, INC.

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Luke 16:16 and whether or not this means that God's law has been done away since the time of John.

No, that is not what Jesus meant at all. He explains it Himself in the very next verse: "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (verse 17). Have the starry heavens or the planets of the earth passed away? Jesus said it would be easier for them to perish or be destroyed than for even one tiny part of one tiny part of God's law to pass away!

On another occasion, Christ told a young man seeking out the way to eternal life, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep into the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). How clear that God's holy law is still in full force and effect!

What, then, did Jesus mean by the statement, "The law and the prophets were until John?" When Jesus spoke of the "law and the prophets," He was referring to the Old Testament. The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, are known as the "law"; the books of Joshua through Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 minor prophets comprise the "prophets." The third major section of the Old Testament was known as the "writings" or "psalms." Notice Luke 24:27, 44. Jesus meant that, until the coming of John the Baptist, the Old Testament scriptures were all that was available. The New Testament had not yet been written.

John came as a forerunner of Jesus Christ. As the "voice of one crying in the wilderness," he prepared the way before Him (Mark 1:2-8). John thundered to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and all the people of his day, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

John began to proclaim the Gospel, preparing the way for Christ Himself. And what Gospel--good news--did Christ preach? "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

Christ preached the same Gospel as John. This is why He said that from the time of John the Baptist, the Gospel, or good news, of God's coming Kingdom is proclaimed.

Thank you again for your question. We hope you will let us know whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Luke 14:26.

This verse reads: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (NKJ).

At another time, Jesus charged His disciples: "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies" (Luke 6:27). He also said: "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them" (Luke 6:31-32, NKJ). In other words, Jesus clearly commands us not only to love those who love us--which should include our relatives--but also to love our enemies who hate us.

Since the Bible does not contradict itself (John 10:35), what did Jesus mean when He said "hate" in Luke 14:26? The Greek word for "hate" in this verse is misei. Its Greek root can mean "to love less, to postpone in love or esteem, to slight" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament).

What Jesus is saying, then, is that anyone who follows Him must love Him MORE than family or relatives or even his own life. In comparison to the greater love we ought to have for Jesus Christ--the One who died for us, our Savior and Redeemer--the love we have for human relatives must be less. Jesus said that the second great commandment is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:39). But what is the first great commandment? It is: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37-38).

One who has such love for God and His way of life will not compromise principle. He will not put any human relationship before God.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (RCH OF GOD)

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning the Magi mentioned in Matthew 2.

Many people believe that the Magi were astrologers. However, God condemns astrology (Deut. 4:15, 19; 17:2-5; Job 31:14; Isa. 47:13-14). Also, there is no reason to believe that pagan astrologers would want to give honor to the Son of a God they did not worship. Obviously, then, the Magi were not astrologers. But who were they?

The Bible talks of two kinds of magi or magians. Of all the ancient records of magi, the earliest is found in Jeremiah 39:3, 13. The King James Bible has "Rabmag"; the word is left untranslated because the translators did not understand its meaning. Rabmag has been correctly deciphered as "chief magi." These were pagan physicians, priests, and learned men in the company of the Babylonians. The best authorities--ancient and modern--all tell us that magi comes from mag or mog, meaning "priest" or "great one," from the old Persian language of Pahlavi. From these magi descend a long line of evil and perverted priests and sorcerers--from Haman the Agagite (book of Esther) to Bar-jesus or Elymas the sorcerer (magian) of Acts 13.

The other kind of magi are mentioned in Daniel 2:48. Here we read: "Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many gifts, and made him ruler of the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men [magi] of Babylon." One of God's most righteous men was made leader of the Babylonian magi! Since Daniel remained in this position for a long time, this Bible example proves there was at least one righteous magus--Daniel.

Now who were the Magi of Matthew 2? And where did they come from? The Old Testament has two expressions for the East. Anything on the east side or eastern is termed "what is before" (meaning the near east). Anything far to the east, or distant as the rising sun, is termed "rising of the sun" (meaning distant east). So Matthew also uses two Greek expressions for areas east of Palestine. First,

Matthew says the Magi are from "the east" (or "eastern parts"--Greek ton anatolon), or the distant East. Second, the Magi saw the star in "the east" (Greek te anatole)--west of the Magi, but east from Palestine's viewpoint, in the "Near East." (See Upham's Star of the Wise Men.)

One great empire east of the Euphrates--biblically "the distant east"--conquered the lands east of the Euphrates area, had Babylon as its capital, and included the areas of Persia, Bactria, etc. It was the Parthian Empire. It ruled the whole area, and was the empire of the East--the land of the Magi!

The Parthians rose to power around 250 B.C. in and around the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. That was the very land into which the house of Israel--not Judah--was exiled. The exiles in this land were members of the ten tribes of Israel. The Parthian Empire included exiles from the lost ten tribes of Israel--many of whom remained in the land of their captivity until about A.D. 226. Certain of the ancient magi could claim Abraham as their father (see McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia, article "Magi").

Thus, historical and biblical evidence reveals that the Magi of Matthew 2 were not astrologers whose observations of heavenly bodies led them to the Christ Child. Instead, they were representatives of the tribes of Israel in exile who were led to their King by an angel! In the Bible, stars sometimes symbolize angels; see Job 38:7 and Revelation 1:20 for examples.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ROY OF

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Mark 8:22-25. Perhaps you are wondering why Christ did not heal the blind man immediately.

No doubt Christ realized this man's faith needed to be strengthened. He could have healed him with one touch.

But, because the blind man's faith apparently was weak, Jesus did certain physical things (spit on his eyes and laid His hands on him) which were intended to increase the man's faith in His ability to heal. These physical actions seemed more substantial to the blind man than words alone and, therefore, helped his faith. To further increase this faith, Jesus partly healed him. With this physical evidence that his sight was being restored, his faith increased even more. Jesus then healed the man's eyes totally.

Whenever we can assist you with your study of the Bible, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD, ROY OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Mark 8:33 and why Jesus called Peter "Satan."

We should realize that Jesus did not mean that Peter was Satan. Rather, He was rebuking the one who influenced Peter to speak to Him in that manner. He was rebuking Satan the devil. Jesus went to the source and rebuked the one responsible for Peter's contrary attitude (Eph. 2:2). Of course, Peter himself needed to learn a lesson that he must not allow human reason, which can be influenced by Satan, to contend against the will and purpose of God.

Whenever we can assist you with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD CH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Mark 4:11-12.

The popularly held concept is that in His day Jesus tried to save everyone and that He instructed His Church to do the same. It is widely assumed that whenever Jesus spoke in parables He did so to make His teachings more understandable to the multitudes who heard Him.

However, Jesus gave no such reason. When His disciples asked Him about one of His parables, He said, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without [the unconverted masses], all these things are done in parables" (Mark 4:11).

Why? To make what He said easier to comprehend? No, just the opposite! He often used parables so that "seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them" (verse 12).

Often, when He employed parables, Jesus intentionally left the masses in their deception. He spoke in parables to cloud His message, not to make it easily understood. He Himself said so. Certainly, He told His Church to carry His message to all nations, but only as a witness (Matt. 24:14). Nowhere did He say that His true ministers are to try to convert the nations.

"For ye see your calling, brethren," Paul wrote to the Greeks in Corinth, "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (I Cor. 1:26). Simply put, everyone on earth is not now able to come to God to be converted. Jesus declared, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).

The Father of whom Jesus spoke has not been drawing the majority of people. This is obvious from the condition the world is in. Jesus pointed out that the majority of humanity is walking in the way of destruction and that now only a few

are finding the way to eternal life (Matt. 7:13-14).

Although God is not calling every person now, by the time His plan is finished, everyone who has ever lived will have had the opportunity to understand and to accept or reject eternal life.

This is explained in more detail in the booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW? We would be happy to send you a copy free upon your request.

Whenever we can assist you with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning marriage between relatives.

In the beginning, marriages between close relatives were permitted. It is clear that the sons of Adam married their sisters with God's approval. At that time, people had a stronger genetic makeup, and marriage among close relatives did not adversely affect the children. It appears that even up to the time of Moses, marriage to a half sister or an aunt was permissible (Gen. 20:12; Ex. 6:20).

When God gave the civil laws to Moses for Israel as a nation, marriage between those who were closely related was forbidden (Lev. 18 and 20). This law was given to prevent degeneration. Today, marriage between first cousins, for example, is forbidden by law in most states in the United States. Marriage of closely related persons risks producing mentally or physically handicapped children.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (JRH) OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether or not God's Word requires a legally recognized marriage ceremony.

We should first understand that God regards marriage as a holy union in which a man and a woman are joined together for life as "one flesh" by a sacred vow (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). They are no longer separate, but are united and committed to walking through life together rather than independently. Therefore, it is right to formalize the union of a man and a woman in marriage by a wedding ceremony.

After instructing the first man and woman, God Himself joined Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The ministers of the Worldwide Church of God follow this example. They remind each couple of their responsibilities as taught in the Holy Scriptures before asking God to join them as husband and wife (see Ephesians 5:21-32 and I Peter 3:1-7, for example). Marriages performed by other legally authorized officials are also recognized by God.

Jesus performed His first public miracle at a formal wedding (John 2). By that wedding, a public statement or announcement was made, and all the community celebrated the couple's coming together in an honorable way.

Jesus also spoke of a great, formal wedding to take place at His return when, symbolically, He will marry the Church (see Matthew 22:1-13, 25:1-10, and Revelation 19:7-9). Notice that this will not be a secret or a common-law type of arrangement! The Holy Scriptures thus clearly reveal that it is God's will that a marriage be formalized by a legal ceremony to officially inform the community of the marriage.

State laws in respect to marriage are supported by Scripture. God tells us we are to obey the laws of the land when they do not conflict with His own (Romans 13:1-7; Acts 5:29). In this way, the appearance and suspicion of evil are avoided (I Thessalonians 5:22). God also tells us we are to set a good example for others (Matthew 5:14-16).

A marriage ceremony serves to protect the rights of each mate and to minimize fornication, adultery, bigamy, and kindred evils in the society at large. When there has been no formal ceremony, it can be a temptation to treat a union casually. If we treat with contempt or flippancy that which God established for our good, we can be sure He is not pleased! Marriage is a very special occasion, and it is certainly right and fitting that it be celebrated with a formal ceremony.

You may wish to ask for our booklet WHY MARRIAGE? IT'S NOT OBSOLETE! We would be happy to send you a copy free upon your request. This booklet shows how marriage illustrates the spiritual relationship between Christ and the Church and teaches us about the God Family.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (I.C.F.)

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether all couples who were married by someone other than a minister of God's Church are living in sin, or whether God recognizes their marriages.

Undoubtedly, you are aware that God is the originator of marriage. He brought the very first man and woman, Adam and Eve, together in marriage Himself. After they sinned and rejected God's way, mankind has mostly left God out of its activities.

But, man's disobedience has not caused God to change His purpose, and marriage is still a sacred institution. Any couple, as long as they were free to marry according to the Scriptures and were joined in a legal wedding (whether simple or elaborate) are recognized by God as husband and wife regardless of who performed the ceremony.

You may wish to ask for our booklet which explains God's purpose for marriage and the family. It is titled WHY MARRIAGE? IT'S NOT OBSOLETE! We would be happy to send you a copy free upon your request.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning getting married, especially in the light of the fact that we are now living near the end of the age.

We want to first make it clear that we have not advised anyone to forgo marriage nor have we said that we are too close to the end of the age for marriage to be considered wise. People should neither rush prematurely into marriage nor postpone it because of the nearness of the end of the age. When the great tribulation actually comes, then for that time it may be best to forgo marriage if one is able to do so without losing control of oneself and burning with lust (I Cor. 7:6-9, 25-40).

Marriage is very good (Prov. 18:22; Heb. 13:4). God created it to teach us about His own eternal family. Marriage and family help us develop the character of God, and it is God's plan that most people will have the opportunity for marriage and the experiences it offers.

When Jesus Christ returns in glory to establish God's Kingdom on the earth, He will change those who have the Holy Spirit from mortal to immortal (I Cor. 15:50-52; I Thess. 4:13-17). Even though immortal children of God do not marry (Matt. 22:30), God has reserved for them joys and pleasures which are far higher. Even the greatest joy possible in this physical life, whatever that may be, cannot compare with the joys we will experience in God's Kingdom (Ps. 16:11).

Most people who survive the crisis at the close of this age will live on into the new world still mortal. They will continue marrying and having families and learning the lessons these relationships teach.

No one, then, should worry that he or she will miss out on anything. Most people will have the opportunity for marriage. But, for those few Christians who may not marry in this life, something incomparably better awaits them in the Kingdom of God!

Whenever we can assist you with your study of the Bible,

we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question regarding membership in a lodge or community organization.

Service clubs, fraternal organizations, and community groups have been organized around the world. Many are dedicated to providing community service and have long records of working in harmony with civic needs. Other groups mostly provide opportunities for socializing and developing friends.

Whether or not someone becomes involved with a group or an association depends primarily on personal interests. However, there are certain considerations one should weigh before joining any organization.

Some groups include rituals in their meetings that emanate from non-Christian ceremonies, even witchcraft. The Bible is clear that such activities should be avoided, even if they appear to be performed in innocence. Such groups are not compatible with Christian belief.

However, many organizations do not have such practices. A Christian could find many good opportunities in these groups to be of greater service and demonstrate the positive fruits of obeying God's Word. God expects us to be separated from the evils of this world, but Christ also commands us to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16, New King James Version). A service organization may afford an excellent opportunity to accomplish this.

Thank you for your interest. It is our pleasure to be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question about Matthew 16:18-19.

To understand what Jesus meant in this passage, please begin reading in verse 13. When He came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples who the people thought He was. They gave various answers. Jesus then asked who they thought He was.

Peter, more outspoken than the others, answered that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Then Christ said to him, "Thou art Peter [the Greek word is petros, which means 'little rock'], and upon this rock [Greek word petra, which means 'very great rock,' referring to Christ Himself] I will build my church." Christ is the great "Rock" upon whom the Church is built (Deut. 32:3-4, 15, 18; I Cor. 10:4; Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:6).

Christ told Peter that He (Christ) was about to found the New Testament Church, guide it (Eph. 5:23), be with it always (Matt. 28:20), and that the grave would never prevail against it. The Church would continue to exist, doing His Work down through the ages as a little flock, till the end time, when it would reach the whole world with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 24:14). The Church would never die out, but would remain until Christ returned to the earth. The gates of hades or "the grave" in the Greek) would not prevail against His Church, since Christ--not Peter--was to be the LIVING HEAD over it (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18).

Verse 19 of Matthew 16 states, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The Church was invested with certain powers and responsibilities.

God's ministers, however, have been given the authority to bind only that which is in agreement with God's laws and which, in reality, would be bound by God. The decisions of God's ministers are based on the Scriptures. In this way, they are led to make the right judgments in accordance with God's will. But,

notice also that this verse neither says nor implies that God's ministers have the power to forgive sin. Only God can forgive sin (Mark 2:7).

From the scriptural teaching, however, ministers of God are able to discern when God has forgiven a person and when He has not. For example, in I Corinthians 5:1-5 Paul knew that this man was not forgiven because he was not repentant. Yet, after the man repented, Paul said that he was to be admitted again to the fellowship of the Church (II Cor. 2:6-8) because his sins were now forgiven.

To guide His ministers in making the right decisions, Christ gave them the "keys" to the Kingdom of God. This is symbolic language, meaning that He gave them the knowledge of how to enter the Kingdom--the knowledge of the way of life which leads to salvation. Notice, in Luke 11:52, Christ reproved the lawyers of His day for suppressing the key of knowledge--hiding the way which leads to salvation and entrance into God's Kingdom. Christ revealed that way--the key to right living--to His ministers and His Church.

If you would like to receive some literature which explains what salvation is and how to be saved, you may wish to request any of the following free booklets: WHY WERE YOU BORN?, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, and WORLD PEACE--HOW IT WILL COME. The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course will also help you understand God's plan and how one enters His eternal Kingdom.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 19:30.

The statement that the first shall be last and the last shall be first, found in this verse and in Matthew 20:16, Mark 10:31, and Luke 13:30, has more than one meaning.

One application is that those who are first in status, importance, and the like, in this life will not necessarily have the same standing in God's Kingdom. God often calls the weak of the world (those who are considered by the world to have lesser standing), and it is these individuals who are first in God's sight and who will have the first or top positions in His Kingdom. Please see I Corinthians 1:26-29.

Another application is found in Luke 13:24-30. The Jews of Christ's day were the first to be called. Even though God sent His own Son to them, many did not accept Him. When the Gospel was given to the gentiles, however, many of them believed it and became obedient to God. By this example, therefore, we see that some who were first to be shown God's truth will be the last to enter the Kingdom. On the other hand, some who received the "crumbs from the table" (Matt. 15:27) will be among the first to be made rulers in God's Family.

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PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 26:17.

In the King James Version, notice that the words "day" and "feast of" are in italics. This indicates that these words do not appear in the original Greek. Italicized words were added by the translators either for clarity in English or because they thought the word was necessary. Properly translated, Matthew 26:17 should read, "Now [on] the first [day] of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?" The addition of "day" is required by the Greek; the addition of "feast of" is not required.

The specific day referred to in this passage is the 14th of the month, Passover day. This conversation took place as that day began. Remember that God begins and ends days with sunset (Lev. 23:32). In other words, they talked at sunset at the beginning of the 14th day of the month. Later that evening, Jesus introduced the Christian Passover (Matt. 26:20).

The day of the Passover is the final occasion on which all leavened bread is to be put out of the home in preparation for the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follow sunset on the 14th day of the month (Ex. 12:18-19). The day of the Passover consequently came to be considered one of the days of Unleavened Bread.

The day referred to is thus the day before the 15th, when the Feast of Unleavened Bread officially began. Because the translators were confused on this point, they wrongly inserted "feast of" in the Authorized Version.

The first century Jewish historian Josephus confirms this. He tells us that the Passover was on the 14th day and preceded the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted for seven days, that is, from the 15th day to the 21st day of the first month of the sacred year. In common speech, he says, the entire eight-day spring festival was called "the days of Unleavened Bread." (See Antiquities of the Jews,

Book 2-15-12; Book 3-10-5.) Luke 22:1 shows that the word "Passover" was also used to refer to the entire period. The two terms were then used interchangeably.

Matthew 26:17, then, refers to the day immediately preceding the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Today, we refer to it as Passover day.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 2:23.

Actually, there is no direct prophecy recorded in the Old Testament about Christ being a Nazarene. Apparently, this was an oral prophecy which had been passed down only by word of mouth. Notice the word "spoken" in this verse.

One verse, however, contains an interesting play on words--Isaiah 11:1. The word branch here is from the Hebrew nezer. This word is very similar to the Hebrew word for Nazarene. Perhaps the Jews at that time understood this verse to refer to someone from Nazareth.

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PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning why in Matthew 19:16-19 Jesus mentioned only six of the Ten Commandments. Does this mean that He did away with the others?

Not at all! David said all of God's commandments are sure and stand forever (Ps. 111:7-8).

Christ did not need to quote all of the Commandments. His hearer knew them. All He needed to do was mention several to show which set of commandments He was referring to as the supreme rule of conduct--so the person would know He was speaking of the Ten Commandments and not the commands of the Sanhedrin.

Notice the particular Commandments Christ did mention: "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These explain man's responsibility to man.

Christ's hearer needed to be reminded of his duty to his fellowman--of how to love his neighbor. This rich young man's refusal to use his great wealth for the good of others proved he did not love his neighbor (Matt. 19:22).

Now notice the Commandments Christ did not refer to directly: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . nor serve them Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . Thou shalt not covet . . ." (Ex. 20:3-8, 17). Since these Commands are not mentioned, does this mean it is all right to worship other gods, curse, break the Sabbath, and covet? Of course not! The Jews understood this.

Jesus inspired James to write that we must keep every point of the law--not just one or two, or even half of them.

Anyone who offends in one point is guilty of all (Jas. 2:10).
To break any of the Ten Commandments is to be guilty of sin
(I John 3:4).

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the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure
to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Micah 4:5.

The context shows that the time setting of this verse is after Christ has returned to earth and put an end to war. Notice verse 3. Strong nations will be rebuked and implements of war turned into tools of agriculture. No longer will nations fight one another, nor will they learn to wage war any more. As nations learn the way of peace, true prosperity will blossom all over the earth (verse 4).

True and right education will be disseminated from Christ's headquarters at Jerusalem. People will worship the true God in their mother tongues, and the Israelis in their tongue--modern Hebrew. However, all nations and races will be taught one pure language in order to communicate with one another (see Zephaniah 3:9). The indication is, then, that native languages will exist side by side with one international language--as is the case in many lands today.

Whenever we can assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning one of the many religious books available today.

We are often asked to evaluate religious works such as The Book of Mormon, The Great Controversy, The Code of Manu, The Rig-Vida (Hindu), The Koran, and The Analects (Confucious). Although we certainly appreciate both your interest and the confidence you place in us, it is not our task to sift through all extant religious literature and separate fragments of truth from error.

The Worldwide Church of God teaches that only the Holy Bible is the genuine Word of God. We do not believe any religious books outside the Bible bear the marks of God's inspiration, preservation, or authority. Nor do we comment on them or offer materials about their messages.

Our brochure entitled AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE explains how to know what is the real Word of God. For assistance in studying the greatest of all books--the Holy Bible--we invite you to enroll in our free Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course.

Thank you for your interest. Please let us know whenever we may be of service again.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Nimrod.

While the Bible is the foundation of all knowledge, in certain instances it gives us only the briefest account of people. We must, therefore, look to other reliable sources of information.

Such is the case with Nimrod. His name appears only four times in the Scriptures. Only three of those are direct references to the man himself.

Genesis 10:8-9, the first passage in the Bible where Nimrod is mentioned, is not clear in the King James Version, but, when properly understood, holds several vital keys to Nimrod's true nature. The name Nimrod itself denotes "one who rebels" or "come, let us rebel." The word before in verse 9 actually means "in defiance of." Nimrod was a "mighty one," that is, a hero to and of the people--in defiance of God! He turned the people away from God to himself for protection.

The Jerusalem Targum, which is a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Aramaic language of Christ's day, says the following: "He [Nimrod] was powerful in hunting and wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men, and he said to them, 'Depart from the judgment of the Lord, and adhere to the judgment of Nimrod!' Therefore is it said: 'As Nimrod [is] the strong one, strong in hunting, and in wickedness before the Lord.'"

Nimrod is also mentioned in the genealogy listed in the first chapter of I Chronicles (verse 10). In addition, his name appears in Micah 5:6. If you wish to study this subject further, you could refer to the article "Nimrod" in A Dictionary of the Bible, by James Hastings.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, please let us hear from you. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Paul's referring to himself as a Jew, when he was actually from the tribe of Benjamin.

The word Jew came to be applied in two ways. It refers to any descendant of the literal tribe of Judah. Jew is a nickname; it is merely a shortened form of Judah.

But, Jew also referred to anyone who refused to join the rebellion at the time the twelve tribes split into two separate kingdoms. As it turned out, all of the tribes--with the exception of Judah, Levi, and Benjamin--formed the northern kingdom under the rule of Jeroboam. Their national name became Israel. The three remaining tribes, under King Rehoboam, formed the southern kingdom, called Judah. You may read of Benjamin's alignment with Judah in I Kings 12:21.

Paul was a descendant of Benjamin. Nationally, however, he was a citizen of the kingdom or house of Judah. Thus, he was both a Jew and a Benjaminite.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning I Peter 4:6.

The key to understanding this verse is in knowing the identity of the "dead" spoken of by Peter. At the time Peter wrote this epistle (about A.D. 67 to 69), multiple thousands of Christians had already been living according to the way of life that was preached by the apostles. In the span of time after the apostles' preaching began, some had lived a Christian life and had died. Many had suffered martyrdom at the hands of unscrupulous religionists or pagan civil leaders.

When did these dead have the Gospel preached to them? Obviously, they had the Gospel preached to them while they were yet alive.

The Bible shows that "the dead know not any thing" and that "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave" (Eccl. 9:5, 10). Clearly, the dead cannot receive any communication whatsoever. Preaching is for the living, not the dead.

There is one other sense in which the Gospel is preached to those who are "dead." In this case, the term "dead" is used in reference to people who have not repented, and thus have not been forgiven by God. They are still "dead" in their trespasses--they have not yet received God's Spirit, which is the down payment of eternal life. Jesus mentions such people in Luke 9:60. Paul explains further in Ephesians 2:1 by saying that such people are "dead in trespasses and sins." Some who exist physically are dead spiritually because they have not yet heeded the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The Church of God has been commissioned to preach the Gospel as a witness to the world (Matt. 24:14). Yet, most people have not yet been called by God and do not heed that message. They remain both in ignorance and in sin. They continue to live and be judged by the standards men devise, rather than "according to God in the spirit."

Each of these individuals will ultimately be given an opportunity to receive salvation. This subject is explained in our free booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW? We will be happy to send you a copy upon your request.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the origin of the Polish peoples.

The people of eastern Europe are usually called "Slavs," a word meaning "slaves." (Many of these people were once sold as slaves into western Europe by the Germans.) But what is their true origin?

The Germans often called them "Wends." The Latins called them "Eneti" or "Veneti." Other tribes among them were called "Pol," and "Elimaei," or "Elymaei," and "Kashub." (See Smith's Greek and Roman Classical Dictionary.)

Where, in ancient Bible lands, were these tribes located?

In the land of Elam!

Elam was a son of Shem who settled east of the ancient city of Babylon (Gen. 10:22). Daniel the prophet spent some time in Elam (Dan. 8:2). The Elamites named the most famous mountain in their land Elwend (Seven Great Monarchies by Rawlinson). No wonder the Elamites were called the "Wends" in Europe.

Elam early invaded the Palestinian coast of the Mediterranean (Gen. 14:1). There they named a river Elwend; the Greeks called it the Orontes. Some of them migrated into Asia Minor where they were named the people of Pul (Isa. 66:19). From the word "Pul" comes Poland--the land of Pol or Pul. From Asia Minor they migrated into southern Russia, then into eastern Europe.

Another tribe in ancient Elam was called Kashu (Encyclopaedia Biblica, map, p. 4845). In Poland we find the Kashub living today (Encyclopaedia Britannica, article "kashubes"). The Greeks in ancient times said that the Elimaei dwelt northwest of them--in what is southern

Yugoslavia today (Smith's Classical Dictionary, article "Elimea"). The word "Elimaei" was also used by the Greeks to refer to the ancient land of "Elam" near Babylon.

The Latins called the Elamites or Wends "Eneti." Strabo, the Roman geographer, wrote about the migration "of Enetians from Paphlagonia in Asia Minor to the Adriatic"--modern Yugoslavia (Geography of Strabo, p. 227). Surely, there is no mistaking where the people anciently called Elam are today and that the inhabitants of Poland comprise many of their descendants.

Poland is experiencing trouble for the same reason all peoples and nations are experiencing trouble. This earth is cursed and under the sway of Satan the devil. This curse, along with its ultimate cure, is explained in our booklet NEVER BEFORE UNDERSTOOD--WHY HUMANITY CANNOT SOLVE ITS PROBLEMS. We would be happy to send you a copy upon your request.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the availability of a prayer group.

Although we do not have prayer groups, we certainly take each request for prayer personally. We do pray, believing God's promises and instructions.

Many request prayer each day. It seems that we each have our personal trials and problems through which God allows us to learn our need for His deliverance. By praying for one another and helping to bear one another's burdens in this way, we all grow in spiritual understanding and love as God intends (Rom. 1:9, 12; Gal. 6:2; Col. 1:9; II Thess. 1:11; I Tim. 2:8; Jas. 5:13-16).

Thank you for your interest. Please do let us hear from you again if there is some way we may be of service.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Feast of Purim.

This festival is one of the national feasts of the Jewish people. It is much like our Thanksgiving Day or Fourth of July. It commemorates the deliverance of the Jews from the Persian Empire during the fifth century B.C. The origin of this feast is found in the Bible (see the book of Esther, especially the ninth chapter). But, it is not one of God's Holy Days.

This is not to say that this or similar festivals, such as the Feast of Lights (from the Maccabean period in the second century B.C.), are without meaning. For the Jews, these festivals are rich in meaning and history. As a Jew, Jesus observed them.

As mentioned, these festivals are not part of God's Holy Days (see Leviticus 23, for example). God does not command us to keep them.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL**Dear Friend:**

You asked where you could write to get answers to specific questions.

We would like to extend to you the services of our Personal Correspondence Department here in Pasadena. Please feel welcome to write anytime you have questions. Although our staff is small, we will be happy to answer those questions you may have about biblical and spiritual topics. Please understand, however, that when a question is best answered by some of our literature, we do try to send the appropriate article or booklet.

Thank you for your interest. Whenever we may be of service in this way, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

We are happy to help you with your question about the black race in relation to Bible prophecy.

The Bible shows that all races are descended from Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20). God intended that there be different races to develop the differing climatic areas of the world (Acts 17:26). Accordingly, it appears that God placed within Eve's ovaries the genetic material which would produce the various racial characteristics in humankind.

The races were preserved through the Flood by the wives of Noah's sons. Noah's sons were white, as was the wife of Shem. The white race was continued through Shem and his wife, the black race through Ham's wife, and the yellow race through Japheth's wife.

The Bible focuses mainly on the activities of the people of Israel--because God chose them to do a job for Him. He intended Israel to set an example for all the other nations and to teach them His way. Because other peoples are generally mentioned only as they come into contact with Israel, the Bible does not say much specifically about the black or the oriental races.

All peoples who make up the "melting pot" called America will continue to partake of both the blessings and curses which God will send upon the modern descendants of Israel. Their destinies are closely linked at present and will remain so, at least until the return of Jesus Christ.

The ultimate destiny of man--whether black, brown, white, red, or yellow--is to be reborn into the very Family of God as His children to live forever and assist in God's Work throughout the universe. One day we will all have glorious, immortal bodies like Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:13-16; Phil. 3:21). Those who will put aside racial and other contentions now and seek God, letting His Spirit reform and develop godly character in them, will live forever when

Christ comes. Their job will be to help teach the way of God to all human beings who will be living during Christ's rule on the earth.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether aborted, stillborn, or miscarried babies will be resurrected.

As you know, it is God's great master plan to make salvation and eternal life available to every human being who has ever lived or will live in the future. He will resurrect those who die without having had this opportunity.

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, late pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, stated that he felt the spirit in man enters at conception. If, however, after conception, the zygote has the potential to produce a human life, we would logically conclude that babies who die before they are born will be raised in the second resurrection. We do not know this with 100 percent certainty. We do know with certainty, however, that God is merciful and, with His infinite wisdom, will maintain His master plan.

If you would like to receive information about the three resurrections or the spirit in man, please feel welcome to request it. We would be happy to send you our literature on these subjects. There is no charge or obligation, of course.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Revelation 10:4 and the message of the seven thunders.

God's Word does not reveal the message of the seven thunders. In fact, we find in this same verse that John was instructed to "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."

It is clear, however, that their message concerns an event which is to take place at the time the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the event which will herald the return of Jesus Christ to the earth (see Revelation 10:7 and 11:15).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Revelation 5:6, which mentions the "seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

In this same verse these spirits are described as being the "seven eyes" of the "Lamb." They are seven angelic beings who serve as the seven observers for Jesus Christ. In Revelation 1:4 we read that these seven angels have access to the very throne of God in heaven.

The function of these seven angels is described in II Chronicles 16:9: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." This description is repeated in Zechariah 4:10, along with a reference to the "eyes of the Lord" being seven in number.

These seven angels have a specific and very important responsibility. They continually go throughout the entire earth to observe conditions and report them to Jesus Christ in heaven.

You may wish to request a copy of our article which explains the various functions and responsibilities of God's angels. Its title is "Angels--Servants of God." There is no cost or obligation, of course.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning wedding rings.

Exodus 35 records that rings were included with the offering the Israelites gave for the building of the Tabernacle. There is not the slightest indication that God was displeased with their wearing rings.

The Bible records that God was with Joseph when he was sold into slavery in Egypt. Joseph served God, and God caused him to find favor in the eyes of the Pharaoh. In Genesis 41:41-42, we find that Joseph accepted a ring from the Pharaoh. It is plain from the context that the ring was a symbol of the very high office which had been bestowed upon him. God was not displeased with this, and the next few chapters show that God continued to bless and guide Joseph.

In principle, the ring given to Joseph served much the same purpose as that of a wedding ring. A wedding ring is merely a symbol of the marriage vows that have been made.

One further example is the famous story of the prodigal son. Jesus used this parable to illustrate God the Father's love toward a repentant sinner. The father, who pictured God, ordered a ring to be put on the son's hand (Luke 15:22).

All of the evidence is positive. The Bible nowhere criticizes the wearing of rings in general or wedding rings in particular.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Romans 7:4.

Notice carefully what Paul said: "You . . . have become dead" (New King James). He did not say, "The law is dead." The law of God did not perish. But, the people became dead to the law by the body of Christ.

Verse 5 helps explain: "For when we were in the flesh [before we were converted, and while we were living according to the pulls of the flesh], the motions of sins, which were [revealed for what they were] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Thus, when we were yet sinners, we were worthy of death in God's sight, having transgressed His holy law.

"But now," Paul writes further, "we have been delivered from the [certain death penalty of the] law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (verse 6, NKJ).

Christ paid the death penalty in our stead. The law of God no longer claims our lives.

While sinners, we were worthy of execution. But, now, Paul says that we are dead to the law--that is, the penalty of death has been paid by Jesus Christ. So far as the law is concerned, the penalty is paid--we are dead, in Christ--and there is no further "date with death" for us, if we continue to live in Christ.

This verse in no way says that the law is done away. It merely shows that Christ paid the penalty of the law for us. He died for us. We are dead with Him (Rom. 6:3-4). No longer does condemnation await us (Rom. 8:1), because we are also made spiritually alive with Him through His resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5, 11).

Our booklet THE TEN COMMANDMENTS shows that God's law is still in force today. If you would like to receive this important information, please feel welcome to request it.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Romans 10:4.

Those who attempt to do away with God's law often turn to this verse. In the previous verse, Paul explains how the Pharisees were going about trying to establish their own righteousness apart from God's righteousness. They ignored the sacrifice of Christ and thought that mere commandment keeping would be enough for anyone.

But, as Paul points out in verse 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." What does "the end of the law" mean? It means the aim, the purpose, the fullness or outcome of the law. Christ in us gives us the power to keep God's holy, perfect law, for which we lack the spiritual strength ourselves (Rom. 8:4).

Apart from Christ, no one can manage to keep God's law in the spirit. By his very nature, man falls far short. But, through Christ we can be obedient (Phil. 4:13). The aim or end of the law is to enable us to become like Christ.

The word end, used in Romans 10:4, is also found in James 5:11: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Now, did James mean that Christ's end had come? Of course not. Rather, James explains it himself. They had seen the purpose or aim of the Lord--"that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Rose Parade, held in Pasadena each year.

The Tournament of Roses Parade is not solely a celebration of the New Year, even though it is usually held on the first day of January. In some years, 1984 and 1989 are two examples, it is postponed a day because it is never held on Sunday. Of course, many use the occasion to engage in inappropriate behavior. This should not be the case for a Christian.

This parade originated decades ago when Pasadenans drove their cars in a procession exhibiting the fruits and flowers grown in this area. Eventually, the cars were replaced by floats covered with flowers. The parade honors the Rose Bowl football game and has no intrinsic connection with pagan deities.

Thank you for your interest. If we may serve you in some additional way, please let us hear from you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning I Samuel 6:19.

The King James Version states that at the time the ark of the covenant was returned to Israel by the Philistines, God slew 50,070 men because they had looked inside the ark. Many Bible translations and commentaries reject the number 50,070 as inaccurate and unreasonable. They argue that this verse should read that only 70 men were actually killed.

This conclusion, however, is inconsistent with the second part of this verse. The Bible plainly states that "the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter."

The term "great slaughter" is used many times in the Old Testament to describe military engagements where tens of thousands of soldiers were killed. Notice I Samuel 4, verses 10 and 17, where 30,000 Israelite soldiers died at the hands of the Philistines in a "great slaughter." Compare also Joshua 10:10, Judges 11:33, and II Samuel 18:7.

Nevertheless, Bible students still find the account of I Samuel 6:19 difficult to accept. The original Hebrew clearly reads "seventy men, fifty thousand men." Scholars point to the unusual arrangement of the numbers in that the 70 stands before the 50,000. The smaller number appearing first, however, is not an unprecedented arrangement in the Hebrew language. Even the omission of a conjunction between the two numbers does not change the meaning of the original text.

The Bible very precisely states that 50,070 men died in a great slaughter because of the irreverence and presumption of the men of Bethshemesh. The critical arguments of Bible scholars to dismiss the number 50,000 as a scribal error or a deliberate corruption of the text are a misguided attempt to diminish this dramatic account.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Scythians.

This name was given to various peoples. In ancient times, the area of the Caucasus mountains known as Scythia (or Sacae) also bore the name "Land of the Rising Sun." In the process of time, the name "Scythia" passed to other tribes and peoples who dwelt in, or migrated through, the land of Scythia.

The apostle Paul divided the world into Greek and Jew, Barbarian and Scythian (Col.3:11)--applying the name "Scythian" to that people which came out of the east and migrated into western Europe and the British Isles. The modern word "Scot" is, in fact, merely a corruption of the old Greek "Scythian."

However, Herodotus describes the Eastern Scythians as an unusual people, lacking body hair, with noticeably rounded face and chin, flat-nosed, speaking a peculiar language and wearing a distinctive costume. Combining the accounts of Herodotus with the traditions of the Parsees of India and the Japanese, we find that a Scythian prince named Zoroaster II founded the royal throne of Japan in 660 B.C. The Japanese of today are likely to be at least part Scythian.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the word selah as found in the Psalms and the book of Habakkuk.

Since the time the Old Testament was translated into the Greek language, about 270 B.C., many have suggested a number of possible meanings for this word. Because the Psalms were written as songs, most scholars today believe that selah was not a part of the sung text. They believe that it was a direction for the musicians about repeating verses, playing interludes, tuning the instruments, and so on.

In the French book The Music of the Bible Revealed, by Suzanne Haik-Vantoura, however, we find an explanation which seems to fit every use of the word in the Bible. The author, who is a Jewish music student, concludes that selah was part of the sung text and not an instruction to the players. While she does not define the word itself, her work does suggest that selah is similar to the word amen at the end of a prayer. The purpose would be to emphasize the truth or seriousness of a passage.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the subject of self-defense.

Jesus said, "Resist not evil . . . whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:39). Does this mean we must never defend ourselves?

The Bible makes it clear we are to live by God's law of love in every aspect of our lives. It is certainly not right for a Christian to fight back with the purpose of inflicting bodily injury, even if provoked.

Nonetheless, the use of restraining force may at times be necessary and advisable. For example, if someone tried to strike you with a club, it would not be wrong to restrain the attacker if you were able.

The best defense is to avoid circumstances which are dangerous or threatening. In case of emergency, we should quickly ask God, in prayer, for protection and deliverance. God hears those who are faithful to Him (see Hebrews 11:6 and I John 3:22).

But, what of "turning the other cheek"? Does that mean Christians are to be pushovers and doormats? Certainly not! Jesus Christ was not. Jesus had the wisdom to know when to avoid confrontations and when to challenge injustice and evil. He forced the money changers out of the temple. Yet, He submitted to the most horrible verbal and physical abuse and finally allowed Himself to be crucified (thereby fulfilling His commission). But, through it all, Jesus set us an example of the type of attitude we ought to have, no matter what the circumstances.

The apostle Paul wrote, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). What should a Christian do in the face of evil and injustice? The answer is, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (verse 21).

If we have a godly attitude and a proper personal relationship with God, we can have total confidence that He is watching over us and will protect us from harm and evil according to His will (see Psalm 91).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about watching soap operas on television.

God wants us to be enlightened, balanced individuals. He wants us to grow in the understanding of the goodness of His law. The apostle John was inspired to write, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul [being, or life] prospereth" (III John 2).

Knowing this, can we really say that TV soap operas offer anything worthwhile for Christians? The obvious answer is, not in the least! Even worldly TV critics who do not claim to be Christians often write about the futility of the plots and the gross amount of time spent on morally compromising situations in the TV soaps. These include premarital sex, adultery, lying, and murder. These are all part of the "works of the flesh," which God warns us to avoid:

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and suchlike: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). And, remember, if it is wrong to participate in a certain type of action in the body, it is also wrong to participate in it in the mind (see Matthew 5:27-28).

Many other scriptures plainly tell us to avoid all those things which are unlawful and incite wrongdoing. It behooves us, therefore, to be careful about the type of television programming we watch. By consulting a program guide, such as those sold at newsstands or found in local newspapers, one can plan ahead and know which shows to watch and which to avoid.

Even for elderly persons or shut-ins, it is much better to find something else to do. Painting, reading, knitting, sewing, writing letters, drawing, and so on, are all far more worthwhile than watching some soap opera which is filled with intrigue, jealousy, and fantasy.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked about the biblical identity of the peoples of Central and South America.

The peoples of Spanish America are of varied origin, including European, Indian, and some black African tribes. Those of European origin are primarily from Spain (except in Brazil, where the main European element is Portuguese).

The Spanish peoples themselves are of varied ethnic background. Certain Spanish American countries are populated by people who are largely of Indian descent. Those who are primarily "Spanish," not Indian or mestizo, can be traced back to Japheth, son of Noah, through his grandson Tarshish (Gen. 10:2, 4). In addition, there are Celtic, Germanic (Gothic), Arabic, Jewish, and other Semitic elements in the Spanish population.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for writing to "Dear Youth 91."

We sincerely appreciate your questions and wish to be of service. However, more than ten thousand people write to or call our United States offices each day. As you can imagine, our staff is not always able to respond immediately with a personal reply. And, the few answers we are able to print in our "Dear Youth 91" column require many weeks before they appear in the magazine.

Any literature you may have requested has been mailed under separate cover. Hopefully, we will be able to answer your questions not covered by our publications as we process our backlog.

We appreciate your understanding and patience.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the authors of the books of the Bible.

Following is a list of the Old Testament books in the order preserved by the Jews.

The first five books, Genesis through Deuteronomy, were written by Moses during the 40 years of wandering. Joshua is the logical author of the book of Joshua. Judges was written by the prophet Samuel, according to Jewish tradition. Samuel also wrote I Samuel 1-24 (I Sam. 10:25; 25:1). The remainder of I Samuel and all of II Samuel was written by Nathan the prophet and Gad (I Chron. 29:29). I and II Kings were probably written by Jeremiah, compiling older records made by prophets contemporary with the events.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were all prophets of God who wrote the books bearing their names.

The Psalms had various authors. David wrote about half of them; other authors include Asaph or his descendants, the sons of Korah, and Moses. Proverbs 1 through 29 belong mostly to Solomon. Chapters 30 and 31 are respectively ascribed to Agur and Lemuel.

The author of the book of Job is not definite, though it was most likely Job himself. The Song of Solomon was written by Solomon. Jewish tradition attributes the book of Ruth to Samuel. Lamentations was undoubtedly written by Jeremiah. Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon. Esther was probably written by Mordecai.

Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah wrote the books which bear their names. I and II Chronicles were written by Ezra.

Following is a list of the New Testament books.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, James, I Peter, II Peter, I John, II John, III John, and Jude were written by the men whose names they bear. Acts was written by Luke. Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews were all written by Paul. The book of Revelation was written by John.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning April Fool's Day.

April Fool's Day or All Fool's Day is of ancient origin. The custom of playing practical jokes on friends or sending them on fools' errands on a particular day was practiced from earliest times.

The Concise Dictionary of Holidays says, "The tradition of setting aside some special day for making a fool out of other people has its roots in antiquity" (page 5).

The Book of Days says, "To find the practice so widely prevalent over the earth, and with so near a coincidence of day, seems to indicate that it has had a very early origin amongst mankind" (page 462).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says this: "What seems certain is that it [April Fool's Day] is in some way or other a relic of those once universal festivities held at the vernal equinox, which, beginning on old New Year's Day, the 25th of March, ended on the 1st of April. This view gains support from the fact that the exact counterpart of April-fooling is found to have been an immemorial custom in India. The festival of the spring equinox is there termed the feast of Huli, the last of which is the 31st of March, upon which the chief amusement is the befooling of people by sending them on fruitless errands."

Even though the roots of April Fool's Day are not known precisely, the evidence clearly indicates that it is of pagan origin. That alone should tell us what God thinks of it.

April Fool's Day is not mentioned in the Bible, but its foundation and instructions regarding it are. Foolish jesting is condemned in God's Word (Eph. 5:4). And, as with any worldly custom taken from pagan tradition, God warns, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2) and, "Come out from among them and be separate" (II Cor. 6:17, NKJ). Clearly, the followers of Jesus Christ should have nothing to do with April Fool's Day.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the practice called water divining.

The Church cannot endorse this practice for two reasons: (1) the practice has no known scientific basis and (2) it is thought by some to involve divination.

If one believes that spirit forces are involved in this activity, then, as a Christian, he should have no part in it (please see Deuteronomy 18:10-12, Hosea 4:12 and I Corinthians 10:20-21).

If we may assist you in answering other questions that arise in your study, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning I Samuel 28.

There are many lessons here. Notice what happened. King Saul asked God about the impending battle with the Philistines. But God gave him no answer (I Sam. 28:1-6).

In great fear (verse 5), Saul disguised himself and went to the witch at Endor, a woman who had contact with familiar spirits or demons. She asked, "Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, bring me up Samuel" (verse 11).

The woman complied with Saul's request--or at least she performed some ritual which made it appear that she did. And "when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice" (verse 12) because she then realized she was dealing with King Saul and could well be in jeopardy of her life for practicing witchcraft (verses 3 and 9). But Saul told her not to be afraid and asked what she had seen. She replied, "I saw a god-like being coming up out of the earth" (verse 13, Jewish translation).

Saul then asked the woman, "What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived [thought] that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself" (verse 14).

In describing what she saw, the woman used these expressions: "a god-like being," "an old man," and "he is covered with a mantle." There is not one word that it was actually Samuel himself! What did she see? She saw an evil spirit which presented itself in a way in which it could be mistaken for Samuel.

The Bible reveals that Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). He is the god of this world and can transform himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 4:4; 11:14). Satan and his demons have the power to produce apparitions and to appear in human or animal forms.

The next question in I Samuel 28 arises over verse 15: "And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" Why does the account read as though Samuel were speaking to Saul?

It is merely a matter of what Saul wanted to see and hear. Demons enjoy fooling people. This one took the opportunity to play into Saul's hand by impersonating Samuel. It apparently knew the outcome of the battle and told Saul that he would die the following day and that his army would be defeated by the Philistines.

Deception is one of Satan's devices (Rev. 12:9). I Samuel 28 records that "Samuel" spoke, although it was actually a demon speaking through what looked like a human. Samuel was not there, either in body or spirit. He was, and still is, dead and in his grave, awaiting the resurrection. This account is written, at least in part, from the human point of view, that is, the way it appeared to the witch and to Saul. (For a complete explanation of the state of the dead, we suggest reading our free booklet IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?)

This scripture in no way contradicts the multitude of clear scriptures proving that the soul is mortal. For an explanation of these scriptures, you may wish to request a copy of our booklet WHAT IS MAN?

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning who wrote the Ten Commandments on the two tables of stone.

Exodus 34:28 is often misunderstood. Notice what this verse says: ". . . and he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." Some have assumed the word "he" here refers to Moses--that Moses wrote the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone.

This assumption is wrong. Notice Exodus 24:12. God told Moses, "Come up to me into the mount . . . and I will give thee tables of stone . . . and commandments which I have written." God "gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Ex. 31:18).

In Exodus 32:16 we read, "The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of GOD, graven upon the tables." Moses broke these first tables of stone (verse 19). Then God commanded Moses, "Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest" (Ex. 34:1). Here God plainly said that He would write them again.

Near the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses rehearsed in the ears of the Israelites the great things God had done for them. He said, "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount . . . and he [God] wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me" (Deut. 5:22). Those were the first tables of stone, which Moses broke when he came down from the mount and saw the people reveling in idolatry. Moses then repeated to the Israelites the fact that God wrote the Ten Commandments a second time (Deut. 10:1-5).

God, not Moses, wrote the Ten Commandments both times. Those who claim that Moses wrote the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone are denying the Word of God.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 27:9.

Please notice very carefully what this verse says: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued" Jeremiah spoke these words. If he wrote them, they are not included in the book of Jeremiah.

The fact that a similar prophecy is found in the book of Zechariah (Zech. 11:12-13) has led some to believe that the word "Jeremiah" in Matthew 27:9 should be "Zechariah." In all authoritative texts, however, the original Greek word is "Jeremiah."

The simple explanation, then, is that Jeremiah spoke the prophecy, and Zechariah, writing at a later time, was inspired to record it. God's Word does not contradict itself (John 10:35).

Thank you for your interest. If we can be of further assistance to you in your study of God's Word, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD AND OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the old and new covenants mentioned in the Bible.

The old covenant was a "marriage agreement" in which Israel (the wife) promised to obey the Eternal (the husband). God, in turn, promised to provide for the nation. To obey the husband meant to keep God's prior-existing law. The old covenant, in essence, meant simply that the children of Israel would be God's people and He would be their God.

The conditions of that covenant are found in Exodus 20. It is important to understand that this was a reaffirmation of the covenant made originally with Abraham: "On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates'" (Gen. 15:18, NKJ). This same covenant was made with Abraham's son Isaac and his son Israel (Jacob). Israel had twelve sons from which came the twelve tribes. It was this covenant which God fulfilled when He rescued the children of Israel: "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Ex. 2:24).

There was just one problem with the old covenant. The children of Israel did not have God's Holy Spirit and were unable to fulfill the requirements of that covenant--to trust and obey God. Therefore, God is in the process of making a new covenant: "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Heb. 8:7-8).

Please read the entire chapter of Hebrews 8, which shows that God will write His Commandments in men's hearts through His Holy Spirit. So the new covenant has the "better promise" of God's Holy Spirit. It also has a better reward. Under the old covenant, the Eternal promised to make Israel

a nation above all people. The promises were purely national and material--for this world. The new covenant contains the promise of an "eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

Under the new covenant, all humans become spiritual Israelites and Jews--including those who were natural-born Israelites. In that sense, those called out now are given the promises of the new covenant. They are all spiritual Jews (Rom. 2:28-29) and spiritual Israelites (Gal. 6:16). At this time, God is calling only scattered individuals, in what can be called "the Church age." Therefore, the new covenant applies to them. However, the great fulfillment of the new covenant will occur when God delivers His people from captivity just prior to the beginning of the Millennium. You may wish to read our booklet THE MILLENNIUM AND BEYOND for an explanation of the future of the covenant.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning The WORLD TOMORROW telecast. Your interest is sincerely appreciated, and it is our pleasure to be of service.

The WORLD TOMORROW telecast is sponsored by the Worldwide Church of God under the direction of Mr. Joseph W. Tkach, Pastor General. Our Work is to fulfill the commission of Matthew 28:19-20 and the prophecy recorded in Matthew 24:14, that the gospel--the good news--of the soon-coming Kingdom of God must be preached in all the world.

The WORLD TOMORROW program was started by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong on radio in January 1934. It continued to grow through the years, until, in 1953, it became an international broadcast. Since the early 1970s, television has replaced radio as a vehicle for conveying the gospel. Since Mr. Armstrong's death in January 1986 at the age of 93, speaking duties on The WORLD TOMORROW program have been shared by Messrs. David Hulme, David Albert, Richard Ames and Ronald Kelly. All four are experienced ministers in the Worldwide Church of God and were trained under Mr. Armstrong.

This Work is not sponsored, subsidized, or supported by any governmental, public or private organization or agency. It is not affiliated in any way with any national or world church council. Our support comes from the tithes and offerings of members of the Worldwide Church of God as well as from the voluntary contributions of our viewers and readers.

Whenever we may be of additional assistance, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning planting crops by the signs of the zodiac or the moon.

Some firmly believe that the success of their crops depends upon planting by the phases of the moon and the signs of the zodiac. But this is not what God says. God nowhere in the Bible tells us to build our lives around moon phases and the signs of the zodiac as astrologers teach. God prophesies that He will burn up unrepentant astrologers (Isa. 47:13-14).

Astrology is a form of idolatry, because it puts man's devices before God's ways. Astrologers teach people to try to obtain success by means of astrology. God expressly forbids this worship of the constellations and the host of heaven (II Kings 23:5).

Christ mentioned several natural factors that govern crop production, including soil types, weather, and weeds (Matt. 13:3-8). He said nothing of astrological influence.

There is also a spiritual aspect to successful crop production. Those who obey God are promised success in every aspect of life--in crops, livestock, business, and family health (Deut. 28:1-13). God also promises that if we are diligent in our work and pay His tithes to Him, He will rebuke the devourer for our sake and pour abundant blessings upon us (Mal. 3:8-11). Notice that in these verses there is not even a hint of a need for astrology.

The moon does have some effect on the tides and on some human and animal emotions, and possibly on the germination and growth of plants, but not enough to be a deciding factor in the success of crops.

The stars have no proven effect on the course of nature. Farmers should use the best possible agricultural methods and trust in God's promises to prosper His servants. Astrologers are headed for destruction, as God prophesied. Success in spiritual and material aspects of life comes only

to those who are yielding themselves to Almighty God.

Whenever we may be of further assistance with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, please let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 7:6.

This is an analogy Jesus used to show how people who have not had their minds opened by God to receive spiritual understanding will often react when they hear the true Gospel. Put another way, Jesus was teaching His disciples not to try to convert those who are not yet being called (John 6:44). Such people are likely to respond by treating God's truth like dirt. Just as a pig would trample fine pearls into the mud because it doesn't know any better and cannot appreciate such worth, the person whose mind is not yet receptive cannot grasp the awesome value of the truth. To them, the truth would be meaningless and would be discarded. They would just trample it underfoot, so to speak.

While we should never attempt to force God's truth onto any person, we should certainly "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [us], with meekness and fear [gentleness and respect]" (I Pet. 3:15). In other words, it is right to explain what we believe when someone sincerely asks us. Such interest may indicate that God is opening the person's mind.

Notice how, at another time, Jesus used pearls to express the value of the truth and of God's Kingdom. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. 13:45-46). God wants us to treat His truth like a priceless gem.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for requesting information about the origin of the black race.

The black race, which no doubt originated within several generations of Adam and Eve, can be definitely traced back only as far as Ham and his wife (whom he married before the Flood). One of their sons was named Cush (Gen. 10:6) which means "black" in Hebrew and is often translated into English as "Ethiopia" because the Greeks first called the children of Cush "Ethiopians." But not all Cushites live in the modern nation of Ethiopia.

Cush first settled around ancient Babylon (Gen. 10:8-10). From Babylon, Cush spread far and wide. Most of the black children of Cush migrated across central Arabia and around its southern coast to East Africa. The Egyptians called East Africa south of Syene, "Kosh." The Chaldeans and the Assyrians called it "Kushu" ("Cush" and "Ethiopia," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

Cush also had sons who went east into Asia rather than into Africa. Herodotus wrote:

The Ethiopians from the sun-rise . . . were marshalled with the Indians, and did not at all differ from [them] in appearance but only in their language, and their hair. For the eastern Ethiopians are straight-haired; but those of (Africa) have hair more curly than that of any other people. These Ethiopians from Asia were accounted (almost the same as the Indians [of India]) (Polymnia, Section 20).

The brown people of southern India and Ceylon are also descendants of Cush. Historians call them Dravidians; the ancients called them Sibae (Smith's Classical Dictionary). Their Bible name was Seba (Gen. 10:7). Josephus recognized an eastern and a western Cush--one in Asia, the other in Africa (Antiquities, Book 1, VI, 2). Herodotus calls them "Asiatic Ethiopians" (Thalia, Section 94). "Ethiopia" in Ezekiel 38:5 should be translated "Cush." It refers primarily to the Asiatic Cush, which is India today.

Ham had another son, Phut or Put. Josephus wrote this: "Phut also was the founder of Libya [meaning Africa], and called the inhabi-

tants Phutites, from himself: there is also a river in the country of the Moors which bears that name; whence it is that . . . the Grecian historiographers mention [Africa] . . . by the appellation of Phut" (Antiquities, Book 1, VI, 2).

Put, or Phut, then, is the father of the central Africans. The Egyptians called the region of the Sudan "Pet." The Babylonians and Persians called a similar region "Putu" (Smith's Bible Dictionary and International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

The author who provides the most information on the development of black peoples in Africa is Herbert Richmond Palmer. He wrote the rare volume The Bornu Sahara and Sudan and the more readily available Sudanese Memoirs. His works provide translation from Arabic into English.

In India the highest castes were not only called Brahmins, but also Rajputs. "Rajput" means "king or chief of Put" ("Raja," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed.). "Phut" or "Put" means a "warrior" in Hebrew. The Rajputs are the most noted warriors of India. The word "Phut" is not properly translated "Libya" in Ezekiel 38:5, because the people of Phut referred to here are those of India.

Of the four sons of Ham, only Cush bears a name that means "black." Yet, just as some of the sons of Cush are brown, so some of the children of Phut are black. The Indians of central and northern India vary from light to dark brown.

What is the origin of the black people of the islands of Southeast Asia and Australia and the Negroid pygmies in Asia and Africa? According to historians, in ancient times "dark-skinned people" lived in Colchis, an area which bordered on the Black Sea. When the Assyrians carried Egyptians and Ethiopians captive (Isa. 20), many were undoubtedly planted in this very region. (See "Colchis," The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed.). These people practiced circumcision--just as the aborigines of Australia do today. From this region northwest of Babylon comes the black race of Southeast Asia.

The Aetas also lived in ancient Colchis ("Aea," Smith's Classical Dictionary). The Aetas today are in the Philippines, where the sons of Japheth are also ("Negritos," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed.). Also, some of the aboriginal tribes of Australia and New Guinea and some West African tribes are descended from Canaan, another son of Ham. There are also brown and black Egyptians living along the Nile in Egypt and the Sudan. These peoples are descended from Ham's son Mizraim.

So, blacks descend from each of the four sons of Ham and his wife.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning which Bible is used on The WORLD TOMORROW telecast.

Our speakers normally use the Revised Authorized Version, which is commonly referred to as the New King James Version (NKJ). Whenever any other translation is quoted, the speaker will mention it, or it will be shown on the screen.

As its name implies, the New King James Version is a modern rendition of the old King James Version, which is officially known as the Authorized Version (AV). The New King James removes the archaic verb endings and pronouns of the old King James English and modernizes the pronouns referring to God.

You may wish to obtain our article titled "Seven Keys to Understanding the Bible." Included in it is a section entitled "Which Translations Are Best?" We would be happy to send a free copy upon your request.

Thank you for your interest in the telecast. Please let us know whenever we may be of further assistance in your study of God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your concern over the fact that the Bible contains accounts of immorality and violence.

The Bible is the great instruction book that tells man both how to live and how NOT to live. Jesus said that we should live by every word of God (Matt. 4:4). The Bible is a very practical book, and, besides containing direct instructions from God, it also contains examples of real-life situations from which we all can learn. It shows that disobedience to God's laws always exacts a penalty. The Bible shows that all people are subject to human passions and that everyone makes mistakes (Rom. 3:23). Human weaknesses and shortcomings are not covered up. In fact, the sins of even the most righteous are revealed in a plain and truthful manner. Why?

God wants us to know that His laws are eternal, and that we, living in this modern, sophisticated world, are not somehow immune to or exempt from the laws which govern human behavior. The recorded examples of the mistakes of others are meant to help keep us from making the same mistakes. The things others have done act as stop signs and traffic signals to help keep us on the straight and narrow way which leads to eternal life. Study I Corinthians 10:6 in this light.

Although the accounts of immorality are a necessary part of teaching us what is right and wrong in God's sight, the Bible never dwells on such acts. Certainly, it may leave no doubt about the nature of an event, but no account in the Bible could be described as being "dirty" or pornographic. The essential facts are simply recorded, and then it is left up to us to learn the lessons. Without a doubt, learning by example is far better than learning by personal experience that sin brings dire consequences and, without repentance ultimately leads to eternal death.

When final judgment is passed, no one will be able to say to God that He didn't care or that He didn't warn us about sin. God is love, His law is perfect, and His written Word is a lamp to guide us to perfection and life everlasting (Ps. 119:105; 19:7; I John 4:8, 16; John 12:48-50; Gal. 6:8).

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether or not God hears the prayers of sinners.

All people have sinned and cut themselves off from God (Rom 3:23; 5:12). The prophet Isaiah wrote, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:2, NKJ).

God does not hear sinners (John 9:31, first part), and will have no fellowship with them (II Cor. 6:14; I John 1:6). He hears only those who are righteous (John 9:31, last part). But there must be a way for sinners to come to God--or else we could never become righteous. How can sinners seek God?

Isaiah answers, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." But how do we call upon God? How do we seek Him? The answer is, "Let the wicked forsake his [own] way, and the unrighteous man his [own] thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:6-7, NKJ).

That is how a person can come to God. He must forsake the way he has been living and begin to obey God. Once he has repented of going the wrong way, that person is no longer a sinner in God's sight. God hears and gives His Holy Spirit to the person who obeys Him (Acts 5:32). When we "keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight," God will hear (I John 3:22). Our booklet IS GOD REAL TO YOU? explains how God answers prayer. If you do not have a copy, please feel welcome to request one.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Satan being loosed at the end of the 1000 years of Christ's rule on earth.

God is working out a great purpose here on this planet. And He is doing so according to His master plan!

For 6000 years God has allowed man to work things out for himself. He is permitting human beings to try every conceivable way to solve world problems in their desperate attempt to find peace and happiness. Men have chosen to follow the way of Satan, the god of this world.

When men finally come to their wits' end and are facing utter annihilation, God will intervene to save them from themselves. Then Satan will be restrained from deceiving the world, and there will be 1000 years of utopia on earth. All people will be taught to follow God's law--the only way to true happiness.

But familiarity breeds contempt. After 1000 years of real happiness, some will forget or will ignore the lessons of history and the record of how miserable it was when Satan ruled. Some few just won't agree with God--they will insist on having their own way.

Satan will be released from his prison for a very short time to demonstrate to those minds the fact that God rules supreme--that His way alone brings true happiness.

Satan will be allowed to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. The nations Gog and Magog are a type of all rebellious peoples who have not yielded themselves to the Government of God (Rev. 20:8).

Those who choose to follow Satan and knowingly refuse eternal life can't be allowed to be around when the next part of God's plan occurs. You can read the surprising

truth about God's plan in full in our booklet IS GOD TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD NOW? A copy is available free upon request.

Whenever we may be of additional assistance with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the apparent contradiction between Acts 9:7 and 22:9.

These passages record the apostle Paul's conversion. As he and a group of men were making their way to Damascus, Paul was suddenly surrounded by a light from heaven. He fell to the ground, blinded. Jesus Christ then spoke to Paul and told him what he must do. The others were dumbfounded: "The men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one" (Acts 9:7, NKJ).

The same event is mentioned a second time. Paul said, "Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me" (Acts 22:9, NKJ).

In the original Greek language, the word akouo is used in these passages. This word, like many others, has several meanings depending on how it is used in a sentence. It can mean to hear or to understand. In the following passage, for example, the latter meaning is obviously intended: "For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him" (I Cor. 14:2, NKJ). His listeners hear him, but don't understand.

This is what happened with Paul and those with him on the road to Damascus. Paul both heard and understood. The men with him heard the voice but did not understand it.

So, the problem is only one of language. God's Word does not contradict itself (John 10:35). Acts 22:9 really should be translated this way: "Now those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not understand the voice of Him who spoke to me."

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question concerning Matthew 25:41 and 46.

The word translated "everlasting" in verse 41 is aionion in the Greek. This word comes from the root aion, which can mean "eternal" but often means "age." In verse 41, the correct translation into English should be "age-lasting" fire.

During the Millennium--the "age" of Christ's rule with the saints on the earth--the valley of Hinnom will be kept perpetually burning. The incorrigibly wicked, those who set their wills in persistent rebellion against God's laws, will be thrown into that fire as a stern witness to the rest of the world (Isa. 66:24).

The everlasting punishment spoken of in Matthew 25:46 is what the Bible elsewhere calls the "second death" (Rev. 20:14; 21:8). Death for all eternity is eternal punishment. The Bible nowhere teaches eternal punishing. The wicked will be burned up and will become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Mal. 4:3). Also notice that in Matthew 25:46 the punishment of the wicked--everlasting death--is contrasted with the eternal life given to the righteous.

You may wish to study our free brochure TO HELL AND BACK for further discussion about the lake of fire and the fate of the wicked. If you do not have a copy, please feel welcome to request one.

Whenever we can be of further assistance in your study of the Bible, please feel welcome to let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD CH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question about the Holy Spirit.

Because the expressions "Holy Spirit" and "Holy Ghost" are found in the King James Version of the Bible, some have assumed that there are two different spirits. "Ghost," however, is an outdated translation that should be avoided.

In the inspired original Greek, the word pneuma is used. This word, unfortunately translated "ghost" so many times, is properly translated "spirit," as in Luke 11:13, Ephesians 1:13, James 4:30, and several other verses, when referring to God's Spirit.

When the King James Version of the Bible was first printed in 1611--over 1400 years after the New Testament was first written in the Greek language--the English words "ghost" and "spirit" meant the same thing. Thus, it was quite natural that the translators should have used both words in rendering the one Greek word into English. This inconsistent usage, however, has given rise to the false impression that a "Holy Ghost" and a "Holy Spirit" exist as two separate spirits.

The only proper way to clarify the subject is to use the expression "Holy Spirit" in all cases that refer to the Spirit of God. The New King James Version of the Bible, officially titled the Revised Authorized Version, does just that. It consistently translates the Greek expression hagion pneuma as "Holy Spirit."

You may wish to request a copy of our free article "Just What Is the Holy Spirit?" It contains many proofs that the Holy Spirit is not a person, but is the power of God.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

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WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the words and symbols found between the verses of Psalm 119.

These words are the names of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In this psalm each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is spelled out in English, and in many Bibles the Hebrew symbol is written before it. Here is the reason.

Psalm 119, like the majority of the psalms, was written to be sung as a song of praise to God. But, unlike most other psalms it was written in a unique style. It is divided into twenty-two sections or strophes, each composed of eight lines or verses. In the first strophe (verses 1-8) the first word in each line in the original Hebrew begins with Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the second strophe (verses 9-16) the same style is used and each line begins with Beth, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This system is continued until all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet have been utilized.

As you can see, Psalm 119 in the original Hebrew is really an intricately written poem. The alphabet was used by translators to separate its twenty-two sections for the reader, because in the English translation this acrostic pattern is not possible to duplicate. Today, in English, we have an accurate translation of the original, even though it is impossible to duplicate the poetic Hebrew form.

Thank you for your interest. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD KINGDOM OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for asking about the doctrines and beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God. We appreciate your interest. The following statements provide a summary of what we believe.

God is the Creator of heaven and earth, sustainer of the universe and source of man's salvation.

Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He was fully man and fully God. Jesus founded and is the living head of the Church. He brought the true gospel from God to man. He was the promised Messiah and died for the sins of the world. Repentant and believing sinners are justified and reconciled to God by His shed blood. God raised Him from the dead the third day. He ascended to heaven and was glorified and sits at the right hand of God as our High Priest. Jesus Christ will return to earth in power and glory as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish peace and bring salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the comforter promised by Jesus Christ, sent from God to the Church on the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit transforms man through repentance, baptism, and continual renewal, and is the source of inspiration and prophecy throughout the Scriptures. It is the Christian's guide to all truth.

The Holy Bible is the inspired revelation from God to man. It reveals the purpose of human life and the way of life God has set in motion for lasting peace, happiness, and well-being. The principles of Christian living are found in the spirit of God's law, expounded by Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament.

The Christian's obedience to God's principles is evident in the fruits of the Holy Spirit and in his willingness to keep God's appointed festivals, the biblical Sabbath, and in worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

The Church is commissioned to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God and teach all things Christ commanded. The work of the Church is financed by tithes and freewill offerings.

If you would like to learn more about specific doctrines and beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God, please request any of the items listed below.

- WHO WAS JESUS?
- WILL CHRIST RETURN?
- THE MILLENNIUM AND BEYOND
- RECAPTURING TRUE VALUES--THE STORY OF
THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD
- WHAT IS THE TRUE GOSPEL?
- WHERE IS THE TRUE CHURCH?
- WHICH DAY IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH?

Thank you again for your interest. If there is some way further we may be of assistance, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD - ROCKY HILLS

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether or not the pharaoh of the Exodus drowned in the Red Sea.

The pharaoh of Egypt at that time was Amenhotep II. The overwhelming biblical and historical evidence is that he did not die with his army in pursuit of Israel.

In Psalm 136:15, we find that God "overthrew Pharaoh and his host [army] in the Red sea." The Hebrew word translated here as "overthrew" is na'ar. This word is also found in Exodus 14:27. It does not mean "to drown" or "to toss or tumble about as in the water" as some have attempted to assert. It simply means "shook off" as is mentioned in the margins of many Bibles and in The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon. (Nehemiah 5:13 is a good illustration of how na'ar should be translated.) Therefore, these verses simply say that God shook off the Egyptians (including Pharaoh) from their pursuit of the Israelites. These scriptures say nothing of who was drowned.

In Exodus 14:28 we see that the waters covered "the host of Pharaoh," but Pharaoh himself is not mentioned. Exodus 15:19 in the Authorized King James Version reads: "For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them." At first, this might appear to be evidence that Pharaoh drowned. But an examination of this verse reveals that "horse" should not be singular. Verse 19 of Exodus 15 is correctly rendered in the New King James Version (also called the Revised Authorized Version): "For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them." Naturally, the horses and horsemen of Egypt were considered to be Pharaoh's. But this scripture does not say that Pharaoh's personal horse, or that Pharaoh himself, drowned in the sea.

This is significant because the death of such an important person would almost certainly have been given special note in the Bible. The Old Testament contains many clear references to the

deaths of enemy kings, most of them much less important than this pharaoh. Archaeology proves that Amenhotep II ruled for at least 16 years after the Exodus.

We appreciate this opportunity to serve you. Please let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning I Corinthians 10:27.

Did God here make an exception to His law? Are there any circumstances under which it is all right--even advisable--for a Christian to eat unclean meats? For the answer, we need to consider the situation to whom these instructions were given.

The Corinthians, converted from pagan idolatry, came from a society in which sacrificing to various idols was a daily way of life. Those offerings were sacrificed in the pagan temples continually, and the meat was usually eaten by the person who brought it.

Often, however, not all the meat was consumed. Each day the priests were left with a surplus. Not willing to miss a chance to turn a quick profit, they sold the extra meat to local butcher shops--called "shambles"--where it was sold to the public. This is where the problems arose.

Paul had taught the converts at Corinth not to become involved in pagan rituals or sacrifices (I Cor. 10:14-21). Christians should have no connection with such idolatrous practices.

But some questioned eating the leftover sacrificial meat sold in the butcher shops. How were Christians to tell the difference between ordinary meat and that which came from pagan altars? And if you were invited to a friend's home, how could you be sure the host wasn't serving "defiled" meat?

Paul explained that the idol was just wood and stone (verse 19). The meat offered to it was just meat. The sin would be in actually participating in a pagan ceremony (verses 20-21).

Therefore, Paul told the Corinthians to stop worrying and to go ahead and buy their meat from the meat markets without asking whether it had been sacrificed to idols.

(verse 25). It didn't matter where the meat came from as long as it was good meat.

The same principle applied to eating at the home of a friend. It did not matter where the meat came from or what had happened to it. Meat was meat--regardless. As long as it was clean meat, it was all right to eat. That is why Paul said, "If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you" (verse 27, NKJ).

When Paul wrote "whatever," he was referring to any clean meat which either had or had not been offered in sacrifice to an idol. Paul's statements have nothing to do with the question of clean versus unclean meat. He was not claiming God's dietary laws were done away. He was simply showing that it was all right to eat clean meat which had once been part of a sacrifice to an idol.

Paul did add one warning, however. He said to ask "no question for conscience' sake" (verse 27). In other words, don't ask the host where the meat came from. It is better to ignore that matter, since it makes no difference anyway. If the Christian questioned the host about the meat, and then ate it, the host might be led to think that his Christian guest was compromising his belief. And others present might be left with the impression that idol worship isn't so bad in the eyes of a Christian. If someone volunteers the information that the meat is "tainted," then, in consideration of that person's conscience, the Christian should refrain from eating it.

The context of this chapter concerns whether or not it is permissible for a Christian to eat meat that had been offered to idols. Unclean meats is not the subject under discussion and is not even mentioned. As other parts of God's Word show, unclean meats should never be eaten (Lev. 11 and Deut. 14).

We hope you find this information enlightening. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Matthew 27:46 and whether or not the Father really forsook Jesus.

Yes, God DID forsake His Son while He hung on the cross. It is important to understand why.

Except for Jesus Christ, all humans have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Sin, the breaking of God's law, requires the penalty of death: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Sin also cuts one off from God: "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him" (John 9:31, NKJ). Isaiah wrote: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2, NKJ).

Nevertheless, when one does repent--change, turn around, go the right way, and overcome--God will hear and answer that person's request.

Did Jesus sin? Is that the reason the Father cut Himself off from His only begotten Son who poured out His blood and finally died on the cross? No, not at all.

Jesus was perfect. He never sinned. Notice: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:21-22). Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, willingly took on our sins and, by His shed blood and death, suffered the penalty of sin for us.

While He was on the cross, Jesus bore the sins of all of humanity, paying the penalty for them. Therefore, Jesus was cut off from God while on the cross because sin separates man from God. If God the Father was going to accept Jesus' one supreme sacrifice

as payment for the sins of all mankind, He had to turn His back on the sinbearer--Jesus. He had to forsake Jesus and let Him pay the full penalty for our sins.

God so loved the world that He was willing to cut Himself off from His perfect, loving, and obedient Son so that the Son could bear the sins of the world. How great and wonderful God's love is toward us!

But, remember, God forgives and applies Christ's sacrifice to only those who have truly repented, those who are willing to turn from their evil ways, the very ways which made Christ's supreme sacrifice necessary. Christ came to save man from his sins--not in his sins.

Why did Jesus ask the question He asked? Didn't He know that God had to turn His back on Him and forsake Him while He was carrying the sins of the world?

Certainly, Jesus fully realized that God had to forsake Him if the world were going to receive an atonement for its sins. This was one of the reasons Jesus came into the world (John 3:16-17). Why, then, did He ask the question? The answer is that by so doing He fulfilled prophecy.

David too, in a time of trouble, cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" (Ps. 22:1).

These words, spoken by a man after God's own heart hundreds of years before the crucifixion, prophetically applied to Christ. They foreshadowed the utter anguish Jesus felt when God the Father forsook Him.

Whenever we may assist you with your study of the Bible or in Christian living, please let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD (IC) OF THE 19th CENTURY

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning John 9:3 and whether or not the man mentioned here was predestined to be born blind.

This man was blind from birth so that "the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:3, NKJ). Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me" (verse 4). In other words, God provided certain deeds for Jesus to fulfill, and this was one of them.

The answer is, then, that this man was predestined to be blind from birth. This event was carefully planned by God to be a witness to the world that Jesus Christ is His Son.

Giving this man sight was one of the greatest miracles Jesus performed during His ministry on earth. The man himself said, "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind" (John 9:32, NKJ). And no one contradicted him. No human being could perform such a miracle without the power of God.

Your interest is appreciated. Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, please let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD - CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked whether the earth could contain all of the people who will be resurrected in the period described in Revelation 20:5, 11-12.

This world in its present state could hold few more people. Many areas are terribly overcrowded. Tillable land is becoming more scarce in many countries, and much of the world is covered with gigantic mountain ranges which are too high to be of use. Deserts or polar regions monopolize space on each continent at this time, and pollution, wars, and many other problems have lessened the earth's capacity to support additional people.

It is unlikely, then, that the world could now contain all those who will ever have lived. What we need to keep in mind, however, is that they will not live in this world, this age, this society. They will be resurrected after a thousand years of renovation by God's Government (Rev. 20:4-5). Here are some of the physical changes that will be made.

Mountains will be miraculously lowered to a tillable height, and valleys below sea level will be elevated (Isa. 40:4). The deserts will blossom abundantly (Isa. 35:1-2). God will restore a right climate to the earth and will provide rain when needed (Isa. 30:23; 35:7; Zech. 10:1).

These changes will take time, but Christ and the saints will have a thousand years to prepare the entire earth for the multitudes that will be resurrected.

Suppose that at the time the events of Revelation 20:11-12 occur, forty billion people will have lived. Could the earth possibly support this number?

Simple mathematics--fifty million square miles of land surface shared by forty billion people--tell us that there would be about five acres of land available for each four- to six-member household. This would be large enough to feed

the household and leave plenty of space for other purposes. This fits perfectly with Micah 4:4: "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid."

The Bible clearly shows the logic of God's plan for mankind. For further information on this and other exciting prophecies, please request our free booklet THE WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW--WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE.

Thank you for your question. Please feel welcome to contact us whenever you have further questions.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Genesis 32:32.

This verse reads: "Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank" (New King James).

The children of Israel began the observance of this custom voluntarily, out of respect for their ancestor Jacob. This tradition was faithfully observed by the Jews in the time of Jesus, as is recorded in the Antiquities of the Jews, by Flavius Josephus (Book I, Chapter XX, Section 2), and is followed today by some Orthodox Jews. There is, however, no record in the Bible that Jesus Himself ever observed it. It was a tradition of men and is not binding upon Christians today.

It would not be wrong to observe this custom today. Such an observance, however, would be totally unnecessary.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is a pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning whether it is proper to eat in a restaurant on the Sabbath.

The Church has long taught that it is not wrong to eat out on the weekly Sabbath occasionally or on the annual Holy Days, depending upon one's circumstances and preferences.

Those waiters, waitresses, chefs, and the like, who may serve in a restaurant, are not our "servants" in the way as described in the Fourth Commandment. They are the employees of the owner of the restaurant. They would be working regardless of whether or not we ate there. God does not hold us responsible for their working on the Sabbath just because we use their services--unless we were the only ones who ever ate in that restaurant on the Sabbath. Obviously, we make up a very small portion of the customers served in restaurants on the Sabbath or Holy Days.

Further, eating out occasionally on the Sabbath can enhance spiritual fellowship with brethren and allow family members more time to be with one another.

Some may still feel that eating out is not included in those things a Christian may do on the Sabbath and Holy Days. No person should violate his own conscience in this matter, nor should he judge someone else on this subject. It is a matter of personal conviction. However, whatsoever is not of faith is sin. See Romans 14:22-23. Therefore, be fully persuaded in your own mind according to your own faith in Christ Jesus.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. We appreciate the opportunity to help you in this way.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

You asked if there is evidence, apart from the Bible, that Jesus really lived.

Actually, the accounts in the Bible, which are God's inspired revelation to humanity, are proof enough.-- But extrabiblical sources also amply attest that Jesus lived, that He was born of a young virgin, preached the Gospel, performed miracles, and was condemned to execution.

Justin Martyr, a second-century theologian, wrote: "Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, 35 stadia from Jerusalem, in which Christ was born, as you can ascertain also from the registries of the taxing under Cyrenius your first procurator in Judea" (First Apology, Chapter 34).

Justin Martyr was referring to public records that existed in his day to demonstrate that Jesus was born in Judea. Of course, one would expect that a religionist such as Justin Martyr would naturally support Jesus' authenticity as a historical person. But what about a historian who despised Christians?

Cornelius Tacitus, Roman historian, senator, consul, and governor of the province of Asia, wrote this concerning Jesus and His followers: "Nero . . . punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. But in spite of this temporary setback, the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome" (The Annals of Imperial Rome, XV, 44).

The fourth-century Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (named this because he turned from Christianity after being brought up in it) wrote a major work against Christianity in which he said this: "Jesus, whom you celebrate, was one of Caesar's subjects. . . . If you dispute it, I will prove it by and by; but it may be as well done now. For yourselves allow, that he was enrolled with his father and mother in the time of Cyrenius. . . . But Jesus having persuaded a few among you, and those the worst of men, has now been celebrated about 300 years; having done nothing in his lifetime worthy of

remembrance; unless anyone thinks it a mighty matter to heal lame and blind people, and exorcise demoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany" (Cyril Contra Julian, VI, pages 213, 191).

These are reports from pagan Romans who despised Christianity. They had access to government records, and, if they could have disproved Jesus' authenticity, they would have done so. But, they could not. Their writings are additional proof of Christ's life.

What about the Jews? If Jesus did not exist, the Jews would have had no reason to reject Him! The Jewish historian Josephus admitted that Jesus, His disciples, and John the Baptist lived. He called John the Baptist "the good man" (Antiquities of the Jews, XVIII, 5, 2). Scholars recognize as genuine his account of the death of James, "the brother of Jesus who was called Christ" (Ibid., XX, 9, 1).

According to The Jewish Encyclopedia (1907 edition) and other sources, Jesus is also mentioned in the Talmud, the collection of Jewish tradition consisting of the Mishnah and the Gemara. The sections of the Talmud which are said to be references to Jesus are Shabbath 104b and 116b; Sanhedrin 43a, 67a, and 107b; and Sotah 47a. You may also wish to read the article "Jesus of Nazareth" in The Jewish Encyclopedia (1907 edition), the article "Jesus" in the Encyclopaedia Judaica, the articles "Jesus Christ" and "Talmud and Midrash," which shows how the Talmud (Mishna) is organized, in The New Encyclopaedia Britannica (1981 edition), and the book titled Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, and the Liturgy of the Synagogue, by Gustaf Dalman (1973).

These facts, all from sources outside the Bible, clearly substantiate the existence of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not a myth. The Bible record is true.

If you would like further information about Jesus Christ and the Gospel He came to announce, please send for our free reprint series "Millions Do Not Know What Christ Really Was!" and our free booklet WHAT IS THE TRUE GOSPEL?

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ARCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question regarding the "times of the gentiles," which Jesus mentioned in Luke 21:24.

Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are all accounts of Jesus' teaching about how to recognize the signs of His coming and the end of this age. The "times of the gentiles" are one of those signs which Jesus said would occur shortly before He returns.

Several other prophecies help us understand the "times of the gentiles." Daniel 12:7, for example, tells us that in the end time a gentile power will succeed in occupying Jerusalem, as well as other portions of the Holy Land, for "a time, times, and an half [a time]." These are the "times of the gentiles" of which Jesus spoke of. But, what does this mean?

Revelation 11:2 clarifies this by telling us that this gentile power--the beast--will be allowed to trample on the city of Jerusalem for 42 months. During this same time, God's two witnesses will testify against this power in Jerusalem for 1260 days (verse 3). This all occurs at the same time as the Great Tribulation and the day of the Lord. The faithful people of God will be granted protection (Rev. 12:14) during the time that the beast exercises authority and rule (Rev. 13:5).

Therefore, we can know that the "times of the gentiles" which Jesus spoke of are the final three and a half years of this age. They end when Jesus comes back to save the world and to set up His Government in Jerusalem!

If you would like to receive additional information about the coming beast power, please feel welcome to request a copy of our booklet WHO OR WHAT IS THE PROPHETIC BEAST? It is free for the asking.

Whenever we may be of additional assistance to you in your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ARCH OF GOD INC

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the length of a generation.

The Bible does not give a direct answer to this common question. Yet it does leave us with some observations. When we study the Scriptures, it becomes clear that the length of a generation differs from one historic period to the next. We find that the generations of the earlier history of man were longer, because people lived longer and tended to marry later in life.

One of the genealogies in the New Testament says this: "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations" (Matt. 1:17, NKJ). Each of these three groupings were summed up as 14 generations. Yet, they did not last the same number of years. In fact, the average generation in the period from Abraham to David was approximately 64 years. But, the average generation from David to the Babylonian captivity and from that captivity to Christ was about 38 years.

The term "generation" may have other meanings too. The "generation" that sees Christ's return, for example, refers to all the people living at that time.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD ROYAL GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the Exodus and whether or not Moses and the Israelites passed through the body of water we call the Red Sea.

Some have suggested that the Israelites actually crossed a reedy marsh north of the Gulf of Suez. The Bible itself, however, proves that this is not what happened.

The modern-day Red Sea, with the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba, was known by the Hebrews as Yam Suph--the Reed Sea. It was in the Reed Sea (Yam Suph) that Solomon based a "navy of ships." See I Kings 9:26-28. It was also the Reed Sea (Yam Suph) which Ham Suph at first stopped the Israelites in their trek out of Egypt. See Exodus 15:4, 22. Was Yam Suph a marsh or a shallow lake? Did the translators make a mistake in identifying this place as the Red Sea?

The evidence proves that the answer to both of these questions is no. Solomon's ships brought back great treasures from distant ports. The cargo of gold alone weighed about 22 tons (I Kings 9:28). The language and meaning is clear; Solomon's men did not merely pole their way across a lake and return with a few ounces of the precious metal. Solomon's ships were seagoing vessels and were manned by those who were thoroughly experienced in sailing the oceans (verse 27).

But there is stronger evidence yet. The biblical descriptions of the crossing of yam suph could hardly be applied to wading across a reed-filled, marshy bog. Notice: "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a WALL to them on their right hand and on their left." (Ex. 14:21-22, NKJ; compare verse 29; emphasis ours throughout).

Notice also verses 28 and 30: "Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them

remained. . . . So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." Elsewhere it is shown that Pharaoh's army drowned in the water as it overflowed them (Ex. 15:4; Heb. 11:29; Deut. 11:4). The water returned with such great force that not one Egyptian escaped.

And consider, even though they walked on dry ground, the Psalmist tells us that the children of Israel passed through the depths of yam suph (Ps. 106:9). Notice Moses' song: "Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath which consumed them like stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright like a heap; and the depths congealed in the heart of the sea" (Ex. 15:4-8, NKJ).

In the New Testament, the crossing of the Red Sea is referred to as a "baptism" of the Israelites (I Cor. 10:1-2). As our free booklet ALL ABOUT WATER BAPTISM explains, true baptism is accomplished only by total immersion in water. With a wall of water standing on each side of the fleeing Israelites and the cloud covering them, the entire nation, in effect, was buried in water. The picture is striking. Walking across a dried-up marsh, on the other hand, could hardly be taken to represent baptism.

The Bible record clearly refers to what we know of today as the Gulf of Suez (Red Sea), the same sea which is several miles wide and hundreds of feet deep. The crossing of the Red Sea was a spectacular miracle which carries great meaning for Christians today.

We trust that this information is helpful. Please let us know whenever we may be of further assistance to you in your study of God's Word.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RECH OF CODE

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your request for information about the New Age movement, which has been in the news in recent years.

The New Age movement has been described as "an esoteric blend of computer-age jargon and ancient religious practice, which often invested stones with powerful magic" (Time magazine, January 19, 1987, page 66). The main concepts it embraces--reincarnation, channeling, and the use of crystals--are not in accord with biblical teaching.

We are to seek instruction and answers about how to live, not from rocks, familiar spirits, and the like, but from God, whose written Word is the Bible (Isaiah 8:19-20; John 17:17; II Timothy 2:15-16). For further study, you may wish to request our free publications: IS GOD REAL TO YOU?, WHAT IS A REAL CHRISTIAN?, IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?, DID GOD CREATE A DEVIL?, IS THERE A REAL SPIRIT WORLD?, and WHAT IS MAN?

It is our pleasure to be of service. Please let us know whenever we may be of additional assistance.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD TCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning John 5:37.

Jesus said, "Ye have neither heard his [the Father's] voice at any time, nor seen his shape." Jesus here was speaking directly to those gathered around Him--those who sought to kill Him, as the context of verses 16 through 19 reveals. This statement does not say that no human at any time has ever heard the Father's voice.

In fact, a few in Jesus' day heard the Father's voice conveyed from heaven to earth. It is clear from Matthew 17:5, for example, that the disciples actually heard His voice. It was the Father's voice that Jesus, and perhaps John, heard on another occasion (Matt. 3:17). There can be no doubt that it was God speaking and that Jesus recognized the voice as the Father's.

Whenever we may be of additional assistance to you in your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the book of Hebrews.

There has been much speculation regarding the authorship of this book, which dates from approximately A.D. 61-62. The most commonly accepted belief of biblical scholars is that the author was the apostle Paul. The subject matter of the book strongly supports this understanding, and we believe it is correct.

Timothy may have acted as a scribe for Paul and delivered the book to the Jerusalem church. It is also believed that Luke translated this book from Hebrew, its original language, into Greek.

Whenever we may assist you with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD RCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the subject of oral sex.

Nothing is specifically written in the Bible to condemn oral sex within marriage if both husband and wife are fully agreed in expressing their intimacy in this manner.

God's law of love would certainly rule out oral sex if either mate finds it objectionable, or if the likelihood of causing bodily harm exists--as would be the case if one mate suffers from genital herpes, for example. Therefore, no Christian should demand oral sex if his or her mate finds it offensive! It is not a necessary element for good sexual adjustment in marriage.

Oral sex is a matter that concerns only the husband and wife involved. If both enjoy it as an expression of marital love, then it may properly fit into their lovemaking practices. But if either partner has any hesitancy about it, it will not add to the pleasure of the relationship and should not be used. Each mate should certainly refrain from anything that would be offensive to the other.

Sex in marriage should be a mutual expression of deep concern and love between mates. Whatever method of stimulation is used by a husband and wife should be based upon that foundation and be within the revealed laws of God.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible or in matters of Christian living, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about obtaining a good Bible dictionary.

Actually, most Bible dictionaries are helpful for general research such as looking up names and places mentioned in the Bible and for researching the meanings of obscure words. Among the many Bible dictionaries available, you should be able to find one that suits your personal preference and needs.

Following is a list of some of the Bible dictionaries you might find helpful: Davis Dictionary of the Bible by John D. Davis (Baker Book House), Unger's Bible Dictionary by Merrill F. Unger (Moody Press), Smith's Bible Dictionary by William Smith (Spire Books), The New Bible Dictionary (published by Tyndale), Peloubet's Bible Dictionary (published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston), and The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Zondervan Publishing House.) One or more of these should be available in most libraries and bookstores.

We appreciate your desire to learn more about God's Word. Please feel welcome to let us know whenever we may assist you further with your study.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry. You asked whether the use of medicines, vitamins, and mineral supplements derived from unclean animals would violate the biblical laws concerning clean and unclean meats.

A key verse in understanding this question is Leviticus 11:8. God commands us not to eat the flesh of certain animals. The scriptural instructions concerning food are abundantly clear.

Products that are consumed, however, can be broadly divided into the two categories of food and nonfood. Food is what we eat on a regular basis to sustain our physical life. Medications, drugs, and supplements would be in the category of nonfood.

In the nonfood category, we may find that some products are made from chemicals obtained from animals God classifies as unclean. Manufacturers select animals for economical reasons and process specific parts in order to obtain particular chemicals, minerals, or vitamins in concentrated form. Calcium, an element, can be extracted from oyster shells. Two chemicals which are commonly processed from unclean animals are estrogen, from horses, and insulin, from pigs. Some vitamins are also composed of chemicals processed from unclean animals. Vitamin A oil is obtained from fish livers.

Consuming these types of nonfood items, however, is not the equivalent of eating the flesh of unclean animals. Therefore, such products are not forbidden. Of course, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). If the prospect of using such an item defiles one's conscience, one should obtain a product that does not cause concern.

Whenever we may assist you further in the study of God's Word or in points of Christian living, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about polygamy.

The culture of much of the ancient world permitted a man to have more than one wife and/or concubine. Even today there are some areas of the world where polygamy is an accepted and legal arrangement. But, as clearly shown by biblical examples, polygamy often encourages rivalry, quarreling and emotional misery.

From reading about several Old Testament figures, one might get the idea that polygamy was common in ancient times. This impression is misleading, as indicated by the following quote:

"Although marriage was allowed with more than one woman simultaneously, as when Jacob married Leah and Rachel, and had sexual relationships with their servants, polygamy was not common in Israel in biblical times. One reason was that a husband had to be quite wealthy to be able to afford more than one wife. Therefore it tended to be royalty who had many wives. David had many, including Michal, Abigail, and Bathsheba, and Solomon had still more during the wealthiest part of his kingship.

"The high priest could have only one wife (Leviticus 21:13-14), and other leading figures of the Old Testament were monogamous--Noah, Isaac, Joseph. . . . It was often pointed out by the rabbis that more than one wife led to problems (Leah and Rachel, Genesis 30; Hannah and Peninnah, 1 Samuel 1)" (Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, 1987, Moody Press, pages 63-64).

It is stated in the article "Marriage" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: "It is significant that the common Semitic name for 'second wife' is [tsarah, number 6869 in Strong's Concordance], the root meaning of which is 'show hostility toward,' 'vex'." Also see page 865d of The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon, 1979, Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc. Strong's goes on to define tsarah as "tightness (i.e. fig. trouble); trans. a female rival:--adversary, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, tribulation, trouble."

These words certainly describe the relationship between Sarah and Hagar and between Hannah and Peninnah. It is written in I Samuel 1:6, "And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb" (New King James).

Such intense rivalries arose in polygamous households that the law codes of Assyria (in the patriarchal period) and Hammurabi protected the rights of the various wives, concubines and children. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 protects the right of the firstborn son when he is the offspring of the less favored wife. That is, the civil law code of Israel did not forbid polygamy though it described its consequences.

While polygamy was practiced by some of the patriarchs and was permitted by the culture and laws of their times, it clearly was not the ideal marital arrangement. It is not even an acceptable practice in many modern cultures that permit casual living together and easy-to-obtain divorce.

Jesus, in responding to questions about divorce (another practice allowed because of the hardness of unconverted human hearts), cited the original marriage to reveal God's will. God made one wife for Adam, and God told Adam that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife (not many wives), and the two of them should become one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6). The New Testament makes it clear that each husband should have his own wife and each wife her own husband (I Corinthians 7:2).

Paul, mindful of God's instruction that the high priest could have only one wife, also stated that a man ordained to the ministry must not have more than one wife (I Timothy 3:2). Therefore, monogamy, not polygamy, is given more honorable status in God's revelation.

Today, polygamy is illegal in most of the Western world and is, therefore, prohibited to Christians, who are commanded to be in subjection to the laws of the land (Romans 13:1-7). In cultures where polygamy is legal and still accepted, however, persons coming into the Church already legally bound to two or more wives are to continue to honor their commitments. But a polygamous marriage would best not be contracted once a person is a member of the Church and has committed himself to seek and live fully by the will of God.

Thank you for your interest. If there is some way we may help you further, we hope you will let us know.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Jesus Christ's second coming.

Many have tried to determine the date of Jesus' return based on their theories and interpretations of events, dates, numbers, and periods of time. None of these predictions has proved reliable.

It simply is not possible for anyone to accurately predict when Christ will return. Jesus Himself said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24:36, NKJ). Notice also Matthew 25:30 and Mark 13:32-33.

Although we do not know the day or the hour, Jesus gave us a number of events to watch for which lead up to His return. You will find them listed in Matthew 24. One such event is the gospel of the Kingdom of God being preached throughout the earth (verse 14).

Jesus also used the parable of the fig tree to illustrate His coming (verses 32-33). When we see the leaves of the fig tree begin to bud and grow, we know that summer is near. In like manner, when we see these end-time prophecies being fulfilled (Matt. 24:5-30), then we can know that Christ's return is imminent. Even so, no prophecy or combination of prophecies pinpoints the precise day.

For more information on the prophecies of the end time, you may wish to request a copy of our free booklet INSIDE THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

Whenever we may assist you further with your study of the Bible, we hope you will let us know. It is our pleasure to serve you.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning a husband and wife having sexual intercourse during the time the wife is menstruating.

The primary biblical instruction about this is found in Leviticus 15:19-30. You may also wish to read chapter 18, verse 19 and chapter 20, verse 18.

In this law given to ancient Israel, it was forbidden for a husband and wife to have sexual intercourse when the wife was menstruating. The law protected health and promoted hygiene. While the ceremonial aspects of this law, such as the specified periods of separation and "uncleanness," are no longer applicable, there is an important principle of health to be considered.

Some medical evidence suggests that some diseases may be more easily acquired by a woman during menstruation. Apparently at that time a woman's vagina is more tender and susceptible to injury. Some form of even minor injury during sex could provide an opening for disease organisms to enter her bloodstream. An article in The Journal of Reproductive Medicine indicates that sex during menstruation presents a positive risk of fragments of the uterus lining migrating to other organs in the pelvic region and producing cysts (November 1989, Volume 34, Number 11, page 887, article "Coitus During Menses").

The importance of this matter to God is evident from Ezekiel 18:5-9. Here are listed some of the characteristics of a righteous man. Among them is not having sexual intercourse with his wife while she is menstruating (verse 6). Therefore, God's Word shows that a couple should refrain from coming together sexually during that time.

Does this instruction prohibit other methods of lovemaking during menstruation? It does not. However, a Christian husband would not impose himself upon his wife during that time.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to serve you.
Please let us know whenever we may assist you further with your
understanding of the Bible and God's way of life.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning labor unions.

Although the Bible does not mention labor unions as such, it does contain a number of guidelines for both employers and employees. For example, employers are instructed to treat their employees well (Eph. 6:9). Also, cheating workers by not paying them fairly is condemned (Jas. 5:4). At the same time, employees are to serve their employers diligently and be deserving of their wages (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25).

Employer-employee relations, then, should be much more of a cooperative arrangement than has commonly been the practice. The rise of unions in the past century has been mainly a reaction to oppressive policies of management toward labor. While there have been abuses and violence along the way, the modern workplace is much safer than in times past. Workers have gained many worthwhile benefits as a result of peaceful negotiations.

Membership in a labor union breaks no biblical law. A Christian, of course, could not take part in every union activity. In the event of a conflict between any union policy or action and biblical teachings, the Christian must follow the higher authority. A Christian should not harm or take vengeance on another human being in any way. These unfortunate things sometimes do occur in labor struggles (see Romans 12:9). As with any other part of life, we recommend that a person be guided by the Ten Commandments and the "golden rule." Applying these laws will help avoid any actions which would be contrary to God's Word.

The payment of union dues is not contrary to the Bible. In some cases, however, a union's master contract may allow a member to contribute an equal amount to a recognized charity in lieu of paying dues to the union. If a person opposes

paying dues to a union (he may disagree with how the funds are used, for example), he might inquire into the possibility of donating an equal amount to a recognized charity instead.

Thank you for your interest. We hope you will let us know whenever we may serve you again.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Colossians 2:16.

This passage is frequently cited in an effort to show what has been abolished by Christ. According to that interpretation, Paul's list ("in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or to the sabbath days") is a reminder of what is no longer in force.

This interpretation is clearly wrong. Christ's death did not put an end to eating and drinking or to keeping holy days. The New Testament contains adequate references to Christians, after Christ's death and resurrection, eating and drinking. And to see how positively the New Testament speaks about God's holy days, one has only to read the account of what took place on the first feast of Pentecost. See Acts 2.

The opposite interpretation is equally wrong. Paul's list cannot have been given specifically as a reminder of what Christians should be observing, as is obvious from the mention of "new moons." New moons are not among the days Christians are commanded to observe.

To fully understand these verses we must apply one of the basic rules of Bible study and look at them in light of their background and context.

One of the reasons the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Christians at Colossae was a disturbing report he had received. The faith of some in the church was being undermined by a heresy. Certain Jewish Christians had fallen prey to early Gnostic teachings. As a result, they contended that Jesus Christ was not the center of God's plan of salvation. They dishonored Christ by seeking to approach God another way.

According to them, Christians trying to reach God through Christ were presumptuous. Such Christians needed to lower their view, these misguided teachers claimed, and seek the mediation of more easily accessible angelic beings to reach beyond Christ to the Supreme God (2:18).

Part of this process was a measure of self-abasement--asceticism (2:23). This included strict regulations in matters of eating and drinking, as well as burdensome dos and don'ts regarding the observance of the holy days, new moons, and Sabbath days (2:20-21). The apostle Paul declared that such "philosophy" (2:18) was in error. It consisted of ideas and commandments of men (2:22).

Jesus Christ is the total and complete way to God (2:9-10). In Him the spiritual IOU for our sins (awkwardly translated "handwriting of ordinances"--2:14) is blotted out. Jesus Christ transcends all (2:15). Therefore the Christians at Colossae were not to let themselves be taken to task by heretical teachers concerning matters such as eating, drinking, holy days, new moons, and Sabbaths.

After all, how could such matters possibly transcend Christ? He is the body, the substance, the very center of God's plan of salvation. All else is a mere shadow that holds no value as a replacement for Him (2:17).

Thank you again for your question. It is our pleasure to assist you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning donating one's body for medical research after death.

The Bible is silent regarding this topic. There is no scriptural proof one way or the other. Therefore, as with other issues, whether or not to donate one's body organs for scientific research must be a personal decision based on the individual's conscience and understanding.

It is true that medical science has not always had the best reputation for how organs and tissues were obtained for study and how they were used. Through the centuries, the scientific community has had to battle much superstition and false belief. In modern times there are laws and policies regarding the use of donated organs, and the system of organ donation is far more organized and respectable. If a person wishes to contribute to the betterment of mankind in this way, that is his or her own decision. The Worldwide Church of God neither condemns nor encourages the practice.

Even though donating one's body for furthering medical research is a personal decision that violates no biblical laws, many people find this practice to be abhorrent. Not only should one not violate his own conscience, but the feelings and consciences of family members should be taken into consideration. The practice of love would compel us to avoid offense when we can.

Thank you again for your question. It is our pleasure to assist you with your study of the Bible and in matters of Christian living.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning Luke 23:43 and the "thief on the cross."

Jesus said that the repentant malefactor would be with Him in Paradise. If we can prove where Jesus went when He died, then we can prove whether the malefactor really went to Paradise that day.

Paul states: "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3-4). Jesus was buried--it does not say His body was buried, and that His soul went to Paradise. It reads that He--Jesus, Himself--was buried. He was dead for three days and nights.

John gives further proof where Jesus was. "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre There"--in the tomb--the grave--"laid they Jesus" (John 19:41-42). It was Jesus who was laid in the tomb, not merely His body. Jesus was dead.

Peter also refers to this: "He [the prophet David] seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31). Jesus was not in Paradise; He was in hell. The word "hell" ought to be rendered "grave." The original Greek word used here was hades, meaning the "grave." It does not mean a fiery, burning hell. The Bible uses another word for that.

Hell or the grave is not Paradise. Since Jesus did not enter Paradise the day of the crucifixion, then neither did the malefactor enter it. Christ has "preeminence" in all things (Col. 1:18). The malefactor, therefore, could not have preceded Christ to Paradise. Whenever the malefactor enters Paradise, Christ will be there too.

Some use I Peter 3:19-20 as supposed proof that Jesus was alive when He was dead--that He preached to spirits in prison during the time He was in the grave asleep in death. But notice what these verses really say. Wicked angels who followed Satan are in chains of darkness, imprisoned for their own folly (Jude 6). When did Jesus

preach to the imprisoned spirits? Read it: ". . . in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (I Pet. 3:20). Jesus preached to the wicked angels in the days of Noah, not during the time He was in the tomb.

Where is Paradise? Paul wrote of one who was given marvelous revelations from God. In a vision he was "caught up to the third heaven"--God's throne. "He was caught up into PARADISE" (II Cor. 12:1-5). Paradise is located in the presence of God's throne.

The Bible further describes Paradise: "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7, American Standard Version). Note that the tree of life is in the Paradise of God.

Revelation 22, verses 1 and 2 refer to "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." In this city we find "a river of water of life . . . proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life" (ASV). The new Jerusalem contains the tree of life. The Paradise of God is the new Jerusalem.

Jesus said the malefactor would be with Him in this Paradise. The new Jerusalem is not yet finished. Jesus is still preparing a place for us in it (John 14:2). Not until after the Millennium will it be fully ready (Rev. 20:1-5). Not until then will it descend to earth--not until then will the malefactor enter Paradise.

Then what did Jesus mean by saying, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"? The thief's plea was, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). The plain fact is that Jesus has not yet come into His kingdom (Luke 11:2; 19:11; I Cor. 11:26; I Thess. 4:13-17; I Cor. 15:23, 49-52).

Also, most translations of Luke 23:43 are improperly punctuated. A comma placed before the word "today" is incorrect. Punctuation was not used in the Greek which Luke wrote. It was added centuries later. Here is, word for word, the order in the inspired original Greek: "Verily I say to thee today, 'With me shalt thou be in the Paradise.'" Jesus stressed the time of His promise--not the time He would be in Paradise.

The malefactor is still dead and buried. Jesus alone is the firstborn from the dead (Rom. 8:29; Acts 26:23; I Cor. 15:23). But the time is coming when this man shall be resurrected also and eventually shall enter the Paradise of God along with all the other saints to be with Christ.

It is our pleasure to assist you with your study of the Bible.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your inquiry concerning the subject of the Trinity and the nature of the Godhead.

The Worldwide Church of God believes in one God (Deut. 6:4). In this context, it teaches the full divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit--the biblical foundation for all Trinitarian discussions. It accepts every facet of God's self-disclosure as found in the Holy Scriptures. The Church baptizes converts "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" according to the instruction found in Matthew 28:19.

Though the Church considers some positions on the Trinity to be heretical (all forms of Arianism, for example), it maintains that the particular creeds adopted by the Councils since the fourth century come short of an entirely satisfactory explanation of the nature of the Godhead. Indeed, these creedal statements are often contradictory and unnecessarily divisive. For example, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan statements of the fourth century speak of the single procession of the Spirit from the Father, which is still the position of the Eastern Church. The Councils of Toledo in the fifth and sixth centuries adopted the position of the double procession of the Spirit (both from the Father and the Son), and the Western Church maintains this view to this day. Furthermore, debates over monistic and pluralistic traditions have never been resolved. It goes without saying that a full and accurate statement on the nature of God would be a major achievement in the history of dogmatics. In the meantime, believers need not be concerned in the practice of the Faith, even though theologians and philosophers cannot agree on the nature of God.

The Worldwide Church of God has made all biblical truths an indispensable part of its teaching, including the doctrine that God is One--but not the specific way in which God is One (which is entirely a philosophical matter). It teaches the full divinity of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit--but it does not enter the debate of whether God is an essential, a personal, or a supra-personal being, in the way these terms are used by theologians.

In the practice of the Christian Faith, the Worldwide Church of God encourages every individual to come to a full understanding of the way God has revealed Himself to man through the Holy Scriptures. To that end it publishes literature on specific subjects such as Bible study, faith, repentance, Christian living, salvation, righteousness and growing to perfection.

Please feel welcome to request literature we announce in the PLAIN TRUTH magazine and in the Bible Correspondence Course. We believe this will help you come to a better understanding of God and His plan for mankind.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your recent question. You asked whether the Great Tribulation is the same event as the day of the Lord.

The Great Tribulation and the day of the Lord are not the same. Concerning the coming Great Tribulation, Jesus said: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22, NKJ).

Then Jesus said: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (verse 29, NKJ). The prophet Joel records these same heavenly sights: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31, NKJ).

Taken together, Matthew 24:29 and Joel 2:31 show that the heavenly signs occur after the Great Tribulation and before the day of the Lord. Clearly, then, the Great Tribulation and the day of the Lord are two separate events. The Great Tribulation is Satan's wrath unleashed upon the world, primarily against the descendants of Israel and those who obey God (Revelation 12:7-17). The day of the Lord is God's intervention in world affairs to rescue humanity from self-destruction.

The day of the Lord begins with God's intervention in human affairs and continues for more than a thousand years while Christ rules on earth.

For further information, please write for our free booklet INSIDE THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

Thank you for your interest. Please let us know whenever we may help you further.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question about Galatians 4:10.

Paul wrote: "But . . . when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known 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 [times] and years" (Gal. 4:8-10, NKJ).

Did Paul mention God's Holy Days, such as Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles or the Sabbath? No. He said, "Days and months and seasons [times] and years"--something altogether different.

Paul began the fourth chapter by addressing the Jews. He wrote "we," because Paul himself was a Jew (verse 3). But, in verse 6, he began addressing the gentile converts. He did not say "we," but "you." He said that there was a time when they did not know God (verse 8). The Jews knew God, but the gentiles had not known Him before they heard the gospel. Jesus said to the gentile Samaritan woman: "You"--the gentiles--"worship what you do not know; we"--the Jews--"know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

The converts to whom Paul is now writing were not Jews. They were gentiles by birth. In times past they did not know God and were cut off from Him (Eph. 2:13). They had been serving demons and idols, not the living God. False teachers were coming among them, perverting the gospel, beguiling them to turn again to their former ways. They were leaving the gospel to return to "days and months and seasons [times] and years." They couldn't be returning to God's festivals. They did not keep them before Paul preached about them.

In Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10, 14 we find that Moses, according to the command of God, ordered the people not to observe "times." To observe "times" originally was a heathen practice often attached to the heavenly bodies, especially in determining the pagan calendar and the heathen religious seasons.

The Catholic bishop Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth century, admits that these superstitious times Paul forbids were pagan customs practiced by "Christians" in his day, as in the days of old. He says: "Many were superstitiously addicted to divination. . . . In the

celebration of these times [they] set up lamps in the marketplace, and crown their doors with garlands" (from Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, pages 1123-1124).

Besides times, the Greeks observed special days in honor of the dead. "The rites took place on the . . . unlucky days accompanied by complete idleness and cessation of business" (Hutton Webster, Rest Days, page 79).

These gentile Galatians were returning to the customs of doing penance on the old pagan days. Paul denounced this vain and abominable practice. We are not to learn the way of the heathen (Jer. 10:1-2 and Deut. 12:29-32).

In connection with the old pagan system were many days observed as idolatrous festivals of penance. These days were consecrated to deities of the state religious cults and were "unlucky" because of the supposed influence of the gods. They were set aside as periods of penance because they were "regarded as unsuitable for many purposes, both public and private: for battles, levies, sacred rites, journeys and marriages. We are told that they owed their unlucky quality to the pronouncement of the Senate and pontiffs" (Ibid., page 17). As many as one third of the old Greek and Roman calendars were marked as "unlawful for judicial and political business . . . on which the state expected the citizens to abstain from their private business and labour" (Ibid., pages 304-305).

No wonder Paul spoke of "days." And how many religious and nonreligious people still have similar beliefs about certain days, such as unlucky Friday the 13th?

Notice that Paul also condemns the custom of observing "months, and . . . years." Certain months of the year were considered sacred to the Greek gods Apollo (April, October), Artemis (April), Bacchus (January), Zeus (February, June) and many others. Also, entire years were set aside every two and four years. During these special years, national idolatrous feasts were held and the Olympic, Isthmian, Nemean and Pythian games were celebrated. Every one of these was connected with idolatrous worship and ceremony.

In short, then, Paul was forbidding gentile converts to return to these heathen practices of observing days, months, times and years. At the same time, he was not forbidding them to keep God's Holy Days and festivals.

Thank you for your interest. We appreciate being able to assist you with your study of the Bible. If you would like to know more about God's festivals and their meaning for us today, please write for our free booklet PAGAN HOLIDAYS--OR GOD'S HOLY DAYS--WHICH?

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

JOSEPH W. TKACH
PASTOR GENERAL

Dear Friend:

Thank you for your question concerning the war in the Persian Gulf.

The war between the allied forces and Iraq illustrates the dangerous times in which we are living. When Cold War tensions eased and the democratic movement swept through eastern Europe, many analysts expected world peace would ensue. But the Bible clearly teaches that before there can be lasting peace, Jesus Christ must first return and establish the Kingdom of God on the earth.

We are living in a volatile age, an age when Jesus Christ said "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matt. 24:7). But we must not make the mistake of thinking this war in the Persian Gulf is the last war that will culminate in the end of this age (as people have assumed of other wars now long past). Notice what Jesus says in Matthew 24:6: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matt. 24:6, NKJ).

As with many other events on the world scene (such as those occurring in eastern Europe and Germany), this war may be setting the stage for the political climate as it will be prior to Christ's return. However, we do not see that this war is specifically mentioned in any Bible prophecy. Therefore, while any war is of concern to all peoples, we encourage you to follow Jesus' admonition and not be unduly troubled or alarmed.

Mr. Joseph W. Tkach, pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, wrote the following in a letter to members of the Church:

"These are difficult and trying times for all humanity. We should all pray for God's will to be done and for protection for all God's people in all parts of the world.

"We should also pray for all families affected by the war and for world leaders, so that, as Paul wrote, we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (II Timothy 2:1-2).

"As members of the Body of Christ, with brothers and sisters from every nationality and human citizenship, our ultimate allegiance is to God. Our prayer in any international conflict is that God's will be done and that his purpose be furthered. Whatever the eventual outcome of the Gulf War, we know our commission (Mark 16:15), and we must never cease for doing it.

"Our hearts go out to all those who have and will suffer from the tragedy of war. We should pray for them, and especially, as Jesus commanded, we should pray with all the more zeal, 'Thy kingdom come!'"

If you would like more information about Bible prophecy, please feel welcome to send for our publication INSIDE THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

Thank you for your interest. Please let us know whenever we may be of further help.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DEPARTMENT