

Zion Assembly Church of God

13th Annual General Assembly Minutes

September 6-11, 2016
United Christian Church
Cleveland, Tennessee

“Commissioned to Build God’s House”



*“Go up unto the mountain . . . and build the House;
and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified,
says the Lord” (Haggai 1:8)*

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A Biblical Explanation of the . . .

General Assembly

The General Assembly is an extraordinary event because 1) it represents the universal [or catholic] expression of the church in worship, fellowship, and decision-making, and 2) it is the highest tribunal of authority on earth under Christ in matters of faith and spiritual government.

In the General Assembly the ministers and members meet together with God in a decision-making capacity in order to determine the will of God, to seek His light and guidance for the future course of the church, and to commit themselves to live and work by the resolutions adopted by Assembly. The Assembly represents the one time of the year that the ministers and members gather together in His name from all over the world to bind and loose in the earth what God has bound and loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). They consecrate themselves to understand the will of God---to find the perfect mind of Christ. This is why in Jacob's words the church is a *dreadful place* (Genesis 28:16, 17): for it is at this special time that the church acts in its official capacity as God's *ekklesia*, having been ordained and authorized by Christ to do so (Matthew 16:19; 18:17; Mark 13:34; Luke 19:13; John 20:23; Acts 1:13-21; 6:1-6; 15:1-29). Here in this special meeting, the church reasons together with God (Isaiah 1:18; Acts 15:6-19, 28), and the ministers and members look judiciously into the Holy Scriptures (Acts 15:15-18 and compare with Amos 9:11, 12) seeking at the same time for the Spirit's illumination until an understanding is reached with God and one another on what is precisely the will of God (vv. 28-29). Then, having come to this understanding, all agree to "walk by the same rule" and "mind the same thing" (Philippians 3:16), that is, they bind ourselves to live and walk as one body by the decisions agreed upon in this sacred meeting.

Because the Bible is the supreme objective authority of the church, the General Assembly is "a judicial body only," that is, all decisions in regard to faith and government that are binding on the ministers and members must be shown to be in accord with the teachings of Christ and the apostles revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

The biblical model for the General Assembly and church's judicious process is found in Acts 15:1-29 in which the *apostles and elders* gathered together with the *whole church* (vv. 12, 22, 28) to deliberate together with the Spirit until an understanding of the will of God was determined. Thus it is said that the decisions made in the Jerusalem council *seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us* (v. 28). Then on this basis, they all agreed to live by the *decrees [dogmas] for to keep* (16:4). Thus it is said also, *And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily* (v. 5).

An underlying principle upon which the government of the church is established is corporate counsel based on the model in Acts 15. The church goes forward and operates by the counsel of the General Assembly which is made up of ministers and members from around the world, that is, by all of whom Providence has blessed to attend and participate. The wise man wrote, *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety* (Proverbs 11:14). And again, *Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established* (15:22).

When Rehoboam was made king in the Old Testament theocracy, it is said that *all Israel* came to Shechem to make him king (1 Kings 12:1). Moreover, it is emphasized that Rehoboam failed because he did not heed the counsel of the *elders and the people* in making decisions (vv. 6-15), but rather heeded the select counsel of a group of *young men that were grown up with him* (vv. 8-10), signifying that Rehoboam was partial in his

decision-making and succumbed to the opinion of the young men who actually opposed the will of God. Indeed, those young men, Rehoboam's former peers, typically were full of themselves, arrogant, boastful, and harsh in their opinions (vv. 10-14).

It will be noticed in the narrative regarding the house of God under Rehoboam that ultimately the will of God is all that really matters, and that the will of God is best determined by the deliberations and discerning gifts of the people who consecrate themselves to the Lord. Ultimately, however, God always has His way, sometimes in spite of the leaders and the people. *Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord* (v. 15; see also v. 24). Tragically, Rehoboam's actions caused the house of God to divide (vv. 16-20), but even this division was determined in the divine counsel and prosecuted according to the will of God. See the prophet Ahijah's prophecy (1 Kings 11:29-39). Thus God's fixed purpose in and through David was fulfilled in Christ through the southern kingdom of Judah. Nothing could prevent that!

The church under the spirit and terms of the New Covenant operates as *the habitation of God through the Spirit* (Ephesians 2:21). The ministers and members form the temple of God and are unified through the indwelling power and wisdom of the Spirit. This is the key to theocratic government--the indwelling graces and gifts of the Spirit being allowed to prevail in the church. For the Spirit creates a spiritual dynamic within the church that unites the ministers and members together in one body of Christ. The 120 on the day of Pentecost--before the Spirit had been poured out--were in *one accord* (Acts 2:1) because they had been *continually in the temple praising and blessing God* (Luke 24:53). Thus the essential key to the unity and power of the church is sanctification and remaining in a consecrated state in Christ. When everyone's ego is crucified [and is kept crucified!], then Christ rules supreme and the kingdom of God prevails! Thus Christ says in His prayer to the Father, *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in you, that they may be one in us . . . And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one* (John 17:17-23).

It is said following the day of Pentecost that *the multitude of them who believed were of one heart and of one soul* (Acts 4:32) and *great grace was upon them all* (v. 33). Likewise, the key to God's glorious government in this last day's Zion depends on our willingness to allow the Spirit to hold sway over us and prevail among us. The apostle Paul understood this divine principle and encouraged the church in the New Testament to *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:1-3). He went on to say, *[For] there is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through you all, and in you all*⁷ (vv. 4-6).

We see then that it is imperative that we cultivate the graces of Christ within us and labor in prayer to create a heavenly atmosphere in the place where we meet to deliberate and act for God. The power fell on the day of Pentecost because they were together in accord in one place. And they succeeded and grew because they were of one heart and one soul and great grace was upon them all.

Should we expect God's blessings to fall on this last day's Zion on the basis of anything less than He required of the New Testament church? Surely not. It is an ancient and timeless principle that cannot be transgressed if we expect the blessings and favor of God to be upon this latter day house: *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! . . . It is like the precious ointment upon the head . . . As the dew . . . that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing* (Psalm 133:1-3).

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Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Welcome Delegates

It would be an understatement to say that this Assembly is important and very much needed at this critical time in our history. For the church is being challenged at this very moment to hold fast against the rising tide of antichrist philosophies and practices, and to battle her way through the powers of darkness to fulfill her mission in the world.

As the world turns more to the image of the Beast, the Bride of Christ must turn more to her glorious Bridegroom.

Certainly “perilous times” have never been more perilous than now, nor the spirit of deception and seduction more powerful and prevalent. Being as we are the “*children of light*” and “*children of the day*”, we “*know perfectly . . . the times and the seasons*”, that “*the day of the Lord*” is rapidly approaching (1 Th. 5.1-7). Still, being aware of the times is not enough; we must also “*put on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*” (v 8); in fact we are admonished in another place by the same apostle to “*Put on whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*”

For these reasons, we should take advantage of this specially appointed time together with God in this General Assembly. We want the church to be transformed this week into an Awesome and Dreadful place! (Gen. 28.17). Let us therefore consecrate ourselves to hear His voice during these few crucial days; to be instructed and empowered by His Spirit! Surely we need to hear His awe-inspiring voice speak to us in this critical hour---through a “*word of knowledge*” and a “*word of wisdom.*” “*Hear what the Spirit saith to the churches!*”

About the Theme

In regard to the theme of this Assembly---“*Commissioned to Build God’s House*”---we are endeavoring to stay the course in Zion Assembly and fulfill our commitment to restore the church according to the pattern revealed in the Bible, and to press forward to fulfill her mission in the world.

The prophetic vision of the church is indeed glorious and exciting: for the bride is promised to prevail against the very “*gates of hell*”, and to be “*caught up*” victoriously to meet her Lord in the air (1 Th. 4.16-18). Then after rejoicing with Him at the Marriage Supper (Lu. 14.15; Rev. 19.7-9), we are foreordained to return with Christ to defeat the Antichrist and his armies in the Battle of Armageddon, and to rule and reign with Christ in His kingdom on earth for a thousand years (Rev. 16.12-16; 19.11-21; 20.3-6). What happy and glorious times are ahead for God’s people!

Zion Assembly Church of God

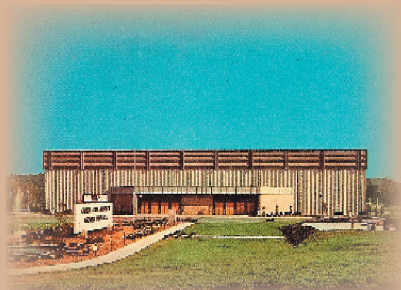
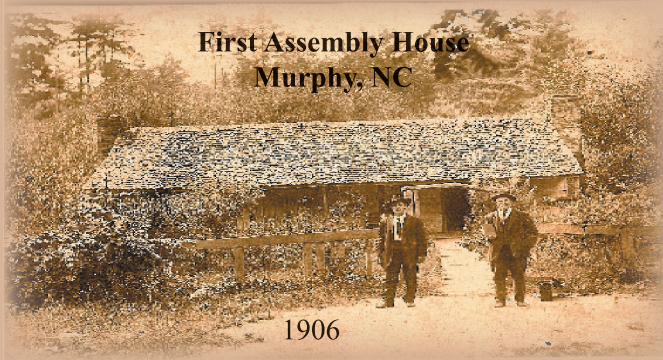
International Ministries Center



United Christian Church

(assembly site 2016)

Historical Assembly Sites



Administration

Presiding Bishop.....Wade H. Phillips
Superintendent of Operations..... Scott E. Neill
Chief Clerk.....Marie Crook
Julia Massey, Sandra Moore, Brenda Reitler, Rita Goodrum,
Donna Pounders, , Sandy Morris, Billie Smith, Shelby Erwin

Chief Usher.....Tod Deakle
Eddie Davis, Vernon Johnson, Cecil Pounders, Bill Reid,
Corey Hall, Daren Childers, Jerry Nichols, Robert Ramirez,
Dave Ashley, Matthew McDonald. J. L. Green, Lee Jaynes,
Andrew McDonald

Chief Registrar.....Mandy Thompson
Emma Erwin, Elizabeth McDonald, Ashley Reitler,
Rachel McDonald, Ally Thompson, Chloe Brooks.

Assembly Business Committee

Chairman Joseph Steele
Zachary Snyder
L. W. Carter
Ray Dickson
Byron Harris
Scott Neill
Tod Deakle
Pete Sarry. (alternate)

Video and Streaming..... Allen Thompson,
Derrick McBride
Danny Shroader

Sound Equipment..... Jerry Pounders

Photography.....Julie Steele, Regina Brooks

Stage Manager..... Joeseph A. Steele

Music.....Zachary Snyder

Maintenance/Props.....Jim Orange

Special Programs Director.....Wanda Busbee



Greetings!

Scott E. Neill
Superintendent of Operations

*I stretch forth my hands unto Thee,;
my soul thirsts after Thee, as a thirsty land (Ps. 143.6)*

I remember as young man growing up on a farm watching my father place a “salt block” under a tree for our cattle to lick. The salt block caused the cattle to crave water and at the same time helped them to regulate the amount of healthy sodium in their bodies. Likewise, it is vitally important in Zion Assembly that we thirst for the Word of God and desire to hear what God has to say to His church in this critical time together. Listen! Listen! He is going to speak to us in this General Assembly.

We are grateful that the United Christian Church has opened its doors again this week for us to convene our annual Assembly. Please be respectful of their property and equipment this week.

Delegates should consult with the appointed Assembly staff (Superintendent of operations, ushers, stage manager, etc.) in dealing with any problems that may arise during the Assembly. The following instructions are offered to help ensure that everything will operate and proceed smoothly during the Assembly sessions.

1) Always remain in designated areas of the building---auditorium, main hallway, Children’s church room, and nursery room. Bathrooms are located in the main hallway.

2) Food and drink are not allowed in the auditorium, except at the moderator’s table.

3) If you need assistance with equipment, see Jerry Pounders.

4) If you need assistance with projection screens, see Tanner Herring.

5) Be sure to give CD soundtracks and media devices to Sound Engineer before the session in which you are on the program.

6) Observe parking signs on the Assembly site and in Cleveland.

7) Nursery facilities have been provided for your convenience. Signs will direct you to the location.

8) Children’s church worship times are carefully posted in the Assembly program.

9) DVDs of Assembly messages and programs are available for purchase. Go to designated table in main hallway.

10) Please refrain from chewing gum in the sanctuary.

We pray and trust that you will enjoy your time in Cleveland and be abundantly blessed in this great General Assembly.

Pre-Assembly Programs

Assembly Business Committee

Monday, September 5, 2016

The Assembly Business Committee (ABC) will meet at International Ministries Center beginning at 6:00 p.m. to finalize its report to present to the 13th Annual General Assembly. The Doctrine Committee (DC) will meet with this committee at this time in regard to its work on the *Abstract of Faith*. Anyone who has relevant questions or presentations may interact with the ABC and DC at this time. Personal interviews with the Committees should be arranged through the chairmen.

Ministers' Meeting

Tuesday, September 6, 2016

Beginning at 9:30 a.m. the annual ministers' conference will convene in the International Ministries Center in Cleveland. All ministers are encouraged to attend and participate including mission directors. The purpose of the meeting is to promote unity and understanding through prayer and discussion. The ABC report will be read and discussed. Also the floor will be open to discuss all relevant issues that might need clarification.

Ministers' and Companions' Luncheon (Immediately following the Ministers' Meeting)

12:15 p.m.

All ministers and their companions are honored guests at the Ministers' Luncheon. This is sponsored by the International Offices. The luncheon will be held in the Cafeteria of the United Christian Church. Special singing: Trevor Graves, KY. Guest speaker: Dr. David Roebuck, Church of God historian and director of Pentecostal Research Center. Comments and special presentations by the First Lady of Zion Assembly. Dress code: most of the men prefer to wear suit and tie for this occasion.

Assembly Program

Tuesday Evening

6:30 p.m. Building on Worship---Erwin Family, TN

Welcome---L.W. and Wilma Carter, VA

Multi-lingual Concert of Prayer led by representatives from Africa, North America, Southeast Asia, South America, and Caribbean.

Official Opening of the Assembly

Sizzling Mini-Sermons---“Divinely Commissioned to . . .

Go!”-----Corey Hall, MS

Preach!”-----Elijah Wafula, Kenya

Baptize!”-----Jorge Estroz, Argentina

Teach All Things that

[Christ] commanded!”----Allen Thompson, MS

Special Songs---Zachary and Kari Snyder, IN

Communications & Media Ministries boost---Scott Neill, director

Assembly Expense Offering

Message---*Go up to the mountain . . . and build the House*”

(Hag. 1.8)---Joel Brooks, AL

Altar Service

[**Note:** *Kidz’ Konvention* schedule: Wednesday 7:00-8:00 p.m.; Thursday 1:30-3:30, 6:15-8:00; Friday: 6:15-7:15 p.m. Saturday: 8:45-10:00 a.m. 2:30--4:00, 7:00-8:30 p.m. A special Children’s program is scheduled for Sunday morning in the Main Auditorium.

Wednesday

9:00 a.m. Building on Praise!---Nicole Pounders
& Alicia Harris, MS

Special Songs--- Ashley Davis, VA

Message---“Take heed how [you] build” (1 Cor. 3:10)

---J.J. Davis, VA

International Leaders’ Reports:

-----Presiding Bishop

-----International Executive Council

-----World Mission Director

-----School of Ministry Director

-----Shepherding Ministries Director

-----Communications/Media Ministries Director

-----Sunday School Director

-----Youth Director/Camp Coordinator

-----Ladies Ministries Director

-----Children’s Ministries Director

-----*Voice of Zion/SYNC* Booster

General Treasurer’s Report

---Lunch Break---

2:00 p.m. Musical Prelude

Reports from Around the World

Overseers, have your region organized and ready to march on time. Turn in your written reports to the Presiding Bishop as you leave the stage.

2:10 North America

Canada---Wade H. Phillips, national overseer

Mexico---Danny Ramirez, national overseer

United States---L.W. Carter, national overseer

3.00 Africa

Kenya---Elijah Wafula, national overseer

South Sudan---Elijah Wafula, national overseer

Ethiopia---Teketel Zewde, national overseer

Uganda---Maurice Ogada, national overseer

Nigeria---Yomi Adekunle, national overseer

Ghana---David Dordah, national overseer

Cameroon---Eyong Eric Eyong, national overseer

Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast, Liberia---Amos Agbonifo,
mission representative

Malawi, Mozambique---Maliele Dzuwa, national overseer

Zimbabwe, Zambia---David Gomba, mission representative

Tanzania, Burundi, DRC (Congo), Rwanda---

Edward Agar, national overseer

South Africa---David November

3.20 United Kingdom

England---Scott E. Neill, mission representative

3.25 **Central America**

Nicaragua---Freddy Garcia, national overseer

Guatemala---Ricardo Valenzuela, national overseer

Costa Rica---Eugenio Cespedes, mission representative

3:35 **Caribbean**

Dominican Republic---Sandraud Pierre, national overseer

Haiti---Saintaniel Hostellus, national overseer

3:50 **South America**

Peru, Bolivia---Yum V. Munoz Quispe, national overseer

Chile---Javier Diaz Perez, national overseer

Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay---Jorge Estroz,
national overseer

4:05 **Middle East**

Pakistan---Boonyong Bureenok, mission representative

India Mid-East---Talari Padma Rao, provincial overseer

India Central---John Babu Ganta, provincial overseer

India South---V. Binoy Joseph, provincial overseer

4:15 **Southeast Asia**

Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma),

Bangladesh---Boonyong Bureenok, national overseer

4.30 **Far East**

Philippines---Domingo Resurreccion, national overseer

Indonesia---Boonyong Bureenok, mission representative

---Supper Break---

Wednesday Evening

Note: *Kidz' Convention* 7:00-8:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m. 'I will praise the Lord with my whole heart
in the Assembly...' (Ps. 111.1)---Kari Snyder

Message---“ . . . *make all men see*” (Eph. 3.9)

---Daren Childers, KY

Special Singing---Erwin Family

Assembly Expense Offering



United States' Missions & New Fields

---directed by L. W. Carter,
overseer of the United States

“Fire in the House”

***“[The Lord's] fire is in Zion,
and His furnace in Jerusalem” (Is. 31.9)***

***“ . . . Behold I will make My
words in thy mouth fire . . . ”***
Jer. 5.14

Thursday

Note: *Kidz' Convention* today 1:30-3:30, 6:15-8:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m. **Camp Report and Program**—Miguel Garcia, Jr.,
International Coordinator



Sunday School Program

—Donna Pounders, director

Special Songs---Becky Land, SC

Praise Reports: Saintaniel Hostellus, Haiti; Nevil Creary, Canada

Message---“*That [you] may know how . . . to behave
[yourself] in the House of God*” (1 Tim. 3:15)

---Pete Sarry, CA

—Lunch Break---

1:30 p.m. “To God be Glory in the Church”

---Nigel and Susan Morgan, Toronto, Can.

Message—“*[Building] according to the Pattern*” (Heb. 8.5)

---Juan Avila, CA

Special Songs—Cliff and Becky Kelton, MS; Charles Barker, IN

In Memory . . . Members: Irene “Ellie” Ratliff; Josefa [Ramirez] Contreras;
Billy Gene Summerlin; Rosina Wright; George Miller, Mary Glass . . .

Friends: Juanita H. Busbee; James C. Orange, Sr.; Troy Harris . . .

[**Note:** *Ministers and their companions should be seated
near the rostrum in preparation for the ordination service*]

Ordination Service

Thursday Evening

6:15 p.m. “O magnify the Lord!”---**Instrumental Praise**
by **Zion’s musicians**---directed by Zac Snyder

Special Songs—Gina Brooks, AL

School of Ministry Program

---Bruce Sullivan, Superintendent



Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs—Erwin Family, TN

Praise Reports—Dave Ashley; WV; Rocky Dalton, VA
Tina Stephenson, SC

Healing Message & Prayer Service

*“A merry heart doeth good like a
medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the
bones”*

(Proverbs 17:22).

Friday

9:00 a.m. Special Songs---Teresa Pettit, AL

Voice of Zion/SYNC boost

—Glenda Major, director



Attention: *The annual SYNC luncheon will be held in the Cafeteria at 12:15 p.m. Glenda Major & Alice Jones in charge. All SYNC members and invited guests are encouraged to attend.*

Special Songs---Andy Davis, SC; Jim Melton, WV



Ladies Ministries Program

---Kim Erwin, director

Shepherding Ministries Program

---Byron Harris, director



—Afternoon Break—

Friday Evening

*[Attention: Front three rows are reserved for Youth Program.
All youth [12-35] meet at 7.15 in the Corridor for Youth March]*

6:15 p.m. Special Songs---West Mobile Choir

Senior Ambassadors' Program—Ricky Graves, director

“I will fill this house with glory . . .”

Message---“*Walls of Salvation, Gates of Praise*”

(Isa. 26.1; 60.18)---Donna Pounders, MS

Assembly Expense Offering

Youth Program

---Miguel Garcia Jr., director



“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these [things] God will bring thee into judgment”

(Ecclesiastes 11.9).

Saturday

Note: *Kidz Convention* today 8:45-10:00 a.m.,
2:30-4:00. 7:00-8:30 p.m.

8:15 a.m. **Morning Prayer Service**---Dave Ashley, WV, in charge

8:45 Praise Him!---Nicole & Alicia

Special Songs---Lee Brown, WV

Message---“*And when the queen . . . had seen
the house that [Solomon] had built . . .*”
(1 Kgs. 10.4)---Tom Brown, WV

Recognition of Special Guests

---Assembly Choir---

Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

---Lunch Break---

Saturday Afternoon

2:30 p.m. Worship Him!---Monday Family, TN

Special Singing---Cliff & Becky Kelton, MS; Charles Barker, IN

Assembly Business Committee Report

---Supper Break---

Saturday Evening

7:00 p.m. “I will sing of the Mercies of the Lord . . .
with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness”
---Michael George, SC

Message---“*Glorious Things are spoken of thee,
O city of God*” (Ps. 87.3)---Zachary Snyder, IN

Assembly Expense Offering

Special Singing---Yomi Adekunle, Nigeria



World Mission Program

---Scott E. Neill, director

“The Stones are Still Crying Out”

“ . . . these stones shall be for a memorial . . . ”
(Josh. 4.6)

---Parade of Nations---

*“And that repentance and forgiveness of
sins should be proclaimed in his name to all
nations, beginning from Jerusalem”
(Luke 24:47).*

Sunday

8:45 a.m. Sunday School Lesson---Clyde “Eddie” Davis, SC

9:15 Special Singing---Trevor Graves, KY



Children’s Ministries Program

---Cheryl McDonald, director

---Assembly Choir---

Message—“ . . . *and yet it is not finished* ” (Ezra 5.16).

---Todd McDonald, SC

Song: “*Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All*”

---led by Betty, Debbie, and Brenda

Assembly Program Adjustments

*The Assembly program proceeded
as scheduled with the following exceptions*

Note:

**The Presiding Bishop gave excerpts from his message
through out the Assembly and completed it on
Saturday as scheduled.**

Saturday

**Regina Brooks, AL and Kim Erwin, TN
sang in absence of Lee Brown, WV**

Recognition of Special Guest:

**Howard Thompson, County Commissioner
Dr. David Roebuck, Church of God Historian
Dr. Stan York: Historian
Ed and Mary Hawk: Salvation Praise Fellowship
Dr. Linsey Hatcock
Tina Turner: Vice President United Community Bank**

Registered Attendance: 517

Actual Attendance (Estimation):

International Staff Reports
Thirteenth Annual General Assembly
September 9, 2015---September 6, 2016

Presiding Bishop’s Report to the
Thirteenth Annual General Assembly
September 13, 2015 – September 7, 2016

“Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways . . . And have respect for all Thy commandments” (Psalm 119.2-6). And again, *“O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day”* (v. 97).

These sentiments by the sweet psalmist of Zion express well what I feel in my heart today. I love the law and testimonies of the Lord, and have respect for all His commandments. And I feel blest.

It has been a work-filled and fruitful year. I thank the Lord for the strength and grace He has given to me to serve another year in this sacred capacity, and for the enablement to accomplish what has been done. These accomplishments have included answering all correspondence and calls that have come into the office this year (roughly 200 letters and emails). I have kept up a monthly correspondence with the overseers and ministers, and have served as the editor-in-chief of our church magazine, the *Voice of Zion*. I want to thank our secretary, Marie Crook, for her untiring assistance. I also want to thank my wife for her assistance in helping to package and mail the paper, and also Brother Neill for some valuable proofreading.

Counseling with the ministers and churches, both in the office and on the field, has required many hours. I have worked with the General Staff, the newly formed Executive Council, the Assembly Business Committee, the Doctrine Committee, the overseers, pastors, and ministers to promote the work in all of its ministries and phases. There were also this year more disciplinary problems that preoccupied much of our time both here in the USA and in several other nations: but the grace of the Lord supplied us with sufficient strength and wisdom to resolve every problem.

I want to commend Bishop Scott Neill for his exceptional cooperation, hard work, and faithful assistance – he has really helped to lighten my load – the General Treasurer, General Staff members and the regional overseers, all of whom have been cheerfully cooperative with the

Presiding Bishop in the promotion of the work. Some of these sacrificed much to move the work forward in their regions and throughout the world. I want to take this opportunity here also to commend the companions of our overseers and international workers, for they minister and attend to them so that they may in turn minister and attend to others.

I have again this year worked with Brother Sullivan and served as president of the School of Ministry, worked with Brother Neill and assisted to direct the mission work throughout the world, and planned and moderated the General Assembly. The world mission work this year included six trips to Canada. I made also three trips to California and ten other states to assist the overseers and pastors in the work.

The work connected with School of Ministry included helping to organize and plan materials; also wrote and taught several lessons for the schools in northern and southern California and in Cleveland. I attended and participated in three of the regional and state conventions in the United States --- Alabama, West Virginia, and California; and was privileged to have my faithful companion, Dale, travel with me and participate in all three of these conventions.

This year was filled a great deal with writing. Besides the monthly chore of serving as chief writer and managing editor of the *Voice of Zion*, I wrote two books and latest of which just came off the press a few days ago --- *Let Us Rise Up and Build*. It's available at one of the tables in the lobby.

I praise the Lord for the progress realized this year; for "without [Christ] we can do nothing." It is no superficial sentiment when I say, I feel small and inadequate for the challenges of this great work. But in the words of the great apostle, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am . . . [and] I labored more abundantly . . . by the grace of God which was with me.*" To be sure, the weight of this office keeps us prayerful and conscious of our utter dependence upon the Lord.

The following are some personal statistics in regard to the work. I offer these only to make myself accountable to this honorable body.

Sermons Preached	164
Revivals conducted	3
Converted	7
Sanctified	11
Holy Ghost Baptisms	2
Added to the church	25
Baptized in Water	0
Tithes paid	\$3840.00

Offerings given 4600.00
Miles traveled. 36,200 (approximately 17,000 by air,
19,200 on the ground).

Churches organized 2
Churches visited 42
Regional Conventions Attended . . 3
General Assembly 1
(Moderated)

Thank you again for your prayerful support and splendid cooperation. You have been so kind and gracious to my family and me. The lack of time restrains us here from mentioning a hundred other names that have assisted the Presiding Bishop in the discharge of his duties and responsibilities and the promotion of the work --- but the Lord has the perfect record, and shortly all will be rewarded by Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and in the glorious Millennium. May the Lord bless and keep you all in His great love and power.

Humbly submitted,



**World Mission Director's Report
to the
Thirteenth Annual General Assembly
September 6-11, 2016**

First, I would like to greet this Assembly with the statement, *"God is a great God and He is greatly to be praised"*. What a great and wonderful year it has been. It has been also an eventful year, and one for which I thank the Lord.

Right after the Assembly last year, we hit the ground running, giving the work of our World Mission department full attention. Throughout the year, we have received approximately 1500 emails and numerous phone calls from our National Overseers and mission workers within the 45 countries where Zion Assembly is now represented. We have responded to the emails that required a response. Many of the emails that come to the World Mission Office are informational only. We are thankful for the new countries of Costa Rica, Bolivia, and Canada where Zion Assembly has been established this year. In September, Bishop Phillips and I received Eugenio Cespedes from Costa Rica into the church by way of a conference call.

Prepared and coordinated sending of Mission Allotments for the quarters of October, January, April, and July.

Conventions attended as Headquarters representative: California, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Kentucky.

Taught a class in the School of Ministry sessions in northern and southern California. Also recorded all of the classes in both of these schools for use in our schools in other countries. We were privileged to bring 2 national overseers to attend these schools. I also made the plane reservations for 5 of the staff to attend the schools in California.

Taught 2 classes in the Cleveland School of Ministry. Also recorded the classes for the upcoming months. Along with teaching the classes, I coordinated the devotion time at the beginning of each day in the Cleveland School.

In the months of October and November, I assisted my wife, Vicki, the General Treasurer in revising and updating the minister's and church report books and getting them ready for

printing. This year for the first time we have been able to print and assemble our report books in house.

We have with the assistance of Marie Crook, Domingo Resurreccion (Overseer of the Philippines), Sandraud Pierre (Overseer of Dominican Republic), and Ori Burenook (Thailand) typeset and printed four new translations of the *Abstract of Faith* in the languages of Tagalog, Thai, French, and Creole.

During the months of October – December, I assisted our Treasurer in converting our church accounting system to a new Fund Accounting Program, which allows for a more detailed and complete reporting system.

Over the past 3 months, we have laid the foundation for the launching of Zion Assembly Church of God Publishing House. We have purchased 100 ISBN numbers for the books. After we purchased the ISBN numbers we went through the process of submitting our new book entitled, “*Let Us Rise Up and Build*” which is the past 12 years of Bishop Phillips’ Annual Addresses to the General Assembly. We have the paperback available in this Assembly and the hardbacks are being printed as we speak. There was an extensive amount of final editing that went into this project, which was completed by Bishop Phillips, Marie Crook, and myself. We are now ready to publish our next project.

In the months of December and April, I initiated the translation and printing of the *Voice of Zion* in Spanish. I would like to thank Norie Garavito, Eric Avila, Renetta Kelton, and Naomi Diaz for the translation. Sister Marie also assisted in typesetting and printing of these *VOZ*’s.

I would like to thank everyone who has assisted me in the translating of emails, letters, and other materials that have come into the World Mission Office.

I would like to thank everyone who assisted Bishop Phillips and myself in the interpreting of phone calls to Spanish that have come into the offices.

We now have tithe envelopes available for the local churches to purchase. They are available in the lobby.

Wrote several articles for the *Voice of Zion*, and assisted Bishop Phillips in editing.

Met with ABC committee in Pigeon Forge and also greeted the Ladies Retreat.

Booked airline tickets for Bishop Phillips, L.W. Carter, School of Ministry staff and overseers traveling to the Assembly.

Devised a new monthly reporting system for the International Overseers and have added the new reports to the International Website.

Conducted 2 Revivals

Visited 15 churches

Reported to the International Offices on a monthly basis.

Made 2 trips to California by air.

Traveled approximately 15,000 miles by automobile.

I will also mention that we have made updates on the International Website and have prepared all of the equipment for the streaming of the Assembly. Thanks to Derrick McBride for his assistance on the Website.

Thanks to my wife and daughter for all of their support and love,

Humbly submitted,
Scott E. Neill

General Treasurer's Report

Greetings to the 13th Annual General Assembly

I thank God for His blessings and for what He helped us to accomplish this year. It has been a privilege, yet a humbling experience, to serve the Lord and Zion Assembly as General Treasurer. Thank you pastors, ministers, members, and friends of each local church for the work you have done, and the way you have faithfully supported the International Offices. Thanks to all also who have faithfully paid their pledges this year.

I would like to take a moment and recognize the local Church Treasurers. These faithful servants work hard every week throughout the year to handle the funds that are received by the local churches, yet they get little to no recognition. Thus, I would like for all local Church Treasurers to stand. I ask this General Assembly to show its appreciation to them for their tireless labors of love in working for the Lord and Zion Assembly.

Additionally, I would like to thank Bishop E. A. McDonald, Jr. for his faithful work as General Treasurer of Zion Assembly from 2004-2015. His hard work, sacrifices, and careful handling of the church's finances are commendable.

This year in the General Treasurer's Office, we made two changes:

1. We updated the financial system to a fund accounting software program, Church Soft Assist 7.0. This software has made it possible for the Treasurer's Office to be more efficient and quickly provide financial information, reports, and computer-printed checks to the Presiding Bishop, International Staff, and others. I appreciate Scott Neill for helping me get the software set up and running.

2. We made new report books for the Ministers and Local Churches that were printed and assembled in-house by Zion Assembly Church of God Publishing Company. This lowered our printing costs and allowed us to print report books as needed, rather than order them in large quantities from local printing companies.

As General Treasurer, I picked up the mail and distributed it to all appropriate offices; recorded and deposited all funds received from local churches, ministers, and individuals; and paid all the bills for the International Offices. I was involved in financial meetings with the Presiding Bishop and World Missions Secretary. I assisted with the financial aspect of the property purchased at 5526 Waterlevel Highway, Cleveland, Tennessee. I prepared and submitted monthly financial reports to the Presiding Bishop, and gave financial reports to the International Staff as requested.

Since October 1, 2015, I have traveled with the World Mission Secretary, Scott Neill, and boosted the work of the General Treasurer's Office throughout the United States.

– I visited 10 churches in the following states: South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky, and California.

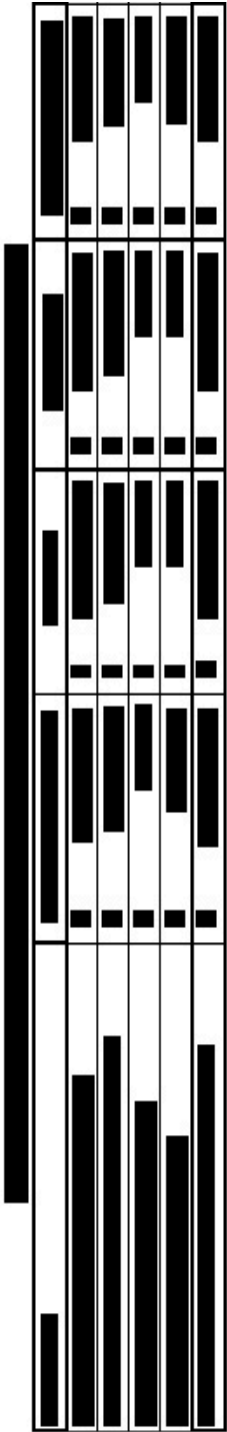
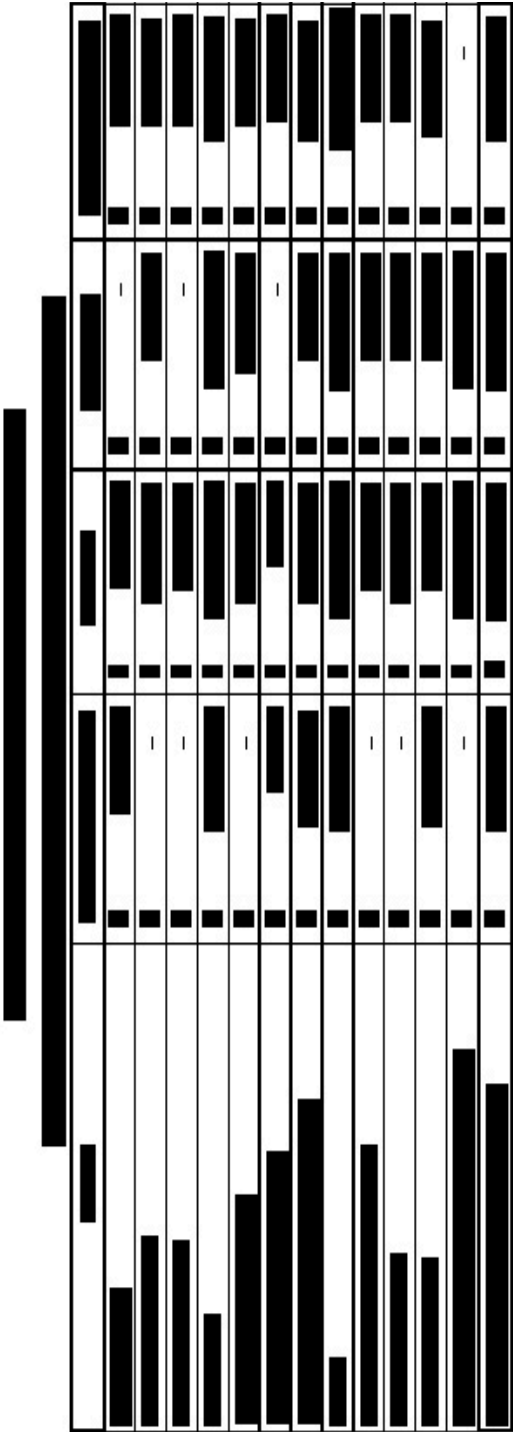
– I attended the East Coast Youth Convention, East Coast Ladies Retreat, and attended classes in the School of Ministry in Cleveland, Tennessee.

– I attended 4 State/Regional Conventions: California, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky.

Humbly and respectfully submitted,
Vicki S. Neill

“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for god loveth a cheerful giver”

(2 Corinthians 9:7).



School of Ministry Report

Greetings to the 13th Annual General Assembly

California (North)

Held at San Jose, California April 5-10, 2016

Total in attendance including auditors - 30

Average attendance - 23

Registered students - 19

Monies received - \$1,575

California (South)

Held at Rialto, California, April 12-17, 2016

Total attendance - 78

Registered students SOM - 54

Registered students Post-graduate class - approx. 20

Number of graduates - 0

Monies received - \$2816 (\$1065.40 for expenses not including lodging, travel, and food)

Cleveland, Tennessee

Held at the International Offices, May 8-13, 2016

Registered students- approximately - 11 (several auditors)

Cleveland, Tennessee (second week) May 15-20, 2016

Registered students -17

Registered students Post-graduate class - 13

Total student - 30 full time

Number of graduates - 0

Total tuition monies received in Cleveland schools - \$3100

Total tuition monies received (all schools) \$7491

Total number of students in SOM and graduate classes - 123 (not counting those auditing)

Respectfully submitted,
Bruce Sullivan

Sunday School Director

Greetings to the 13th Annual General Assembly

I am honored to have had the opportunity to serve in the capacity of Sunday School Services Director again this year. I give honor to the Lord for all that was accomplished.

As director my responsibility is to organize outreach events that help promote Sunday school attendance, oversee the electronic distribution of the Sunday school material each month, and collect information from the local churches as to their progress.

We currently email the Faith-N-Focus material in both English and Spanish to over 325 individuals each month. Copies of the lessons are then made and distributed in the church or mission where they attend. In addition to those who receive the material by email, we have numerous individuals who download the lessons directly from the website.

Last year we implemented a Sunday School Quarterly Report. The report is accessible on the International Office website and we encourage each church to continue to send those reports to the Sunday School Services Director. The information received will be beneficial in recording growth in our Sunday School Department.

In January I started sending out a monthly newsletter to the pastors and Sunday school superintendents as a means of communicating information to help build and grow our Sunday Schools on the local level. We will begin sending those again in October as it is our hope that this avenue of communication will prove to be a valuable tool in keeping our ideas united and our outreach efforts fresh.

We had three churches that excelled in their Sunday school offering this year:

1st: \$ 1,745.90 (West Mobile, AL))

2nd: \$ 1,544.34 (Greenville, SC)

3rd: \$ 1,388.71 (Columbus, MS)

This past year I was honored to attend the following events with many being opportunities to promote the work of Sunday School outreach:

Attended the Ladies Retreat in Pigeon Forge, TN; Couples Retreat in Pigeon Forge, TN;

Attended the School of Ministry in San Jose California and Rialto, California,

Attended the South Central Regional Convention

Visited churches in several states

Respectfully Submitted,
Donna Pounders

Sunday School Literature Editor

Report to the 13th Annual General Assembly

As the literature editor, my work involves developing the Faith-N-Focus curriculum, writing literature, and, of course, editing the adult, teen, and children's lessons. The editorial work is multifaceted. My work typically begins with a plan. The initial step is determining a topic for the new series of lessons, and then developing individual lesson ideas or creating a tentative outline. Another aspect of my work is scheduling writers and communicating with them in their progress during the year. The editorial process is a constant flow of writing and editing that requires advanced planning and scheduling to meet the required deadlines. After the literature is written, it must be proofed and edited. The literature is then forwarded to Spanish translation. The final step is adjusting the format and publishing all of the literature to PDF. The finished product is then forwarded to the Sunday School Director for distribution. My work as editor involves all of these tasks.

In review of 2015-16, we had some excellent studies. The adults covered the following topics: Doctrine of Sin, Doctrine of Grace, the Epistle to the Philippians, and Faith. The teen studies were Love, Stewardship and Service, Doctrine of Sin, and Doctrine of Grace. The children's topics were Acts, Exodus, the Ten Commandments, and the Life of Christ.

At this time, I want to thank our Presiding Bishop for his editorial assistance this year. Also, our literature would not be possible without the following volunteer writers who freely gave their time and talent. Our children's writers were Shanda Graves, Alicia Harris, Tracy McCafferty, Kari Snyder, Kara Spicer, and Mandy Thompson. Our teen writers were Miguel Garcia Jr., Trevor Graves, Byron Harris, Pam Jones, Zachary Snyder, Allen Thompson, and Todd McDonald. Our adult writers were Bruce Sullivan and Todd McDonald. I want to thank Norie Garavito, and Noemi and Gerson Diaz who worked many hours translating the literature into Spanish. I sincerely appreciate all of our volunteers who made the Faith-N-Focus curriculum a reality.

On a final note, after conferring with translator Norie Garavito and director Donna Pounders, I plan to introduce a new format for the adult literature in April 2017. This new format will provide two printing options: booklet, and large-print. These options should better serve the needs of our adult students.

Respectfully submitted

Todd D. McDonald

International SYNC Director

Greetings to the 13th Annual General Assembly

First I want to acknowledge and thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His daily grace and mercy that He freely bestowed upon me this last year, and for His protecting on my family. I am humbled and thankful to again be a small part of what God is doing in Zion Assembly. It has been exciting, as well as humbling, to work with such a wonderful, dedicated, and talented group of professional people, and to promote The *Voice of Zion* magazine.

This Assembly year has been a year of great support for this ministry. I wish to thank each person who has gone the extra mile to support *Voice of Zion* and *SYNC* Ministries. Your love and dedication to the church and this magazine has been tremendous.

This year I sent out letters of reminders of the contests that were forthcoming for *SYNC*, as well as letters of encouragement. Our focus this year has been on bringing the youth in to work alongside the adults to promote the *Voice of Zion*, and it was to this end that we had a separate contest for the Youth, giving away prizes and a grand prize in this Assembly.

I sent out packages of materials to each region for the *SYNC* and *Voice of Zion* Boosters, including the contest information, application, rules and the prizes. The purpose of the contest is in part an advertising tool and to help remind subscribers to renew their subscriptions early in an effort to lighten the work load of International Headquarters. I am working on sending out post cards again this year as a reminder to renew their subscriptions to the *Voice of Zion* Magazine. I ordered and sent out post cards giving an explanation of the “Subscribe Your neighbor Club” or “S.Y.N.C.” as an advertising tool as well.

God has allowed me to be able to travel and boost the *Voice of Zion* and *SYNC* program again this year, my thanks to the pastors and overseers who has allowed me this privilege. I was also able to promote the *Voice of Zion* and *SYNC* by adding a flyer in the SOM workbook. Along beside Alice Jones and my faithful family, I planned and organized the *SYNC* luncheon. Sending out invitations, making and purchasing decorations, purchasing and wrapping the gifts, as well arranging for a staff to assist with the luncheon. I am especially proud to have assisted in making the arrangements for Jorge Carrasco to bless us at the luncheon with his music and songs.

I sent out “Thank You” letters to each *Voice of Zion* subscriber, in an effort to remind them how important their subscription is and what it means to us as Zion Assembly Church of God. I planned and organized the *SYNC* program for the Assembly, as well as assisted in the layout of the *Voice of Zion* table in the foyer.

We are very grateful for each of the 372 *Voice of Zion* paid subscribers and the 61 *SYNC* Members. Approximately 472 receive the magazine, including the national overseers and mission workers. We are also grateful that *SYNC* Ministry has been self-supporting. It has been a privilege to work for God in this capacity this year.

Respectfully submitted,
Glenda G. Major

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me! And he said, “Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

(Isaiah 6:8-10)

Ladies' Ministries Report

Greetings to this 13th Annual General Assembly

I give honor and praise to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the privilege of serving his church as Ladies Ministries director. It has been a blessing to minister alongside our Ladies of Zion.

This year during our 11th Annual Ladies Retreat in our Western Region, 79 ladies gathered together at the Double Tree Hotel in Ontario, California, Feb. 12-14, 2016. The theme this year was 2 Samuel 22:29-30 ***“For thou art my lamp, O Lord: and the Lord will lighten my darkness. For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall.”*** From the opening statements on Friday evening, to the last Amen on Sunday, the presence of the Lord was felt and manifested. Anointed messages and classes were delivered by our Maria Avila, Jovania Garcia, Neomy Argueta and Sandy Garcia. I was blessed to be able to minister in word and song on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Altars were filled and many testified to receiving healing, encouragement, instruction, deliverance and inspiration to move forward in the Lord and His work. We left this retreat with assurance that God will light our paths with His truth and empower us--- the Ladies of Zion--- with strength to run through any troop and to leap over any walls of resistance, in order to fulfill the great commission that Christ gave to His church. What a wonderful job Maria Avila and her staff did in putting together this retreat and much thanks to Rosie Rameriz for her continued work and love for the Ladies of Zion.

Our 7th Annual Ladies Retreat in our Eastern Region was held at the Oak Tree Lodge in Sevierville, TN on Friday, February 26-28. We had 84 in attendance. Our theme for this retreat was Song of Solomon 2:10 ***“Arise my Love, my Beautiful One, and come away with me.”*** The ladies from Wilmington, NC started the retreat with power-packed cheers and praises and victory, lead by their captains---Marie Laneza and her mother, Virginia. Anointed messages and classes were delivered by Kari Snyder, Meta Clark and Wanda Busbee. Donna Pounders got the attention of the ladies, with an insightful skit, showing the faithful journey of the Bride of Christ. It was an encouraging reminder for us to stay on course in Zion Assembly. Saturday evening, we were greeted with words of encouragement by our Presiding Bishop, Wade H. Phillips, and also the World Missions director, Scott Neil and Joseph Steele, the overseer of Tennessee.

I was blessed to be able to minister in word Sunday morning following the words of encouragement and zeal made from our 1st lady, Dale Phillips and Wilma Carter, the wife of our United States Overseer. Throughout this retreat, many received healing, strength, deliverance and restoration: and all returned home consecrated and anxious to work for their Master.

On April 30th, with the help of Pam Jones and Glenda Major, we conducted a Ladies day at the San Jose church in California. There were 20 beautiful ladies in attendance and the Lord greatly blessed during a special time of prayer and consecration. We enjoyed a time of fellowship during our craft class and Pastor Jorge Carrasco and some of the dear brothers served the ladies a delicious lunch. We were honored to be in service with the San Jose church on Sunday morning where the power of God fell mightily, and the altar was filled.

On July 22-24, Bishop Yomi Adekunle's wife, "Sister Jummie", conducted their 2nd National Women's Convention in Nigeria. It was a great success with over 1000 in attendance. She reported the retreat was filled with power-packed preaching, worship, dramas and instruction for the Ladies of Zion in Nigeria. On Saturday morning of the convention, 9 sisters, alongside Yomi Adekunle and his wife, visited an orphanage in which they took clothing, toiletries and snacks for the children. Yomi Adekunle ministered in word and prayer to the children and caretakers. Praise the Lord for the work in Nigeria. The Ladies Ministries Fund currently has a balance of \$3,589.65.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kimberly Erwin

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost”

(Romans 15:13).

International Youth Director's Report

Greetings to 13th Annual General Assembly

It is my desire to please God in all that I do for Him here on earth and in the church, I want to be found faithful in the little he has placed on me, I want so much to just hear those words in Matthew 25:21 “...***Well done, thou good AND faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord***”.

How sweet will that day be when we enter into heaven and hear those words spoken out of the mouth of our sweet Savior? I get excited just thinking about it!

The responsibility of leading our youth ministry is one I take very serious; I work in it with great joy and enthusiasm. The load gets even lighter when I know that we have Spirit-filled and talented youth ministers. We have Youth directors that want to see young people be saved, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost and do whatever it takes to be there for their young disciples. I am encouraged by their love and compassion for young people. This year, as some of you might imagine, has been a particularly tough year, at least on my end; but the good news is there were people willing to carry on the work regardless of whether I was involved or not. I thank God that He reminds me, it's not about me, “this is My church and I will look after it”. Because of that, I was not able to travel as much as desired, but I am happy to report that the youth have caught a spark, and we are beginning to see a fire lit under each of them, I have heard of wonderful youth revivals happening in Tennessee, South Carolina, and West Mobile, AL where God is equipping young people to be pastors, preachers, evangelists and worshippers they need to be to lead the church forward in this 21st century. To God be the glory and honor.

I want to thank all the Regional Directors and their wives [husbands] for their support and prayers. I would also like to thank my wife and children for their support, love and prayers.

It is my greatest joy and privilege to serve God and His Church in this capacity this year. Yet there is still a lot of work to do and we are ready to do it.

Area 1 represent: International work
Name of director: Miguel A. Garcia Jr
Number of messages preached during year: 5
Number saved: 2
Many lives touched and filled
Organized two (2) Youth Conventions (East and California)
How many registered for Youth Convention : 450 +
Wrote 8 Teen Sunday School lessons
Work with Social Media: Facebook Youth Page

Our Youth Ministries facebook page reaches an average of 550 persons, but from August to September, that number increased to about 694 persons, most of whom are “unique” visitors. We had also an increase of people involved by way of sharing a post, and liking and commenting, to a high of 296 from August 30th to September 5th. So we recognize the potention to reach souls everywhere, and we want to invest our time and efforts in these areas.

Total offerings collected by Youth Ministries: \$12,636.43
Greenville Church, SC (Youth Director, Gavin McDonald): \$707.97
Idamay, WV (Youth Director, J.J. Davis) \$476.65
W. Mobile, AL (Youth Director, Allen Thompson) \$438.13

I want to encourage each local youth ministry to continue the excellent work of sending in Media Ministries offerings. I also would like to encourage what we are doing in collecting a quarterly offering for the translation of the *Voice of Zion* in Spanish.

The year 2017 will see the youth ministries department team up with world missions department on our very first yout mission trip. We are still trying to figure out dates and location, we have flyers and applications for sign up.

We are excited and looking forward to many blessings God has for us as we seek Him daily.

“Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:9).

Humbly Submitted,
Miguel A. Garcia Jr.

International Camp Corordinator/Advisor

Greetings to the 13th Annual General Assembly

I would like to greet this General Assembly in the name that is above all names, Jesus Christ.

Without a doubt, one of the most important things a church can have is a healthy camping ministries---healthy because, if the Holy Spirit is moving the change in a child or young person will be irreversible and we will be able to see fruits of repentance; healthy because of the quality time we spend with children and young people, time that is used to disciple and train, also time that is spent listening to their life stories and their struggles and what joy they feel at having someone pay attention to them at least once in their lives. Many campers come from broken and dis functional homes where they see and experience things you and I only hear about in the news. Healthy because of the many brothers and sisters that have spent countless hours preparing, planning, adjusting their schedules, running around the day of all to see a child or young person pouring out their hearts in the altar. I tip my hat to the many staff workers that worked camp this year, I thank God because in Zion Assembly we have healthy-Holy Spirit filled summer and winter camps. I believe that another sign of a healthy camping ministry is having campers go back home and begin to serve in their local churches and that is exactly what is going on. We are seeing people being called to ministry and to serve in any possible capacity. God is blessing and honoring your efforts. I have even heard from one of our regions that they are implementing a follow up system to keep these kids coming back to church after camp. To that we say, praise the Lord! I believe the Holy Spirit is at work and very active in the lives and minds of people at our camps. It is a place where we encourage pressing deeper into God's unlimited power and the reports we have received throughout the different regions speak to us of the very fact that God is moving! This year reports came to us once more, young people and kids seeking salvation, touched by God, baptized with the Holy Ghost and baptized in water. We are truly living in exciting times!

Here is our report for Summer Camps:

Professed Salvation: 43

Professed Sanctification: 16

Baptized with Holy Ghost: 5

Baptized in water: 58

Professed healings:3

Total attendance at Summer/Winter camps: 333

Thank you and God bless each regional overseer for their support for the camp ministry, camp coordinators, camp directors, volunteer staff and kitchen workers, along with camp boosters and fundraisers who mad this year's camps possible. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Lord and camp ministry. Allow me to restate what we said last year about the impact of our laborers at these camps; "You will never know how your presence at these camps have made a lifelong impact on our children and young people." God bless you greatly and we are hoping for more exciting reports like this at next years' assembly.

Humbly submitted,
Miguel A. Garcia Jr

Note: California was not able to hold camp due to lack of a camp site.

International Children's Ministries Director

Greetings to the 13th Annual General Assembly

I am thankful to know what I know. My parents raised me to know God's Truth and to live counter cultural. This Truth has anchored me through many storms throughout my life. A few years ago, I came to realize that it was time for me to pass this same knowledge of the Truth on to my children and those within my reach. About that time, Zion Assembly was organized and my husband and I knew we had to make a stand for Truth for the sake of our four kids. As a result of that decision, I have been very privileged to serve as the Children's Ministries Director for Zion Assembly for the past ten years. I have had some unforgettable experiences with the Lord as I serve children. Many children's workers can not wait to get out of the classroom to see what is going on in the sanctuary. I can not wait to get out of the sanctuary to see what God will do in the midst of our children.

This past year has proven to be my greatest ministry challenge. On a weekly basis, I have questioned my teaching methods and practices as I have taught children in a cross-cultural setting. I been stretched and shaped by my students. The longer I serve them the more I realize they so desperately need God's Truth to be taught to them by passionate teachers who will love them in spite of their immediate resistance and rebellion. God's Word will not return void (Isaiah 55:11). It is being planted in their hearts and will one day burst forth into New Life. I do not claim to have a handle on things but I do know that God has a much bigger plan in mind for them and for me than I can ever imagine. Psalm 139:5-6 says, "Thou has beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain it."

God has blessed me with many opportunities in Children's Ministry this year. In November, I attended the Youth Convention in Cleveland, TN and conducted two Bible classes for children. In June, my husband and I organized a successful Vacation Bible School in our local church. I taught two sessions at the Carolinas Regional Convention in July. I created thematic lessons and an ideas page, to promote Children's Day throughout Zion Assembly. For this year's assembly, I have recruited teachers and coordinated the classes for another exciting Kidz Konvention. I have also prepared the Children's Sunday morning program for this General Assembly. I thank God for what He is doing in and through me to help Zion's Kids to be "Anchored in Truth."

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl H. McDonald

2012 was the first year that the Presiding Bishop's Commendation Award was bestowed upon deserving members. It has since become an annual Assembly event. The Assembly Business committee passed this in the 2012 General Assembly.

The following have been recipients of these awards:

2012

*Honorio Garavito, CA
William (Bill) Reid, TN
Joshua Amara, Africa*

2013

*Marie Spurling Crook, TN
Miguel Garcia, Sr., CA
Dale Phillips, TN*

2014

*Yomi Adekunle, Nigeria
Glenda Major, CA
Danny Ramirez, CA*

2015

*Robert Barron Ramirez, CA
Wanda K. Busbee, SC
Alice Jones, TN*

2016

*Jeanette Surratt, SC
Donna Pounders, MS
Saintainel Hostelus, Haiti*

2016 ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE AND DOCTRINE REPORT

[We, your Assembly Business Committee, after prayerful and careful consideration, present this report to the General Assembly for your consideration].

SECTION I

Selection of the Presiding Bishop

The Assembly passed in 2012 that the office of Presiding Bishop should be vacated every four years and either the same bishop be reappointed or another bishop be chosen to serve the next term. Since this committee is responsible for nominating the Presiding Bishop, we recommend that Bishop Wade H. Phillips be reappointed by this Assembly to serve in this capacity until the 2020 Assembly. In this choice we have taken into consideration the growth of the church in the past four years in the areas of spirituality, finances, unity, and harmony within the church; and weighing his leadership qualities in regard to being a man of the Word of God, sound in theology, and able to articulate and defend the doctrine of the church. We firmly believe he excels in every biblical qualification and possesses the anointing of the Holy Ghost to continue to fill the office of Presiding Bishop.

SECTION II

Term of Executive Council Members

We recommend that the term for members of the Executive Council (except for the Presiding Bishop) be for one year. However, all members may serve more than one term.

SECTION III

Walking Circumspectly

We fully endorse Section V of the Presiding Bishop's annual address, titled "Take Heed Lest [You] Fall." In view of the "perilous times" in which we live, where the spirit of the Antichrist is prevalent and clearly disrupting, discouraging, distracting, and destroying the lives of multitudes, we admonish all to be especially careful to keep themselves "in the love of God" and to keep "[prayed-up] in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20-21).

SECTION IV

Plain Dress and Modesty

We fully endorse Section III of the Presiding Bishop's annual address, titled "Plain Dress and Modesty." Zion Assembly is a body of people who desire to make clear that jewelry, gold, pearls, expensive and extravagant clothing, gaudy cosmetics, etc. are inconsistent with the spirit of holiness and ill-fitted for children of God called to be a "peculiar people" (1 Pe. 2:9). These things are connected with pagan practices, and associated with pride and contrary to the church's calling to restore the perfect image of Christ within fallen humanity-an image conditioned by humility, sobriety, gravity, deep spirituality, and a meek and quiet spirit.

SECTION V

The Sanctity of the Mother's Womb within the Sacredness and Intimacy of Marriage

We fully endorse Section VII of the Presiding Bishop's annual address, titled "The Sacredness, Intimacy, and Dignity of Marriage: The Intrusion of Surrogacy in Childbearing." The Bible is clear that the womb of a woman is sacred, and that God in His sovereignty controls fruitfulness and/or barrenness (Ge. 29:3; 30:22; 18:10-14; I Sam. 1:5-6; Lu. 1:36-37, 41). Also, great emphasis is placed on the fact that the womb and the mother are one and the same, since it is within the womb that the mystery of life is formed and nourished until birth (Pr. 31:1-2;

Ec. 11:5; Job 10:8-10, 18; Ps. 22:9-10; Is. 44:2, 24; 49:5, 15). With these principles clearly defined, we conclude that our ministers and members should not involve a “third party” surrogate in order to produce a child, but rather maintain the unity, sanctity, and personal intimacy of marriage and procreation. Those who may have fallen into this error are not to be condemned but should take the counsel of Scripture.

SECTION VI

Moving Forward to Fulfill Our Vision

We fully endorse Section VIII of the Presiding Bishop’s annual address, titled “Moving Forward to Fulfill Our Vision for the International Properties.” We would like to take this opportunity to firmly encourage all of our ministers and members to catch the vision of our Bible College and extension of the International Office building and then to raise funds throughout the year using the attractive and informative brochures developed by our International Offices. We also are convinced that there are thousands of people out there who desire to give to such a noble and worthy cause.

SECTION VII

Cryptic Name

It has come to our attention that in some localities where Zion Assembly is established, and where Islam is the prevailing religion and *Sharia Law* is the government, our congregations and even some of our national offices are under a threat of persecution and violence because of the name *Zion*. In these areas, Zion is linked to the term Zionist whose main objective is to promote the expansion of the religion and national supremacy of Israel. Therefore, we recommend that in these special situations permission be granted for those congregations to use a cryptic name connected with Church of God. This should be done only in counsel and with the permission of the Presiding Bishop.

SECTION VIII

General Funds

We recommend that we continue to operate the same financial system for this upcoming Assembly year, and that funds be transferred between accounts to bring all funds into a positive balance.

SECTION IX

Called Assembly

Section V, page 46 of the 2013 Assembly Minutes titled “Special Called Ministers Council” stated, “In the event of a pressing issue in regard to a doctrinal matter or an administrative decision that would normally be made by the General Assembly, we recommend that a special called council of all ministers be called by the Presiding Bishop to resolve said issue until the next General Assembly. In the following General Assembly the decision made in the special called council may then be approved or modified.”

We recommend the following changes: “In the event of a pressing issue in regard to an extraordinary circumstance (not related to a doctrinal matter or an administrative decision) that would normally be made by the General Assembly, we recommend that a special Called Assembly be called by the Presiding Bishop to resolve said issue. The decision(s) made in this Called Assembly will be considered an official resolution and will therefore have no need of ratification or modification by the local church or in the following General Assembly.”

Respectfully Submitted,

Joseph Steele, *Chairman*

Zachary Snyder, *Secretary*

L. W. Carter

Jim Orange

Ray Dickson

Byron Harris

Scott E. Neill

Peter Sarry (Alternate)

The Reconciliation of Divorced Couples

A question has come before the Doctrine Committee regarding what actions a couple should take if they have been “legally” divorced and then reconcile.

The church recognizes marriage as being between one man and one woman for life. This means nothing except death can dissolve a legitimate, God recognized marriage. However, this does not mean secular divorces do not exist. In fact, children of God may be placed in situations where they are forced into a “legal” separation or divorce. Though a legal divorce may be granted and recognized by the secular authorities, this does not mean the marriage bond is dissolved in the eyes of God. Therefore a couple who divorces remain husband and wife and “One Flesh” in the eyes of the Lord. Because the marriage of a divorced couple was never actually dissolved, a couple who reconciles after divorce need not secure a “legal marriage” to restore their marriage bond. However, it may be expedient to do so. Those who don’t understand that marriage is permanent may see the reconciled couple as committing fornication or adultery by living together. Therefore not securing a legal marriage document may hinder one’s witness. This is precisely the principle faced by the early church regarding the consumption of meat offered at an idol temple and then brought to the marketplace to be sold. The question arose as to whether it was lawful to eat these meats. Paul tells them, since it wasn’t being eaten to honor an idol, it was lawful to eat it. However, Paul added, “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.*” (1 Cor. 10:23). If it causes offense to others or causes sinners to believe you are honoring an idol, it would be better to refrain from exercising your legal rights in favor of doing what is profitable for the furtherance of the Gospel. This scripture says in another place, “*Let not then your good be evil spoken of...*” (Rom 14:16).

Jesus Himself followed this principle regarding the paying of the “Temple Tax.” The Jews questioned why Jesus had not paid this tax which was required of all Jews. Jesus explained to Peter that as the Son of God He owned the temple: and thus was free from the legal obligation to pay the tax. Nevertheless, he ordered Peter to pay the tax “*lest we should offend them...*” (Matt. 17:27).

Based upon the Biblical principles of not being offensive and to protect one's witness, we recommend all couples, who were legally divorced and then reconciled, to secure the proper marriage documents in accordance with the laws of their community if at all possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce Sullivan, *Chairman*
Tom Brown, Rick Ferrell, Tod Deakle,
Joel Brooks, Jimmy Johnson, Trevor Graves

Wade H. Phillips



Presiding Bishop

Marie Spurling Crook



Chief Clerk

Presiding Bishop's Annual Address

Cleveland, TN
September 10, 2016

Bible Pledge

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I promise to read and study it, and by the grace of God to obey it. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.

Church Pledge

I promise to walk together with my brothers and sisters in Zion Assembly according to the light we have received together in our General Assemblies. I will be faithful to our commitment to proclaim the "whole counsel of God," and will work together with my fellow members under the church's divine government and discipline. I will strive always to keep and promote the faith "once delivered to the saints"---one God, one Faith, one Mind, and one Church for all. Amen.

Introduction



In reflecting on the twelve years and five months since this prophetic restoration movement was launched in April 2004, I notice a two-fold theme that has dominated our thinking and actions; namely, an awareness that we are speedily approaching the Coming of the Lord, and a sense of urgency to hurry up to perfect the Bride and fulfill the church's mission in the world. Well, I'm not thinking or feeling any differently about the situation at this point in time: for the signs of His soon coming are now glaringly obvious. In fact, I seem to be driven by the Spirit more now than when we

first launched this restoration. We must "hurry up" and finish the work of the church to be ready for that triumphant and glorious event just ahead when the church will *be caught up to meet [her] Lord in the air!*

I'm glad that so many of you feel this very same way. You sense the urgency of the moment and are willing to labor faithfully and sacrificially

to prosecute our mission in the world---to proclaim the Gospel and “teach the nations” the “all things“ that Christ commanded. You have been convinced by “*the spirit of revelation*” that what we are doing in Zion Assembly is of paramount importance, for it is connected with what the apostle calls the *eternal weight of glory!* You know also that, however hard we labor and sacrifice now, it will be worth it all: for we have a crown of glory awaiting us---a matchless reward that far exceeds any sacrifices we are making now or will have to make in the days ahead.

But make no mistake, brethren, we will not receive the reward promised to us without strong opposition from the enemy; because Satan knows that we are being trained and disciplined to rule and reign with Christ over all the nations on earth for a thousand years. We should prepare ourselves, therefore, for fierce battles ahead. We may be sure of this, that no one is going to haphazardly stumble into heaven; and only those with an ironclad disposition to lay hold on the promises of God are going to inherit the kingdom of God on earth (Mt. 5.5; 11.12; Lu.16.16). And just assuredly, only those with a prophetic vision of God’s church and a holy determination to build it according to the pattern revealed in the Scriptures, will finally succeed in fulfilling the church’s mission in the world, including making ready the Bride for her wedding day.

Section I

Contending with Universal Lawlessness

It is significant that the Greek word *apostasia* translated “a falling away” in 2 Thessalonians 2.3 in our King James Bibles is rendered in some translations as “rebellion.” In classical Greek the word *apostasy* was used of a revolt led by military commanders. Certainly what is depicted in the entire passage in 2 Thessalonians 2.1-12 is the final rebellion of unbelievers in the last days and the repudiation of the Christian faith that culminates in the revelation of the Antichrist and his apostate system.

It is true that a departure from the faith may be caused by various means---false teachers, demonic deception, persecution, worldliness, spiritual lapse and half-hearted devotion: but it may be caused also by a spirit of defiance and conscious rejection of God’s authority. Perhaps all of the above factors may be involved in the final apostasy, but an arrogant defiance against God’s laws and government seems to be especially in focus in Paul’s prophecy in 2 Thessalonians 2.1-12.

Who will deny that the present apostasy in the world has degenerated into a conscious rebellion against the fundamental laws and

principles of the Christian faith? Reflecting on our experience in the United States in recent decades, we can see a distinct move in this direction in the so-called “Cultural Revolution” that was born in the liberal universities in the early 1960s. Clearly this movement---hatched in the minds of arrogant and degenerate intellectuals---was nothing less than a revolt against our Judeo-Christian faith that had transformed and reestablished the western world beginning in the first century on the Gospel of the Jesus Christ and the authoritative revelation of the Bible. At its core, this present rebellion is therefore antichrist.

After this rebellion was set in motion, we watched it grow; and its agenda became ever more obvious, and its influence more powerful and effective. For almost sixty years now this antichrist spirit has effectively leavened the western world; and we may be sure that as we approach the imminent coming of the Lord, this godless rebellion will become more sharply focused against Christ and His peculiar people. Indeed, its ultimate aim is in plain view now to wide-awake Christians.

Almost as soon as the rebellious movement began in the 1960s, it made its way into the common denominations and liberal churches. And though it took about 15-20 years, it gradually made its way into the Pentecostal movement and finally into the Church of God.

At its core this rebellious movement is the manifestation of spiritual lawlessness; and the coming Antichrist will be the personification of this lawlessness. In fact, *anthropos tes anomias* translated “man of sin” in 2 Thess. 2.3 is perhaps better rendered “man of lawlessness,” for *anomia* literally means “lawlessness.” So also *musterion tes anomias* translated “mystery of iniquity” in v. 7 may be rendered “mystery of lawlessness,” and *ho anomos* translated “that Wicked” in v. 8 may be rendered “the lawless one.” Now this Lawless One will succeed to “change [God’s] laws” and substitute in lieu of them his own corrupt laws---namely, a perverted Gospel that is designed to turn people away from the true Christ and His teachings. The prophet Daniel prophesied about this “lawless one” more than 500 years before Christ

“And he shall speak great [pompous] words against the most High . . . and think [intend] to change times and laws: and they [the saints] shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [three and one-half years]” (Dan. 7.25).

“And through his policy [political craftiness] also he shall cause craft [cunning deceit] to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace [prosperity]

shall destroy many: he also shall stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand," that is, broken by the Power of God (Dan 8.25).

We may be sure that Paul's prophecies in 1 Tim. 4.1-3 and 2 Tim 3.1-7 point to the coming Lawless One and the antichrist system that he will set up in the very last days.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous time shall come. For men will be lovers of their own selves, covetous [lovers of money], boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers [slanderers], incontinent [without self-control] fierce [brutal] despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady [reckless], high-minded [haughty] lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. . . ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth . . . [from such turn away]."

"Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats [foods], which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

We should not be surprised then by the outrageous contradictions and perversions of the Gospel of Christ that we are witnessing in this generation. We have been watching now for several decades the evil transformation of society---the dismantling of well-established truths and Godly principles in favor of moral and spiritual deviance and debauchery. The divine institutions of marriage and the family have been attacked now for decades and are crumbling under the weight of the overwhelming social consensus against them. Marital infidelity is rampant, and divorce and remarriage is the rule rather than the exception. Sexual perversion of every stripe has become "normal" in contemporary society. Homosexuality is leavening the whole social order (or disorder!); and the laws of the land are being changed to justify the desecrating and absurd practice of homosexual marriages. Thus, as it was in the days of Lot in Sodom so it is now in these last days---days that are rapidly leading up to the imminent return of the Lord (Lu. 17.18-20; Gen. 19.1-15, 24, 29; 2 Pet. 2.6-7; Jude 7-8). What

wide-awake saint will deny that hordes of demons have been unleashed in the earth in recent years, seducing men and women and exciting their carnal lusts and passions to commit unspeakable acts of fornication and all manner of filth and moral corruption (1 Tim. 4.1-3; Rev. 16.13-14).

Medical technology in this generation has become an accomplice in the irrational and abominable practice of “transgender” surgeries---the pretense by surgeons that they can overturn God’s natural order of creation. I heard a testimony on CNN a few days ago in which a woman was transformed into a man and a man into a woman; and then these two deranged persons went through---with the assistance of an ordained minister and other deranged witnesses---the mockery of a marriage ceremony! Our counsel in Zion Assembly to these confused and misguided souls is that they need a heart change not a sex change. For when one gets the heart right with God, one suddenly finds his/her true identity in Christ with joy and godly contentment!

Modern science is also delving into gender manipulation of the unborn---changing the sexes of fetuses! And of course medical doctors have been using their perverted skills and technology for years to tear and rip apart the unborn from their mothers’ wombs. Killing the unborn is now commonplace and considered normal; and thus murder in this guise since 1972 has been justified by man’s law---the Supreme Court of the United States, and also courts and legislatures in other nations. Moreover, murder and killing in many forms---hate crimes, terrorism, rape, drug-related and robbery-related killings---are now rampant throughout the world. Violence is again filling the earth as predicted by Jesus---“*as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be*” (Mt. 24.37-39).

The moral and spiritual disintegration and rampant lawlessness has shocked a great many naïve and unsuspecting Christians. Again Jesus warned, “*many shall be offended [feel they are being scandalized by those who continue to hold to the truth], and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*” (Mt. 24.10) and again, “*And because iniquity [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax [grow] cold*” (v. 12).

Will anyone contest the assertion that we are in this very hour experiencing the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecies of the end-times in Matthew 24 and elsewhere? For many of our brothers and sisters in our former fellowship and other Christian groups are now offended by our stand for truth, when not that long ago they stood for the same truths and encouraged and applauded us for our stand. It is not too much to say, in fact, that we are now hated by many who were once in fellowship with us. What has happened? I assure you it is not what they claim; namely, that they have received more light and understanding, and are simply endeavoring

to walk in that light. Rather, it is because, like Lot in Sodom, they have become “vexed” [the original word may imply *weakened*] in their faith and resistance to evil; and thus many now, because of the consensus of opinion among other Christians to change the teachings of Christ and His apostles, have become offended by the same truth they once embraced. Evidently because they no longer *love the truth*, they are now betraying those who do; and, yes, many are proving by their slanderous words and hateful actions that they really despise those who are continuing to hold to the truth.

The sober reality is that we are now witnessing the last day’s rebellion prophesied by the apostle Paul and other inspired apostles and prophets. Millions who once zealously embraced a holiness lifestyle and consecrated living are now turning away from the truth. But make no mistake, they are turning away not from religion; in fact they now embrace more zealously a certain religious mindset which they have substituted in lieu of the truth. They are thus fulfilling the apostle’s prediction in “speaking lies in hypocrisy”, having become the ministers of Satan in promoting the “doctrines of demons”--- propagating lies and deceit born of the devil (2 Cor. 11.13-15; 1 Tim. 4.1-2).

Again, should we be surprised? Paul prophesied that
“the time will come that they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears. And shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4.3).

And again,

“the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy . . . ” (1 Tim 4.1).

Section II God’s Righteous Nation

*“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah [“Praise”]; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that **the righteous nation** which **keeps the truth** may enter in”* (Is. 26.1-2)

The good news is that God is raising up a “righteous nation,” an “holy nation,” in these very last days that will contend with and overcome the demonic powers and seducing spirits who are plunging the world into

darkness and apostasy. This righteous nation will continue to courageously hold up the standards of holiness and righteousness, and will be honored consequently to rule and reign with Christ on the earth for a thousand years (Mt. 19.28; Lu. 22.28-30; Rom. 8.17; 2 Tim. 2.12; Rev. 5.10; 11.15; 20.4; 22.5). Even under the threat of persecution and through trials and tribulations, this “righteous nation” will rejoice and sing, *“We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks!”*

Our response to the question raised in Section I, namely, Should we be surprised or shocked by the prevailing lawlessness in this generation? is that we should see the increasing lawlessness rather as our prophetic cue to accelerate our efforts to adorn the City of God and rush more zealously into the harvest fields with the “all things” message of Christ and the church.

The prophetic promises of Christ for His church are indeed encouraging and glorious: for we are assured by our faithful Lord that we will succeed against the resistance of demonic powers and spiritual wickedness to fulfill the church’s mission in the world; and that the church will finally be presented to Christ in “robes of righteousness” and garments of holiness, *“clean and white”*--- *“not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that [the church] should be holy and without blemish”* (Eph. 4.11-13; 5.27; Rev. 19.7-8).

“Open Ye the Gates”

We can easily envision now the moment of fulfillment of this exciting promise: *“Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in”* (Is. 26.2). This prophecy seems to indicate that the Holy City, New Jerusalem, up to this point has never been occupied, and that the gates will likely be opened by the guardian angels in order for the church to enter and begin the Millennium; and, further, that New Jerusalem will be the habitation for the church and all of the glorified saints during the Millennial Reign. *“Then shall the King say to them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world”* (Mt. 25.34; see also Jn. 14.2-3; Rev. 21.2-4).

Get Under the Cloud!

Have you ever seen such doubt, confusion, and desperation among professing Christians! With over 40,000 denominations and sects advocating more than 50,000 contradictory doctrinal views and interpretations of the Scriptures, Christians today are saying they don’t know *what* to believe or *whom* to believe. Many have simply given up on

the idea that a particular visible church may have the answers to right and wrong, truth and error. They simply don't believe that God has a peculiar body of people whom He has sanctified, illuminated, and ordained to be "*the pillar and ground of the truth.*"

The apostle Paul indicates that the secret is for God's people to get "under the cloud" (1 Cor.10.1-2). For it is *under the cloud* that we receive the revelation of the truth, and become settled and established in the truth. It is under the power and illumination of that cloud of glory that confusion vanishes away, and God's will is discerned. It was *under the cloud* at Mount Sinai that the church was established, the commandments of the Lord were received, and the people entered into a mutual covenant with the Lord to be His "peculiar people" and "holy nation" (Ex. 19.3-8; 13.21-22; 14.24-31; Ps. 99.6-9; Deut. 5.2-5; 1 Pet. 2.9).

It is in the "cloud"---in and under the presence and glory of the Holy Ghost---that *the secret of the Lord* is revealed (Prov. 3.32; Amos 3.7; Judg. 13.18). For "*the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Cor. 2.14): "*but God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea the deep things of God*" (v.12).

Further, it is in the cloud that God's leaders are exalted and receive their spiritual authority.

"And the Lord said to Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak to you, and believe you for ever. And Moses told the words of the people to the Lord" (Ex. 19.9; see also vv. 16-25; and cp. 1 Cor.1-16; Heb. 12.18-29).

It is in and under the glory of *shekinah* and the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost that God's will and prophetic plan is revealed to His people. Under the glory of that glorious power and illumination, nothing is withheld from our understanding---"*yea the deep things of God are revealed!*" Under the cloud, we receive understanding and clarity on every essential and relevant issue: and we receive also divine guidance, protection, assurance, and direction in the Holy Ghost (Ex. 19.9; 24.9-18; 40.34-38; Num. 9.15-23; 14.14; Deut. 1.33; Ps. 78.14; 91.1; Dan. 2.28-29, 47; Mt. 13.10-11; 1 Cor. 2.7-16; Jn.14.26; 15.26; 16.7, 12-16; Lu. 24.49-53; Acts 1.6-8; 2.1-4; Eph. 1.9; 3.17-19; Heb.4.12). In and through the Holy Ghost we are elevated, illuminated, translated, and "caught up" *into heavenly places in Christ*: and in that secret place with God, we "*behold as in a [mirror] the glory of the Lord, and [are changed from glory to glory*

into that same image], even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3.18; Eph. 1.3, 9, 20; 2.6; 3.5).

It was thus that the apostle Paul was “*caught up into paradise [‘third heaven’], and heard things not lawful for a man to utter;*” and received also an “*abundance of [visions] and revelations*” (2 Cor. 12.1-7). The apostle John also testified, saying he “*was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind [him] a great voice,*” and through this glorious vision in the Spirit he received the glorious revelation of the Lord (Rev. 1.10). Later he says, “*And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*” (21.2). Then a few verses later, he says, an angel came and talked with me saying, *Come hither, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God*” (vv. 9-11). So whereas Paul heard things not lawful for a man to utter, John saw things!

It was thus that the prophet Isaiah in a vision “*saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple*” (Is. 6.1). So also God said to Abraham, “*I will show you . . .*” (Gen. 12.1); and to Moses, “*I will show you*” (Ex. 25.1-2, 8-9); and to Jeremiah, “*I will . . . show you great and mighty things*” (Jer. 33.2-3). Ezekiel wrote, saying, “*... the hand of the Lord is upon me . . . [and] set me upon a very high mountain . . . and [I saw visions of the House of God] . . .*” (Ezek. 40.1-48.35).

We see then that it is in and through the Holy Ghost that the Lord reveals His secrets to His people. Jesus said,

“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come . . . For He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (Jn. 16.13-15).

The Prophetic Vision of the Church

Those who do not have a prophetic vision of the church cringe and flinch when they hear preaching that exalts the church. They think that somehow it diminishes the glory of Christ. But just the opposite is true. For Christ is the one who makes the church what it is---“*A city set on a hill.*” “*The light of the world.*” “*The righteous nation.*” “*The Zion of the*

Holy One.” “The Bride of Christ.” The promise is, “. . . the mountain of the Lord’s house . . . shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it” (Is. 2.2); and again, “Wait upon the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land” (Ps. 37.34).

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee . . . and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . Then [you will] see . . . And [your] heart shall fear and be enlarged ; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee . . . Therefore thy gates shall be open continually . . . that men may bring unto thee the forces [riches] of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve [you] shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted . . . And the sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto [you]; and all that despised [you] shall bow themselves down at the soles of [your] feet; and they shall call [you], The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One . . .” (Is. 60.1-14).

Listen to the inspired prophets utter the very thoughts of God:

“The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the [tents] of Jacob” (Ps. 87.2).

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion . . . For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled” (Ps. 48.1-5).

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Ps. 87.3).

So beautiful and exalted will the church be as we approach the Lord’s coming, that men will marvel and say,

“Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible [awesome] as an army with banners” (Song 6.10).

Mysterious Union Between Christ and the Church

How could the church not be exalted in view of the fact that she is the bride of Christ and body of Christ---*flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone!* This intimate union itself exalts the church: for she is peculiar to God “*above all people*” on the earth (Ex. 19.5). Thus she is depicted throughout the Scriptures as the very counterpart of Christ. This point cannot be overemphasized, for Christ now works His perfect will through the instrumentality of His church. It is true that Christ is the source of the church’s energy and strength, but, at the same time, she is His body---His hands, feet, eyes, ears, and vocal chords. Christ and the church are “*laborers together,*” and the ministers and members are “*joint-heirs with Christ,*” and will soon be “*glorified together*” with Him in the Rapture (Rom. 8.17).

See here: if Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is His Bride. If He is the Way, she is “*the new and living way.*” If He is Husband, she is His wife. If He is ruddy and beautiful, she is ‘*comely as Tirzah*’; if He is the Son of David, she is the City of David; if He is the Prince of Peace, she is the City of Peace; if He is the Shepherd, she is the Fold; if He is the Captain, she is the Army; if He is the Governor, she is the Nation; if He is Moses, she is the ‘*Church in the wilderness*’; if He is Solomon, she is the *Shulamite* woman (*Shulamite* is probably the Heb. feminine of Solomon: she thus took His name!); if He is Adam, she is Eve; if He is Isaac, she is Rebecca; if He is Boaz, she is Ruth; if He is the Man of Edom [Is. 62.1], she is the Armies of Heaven coming to bring judgment in the earth [Jude 14-15; Rev. 19.14]; if He is the High Priest, she is the Temple; if He is the King, she is the Queen [Ps. 45.9-10, 13-14; Is. 28.5; 62.3]; if He is the Lily of the Valley, she is *Hephzibah* [Is. 62.4]; if He is the Rose of Sharon, she is *Beulah Land* [Is. 62.4]; if He is Shiloh, she is His Gathered People [Gen. 49.10]; if He is the Lord, she is the Servant [Is. 49.3-6]; if He is the Door, she is the Gate [Gen. 28.17]; if He is the Truth, she is the ‘*Pillar and Ground of the Truth*’; if He is the Builder, she is the Building; if He is God’s only begotten Son, ‘she is the only one of her mother’ [Song. 6.9]; if He is the Son of God, she is the daughter of Zion; if He is a mighty Warrior, she is ‘*terrible as an army with banners*’ [Song. 6.10]; if He’s the Bread of life, she is the ‘*salt of the earth*’; if He is Christ, she is the Body of Christ; if He’s the Vine, she is the Branches; if He is the Root, she is the Fruit; if He is the Head, she is the Body; if He is the Royal Bridegroom, she is a Royal Priesthood [1 Pet. 2.9]; if He is the master of the House, she is the House; if He is the Sun of Righteousness, she is ‘clear as the sun’ [Mal. 4.2; Song 6.10].

It is noteworthy also that the church is often depicted in identical terms with Christ because of their intimate covenant union. Thus if He is a Jew and part Gentile, she is Jewish and part Gentile; if He is the Light, she is the Light; if He is the Seed, she is the seed [Gal. 3.16, 29; Rev. 12.13-17]; if He is the Lamb, she is the sheep; if He has Dove's eyes, she is His Dove; if He is 'all fair', she is 'all fair'; if He is the Temple, she is the Temple; if He is a Living Stone, she is 'Lively Stones' [1 Pet. 2.4-5]; if He is the Arm of the Lord, she is the Arm of the Lord; if He is Salvation, she is Salvation; if He is the Messenger, she is the Messenger; if He is the Voice, she is the Voice; if He is exalted, she is exalted; if He reigns, she reigns; if He judges, she judges; if He embodies God, she embodies God; if He is crucified, she is crucified; if He is resurrected, she is resurrected; if He is ascended, she will ascend!

Light to All Nations

Now let's return here to Isaiah's prophecy about God's "Righteous Nation." This nation is set over against the nations of the world in the Scriptures. The Lord has espoused this nation to Himself; He is her *Husband and Maker* (Is. 54.5; Jer. 3.14), and thus she has a special relationship to Him and a special destiny---peculiar unto Him "*high above*" all other nations on the earth.

"The Lord has avouched [summoned] thee this day to be His peculiar people . . . to make [set] thee high above all nations which He has made, in praise, and in name, and in honor . . . that you may be a holy people" (Deut. 26.19)

and again,

"For thou art a holy people unto the Lord . . . a peculiar people . . . above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14.2; see also 4.7-14; 7.6; 28.9-10; Ex. 6.7; 19.5-8; et al).

It is plain that Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob ('Israel') became the family of God; but they were later incorporated at Mt. Sinai [Mt. Horeb] by a special covenant, and thereby became the "*church in the wilderness*" (Ex. 19.5-8; 24.3-4, 78; Deut. 5.1-24; Acts 7.38). Then, after Christ came into the world, this same chosen nation, *Israel* [that is, the elect Jews and Gentiles who believed in Christ], was transformed under the New Covenant and became the New Testament

church, the true “Israel of God” (Rom. 10.1-21; 11.4-7, 11-23; 1 Cor.10.1-11, 16-21, 32; Gal. 6.16; Eph. 2.11-19; 3.6). Further, we are encouraged that this same church will continue to be transformed from glory to glory to fulfill God’s ultimate purpose for her (Is. 9.2; 49.3-6; 60.1-14; 2 Cor.3.18; Eph. 2.11-21; 3.6; Heb. 3.5-6; 1 Pet. 2.9;), namely, to be the Light of the World and His special instrument to make disciples in all nations (Is. 60.1-3; Mt. 5.14-15; 28.19-20; Mk. 16.20; Eph. 5.8, 14; Rev. 21.10-11, 23-26).

Just Ahead---Millennial Glory!

God’s church is destined to rule and reign on earth with Christ and all of the saints for a thousand years! And, we know by the signs of the times, that day is just ahead. Think of it. After the church is “*caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air*” and the Great Tribulation is fulfilled (which will last it seems for seven years), Christ will return to the earth with His saints to defeat the Antichrist and his armies and deliver His persecuted people---the “Tribulation saints.” He will then establish His government in Jerusalem and inaugurate the Millennial Reign. This means that if the Rapture takes place, let’s say, three years from now: we will begin to rule and reign with Christ on earth ten years from now. How exciting is that! But in any case, whether it’s ten years from now or twenty, we know the time is short: and thus we should be zealously prosecuting our mission to reach “all nations” with the “all things” message. For it is on this basis that the Lord says, “*then shall the end come*” (Mt. 24.14). Jesus said, “*Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be . . . Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into city*” (Rev. 22.12).

Intriguingly, our fathers espoused very early in our history the doctrine of the Millennial Reign; yet they seemed to have been overly cautious through the years, even reluctant, to develop an extensive theology of our hopes and expectations for this Golden Age. This reluctance occasioned a great many contradictions among our ministers and members in regard to our understanding and proclamation of end-time events. I have felt somewhat bound myself in regard to sharing freely my understanding of this important and exciting teaching, for fear of perhaps offending those who have not put much thought into the subject. But it seems now high time to address this important subject, and to encourage the development of a full-blown theology of the Millennial Reign. The following analysis and exposition is intended to serve as a starting point toward this end.

The doctrine of the *Millennium* is based on several passages in the Bible. The most explicit one in regard to the time element is found in the last book of the Bible:

“. . . and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished . . . Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired [completed], Satan shall be loosed [released] out of his prison” (Rev. 20:4-7).

This text serves to govern and explain many other passages that refer to a glorious reign of Christ on earth, in which the church will rule and reign with Him for a thousand years. It will be the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise: *“The meek shall inherit the earth”* (Mt. 5:5). In that day---*the day of the Lord*---the spiritual kingdom as we know it now, that dwells presently in men’s hearts (Lu. 17. 20-21; Jn. 3.3-8; Rom. 14.17), will become a visible government on earth under the kingship and visible reign of Christ, thus fulfilling scores of biblical prophecies (Gen. 49.10; Ps. 72. 1-19; Dan. 7.13-27; Is. 2.2-4; 9.6-7; Jer. 3.17-18; Zech. 9.10; 14.3-5; Mic.4.1; Jude 14-15; Rev. 19.11-21; et al).

How to Interpret Millennial Passages

Since many Millennial passages collapse together the events of the Great Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon and Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Reign, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth, it is necessary to distinguish the particular events within the framework of the overall prophecy. The prophecy of Joel 2.21--3.1-21 is a case in point. Here Joel compresses together in typical prophetic fashion the events in his own particular day---the locust plague and restoration of the land (2.21-27); then he moves on to depict the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (vv. 28-32; cp. Acts 2:14-21); then he moves forward to describe the events of the Great Tribulation (3.1-17); then finally he forecasts the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (vv. 18-21).

The prophecy in Zechariah 14.1-21 is structured in the same way: it progresses from the Second Coming of the Lord and the Battle of Armageddon (vv. 1-15), then proceeds to the establishment of the

Millennial Government and the glory of the Kingdom on earth.

On the other hand, the prophets often recapitulate [repeat, restate, ‘go over the same ground’] certain particular events in revealing the overall picture or scenario of the prophecies. The apostle John almost certainly does this in the Book of Revelation: for example, in chapters 4 through 21 several particular themes and visions are emphasized in the framework of the overarching vision of the Book. The visions of Babylon in Rev. 17 and 18 are almost certainly speaking of the same Babylon, the same pagan system: only the religious element is depicted in chapter 17 and the commercial element in chapter 18. Likewise, divine judgment and the Great Tribulation are depicted in chapters 6 through 20; and the Second Coming of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Millennial Reign, and the vision of New Jerusalem are all recapitulated and interwoven in the larger and overall picture in Revelation chapters 19 through 22.

Then there are many Millennial passages that have their initial fulfillment in the church in the present Gospel Age, but realize their ultimate fulfillment in the Millennium, while others do not realize their ultimate fulfillment until the creation of the new heavens and earth, e.g., Isaiah 2.2-4; 25.6-7; 60.1-22; 65.13-19.

Finally, many of the prophetic passages have a double or two-fold meaning: the symbolic and the literal; for example, the references to the “waters” and “rivers” in Ezekiel 47.1-12 have both literal and symbolic significance. They refer to the operations of the Holy Spirit in this present Gospel age, as well as in the Millennium and in heaven: but there is every reason to believe they also refer to actual waters and rivers in the Millennium. In fact, the prophecies would be rather confusing and misleading if they did not have also a literal meaning. The same is true of the “*trees for food*” and the “*leaves for healing*”: they should be understood to have both symbolic and literal significance. Likewise, *mountain* in Isaiah 2.2-3 should be understood to signify “government,” but we should expect to see also a literal mountain in the Millennium.

While the vast majority of professing Christians in the world today deny or question a literal premillennial reign of Christ on the earth, yet the Bible clearly reveals it. We certainly hold to this precious hope and expectation in Zion Assembly. We hold it because it is consistent with a literal and reasonable interpretation of the Scriptures. It seems inconsistent in fact to spiritualize passages that refer to Christ’s reign on earth, as the Roman Catholic Church and the vast majority of Protestants do today. This view is called *A-millennialism* or *no-millennialism*. Others teach that this present Gospel age (before Christ’s second coming) will so completely succeed to root out sin and evil in the earth until righteousness will reign

universally. This is called *postmillennialism*. This was the view of the Puritans and many early American religious leaders and groups. But this view has become virtually obsolete: for almost all evangelical Christians agree that the world in general has not progressed in Christian grace and power in the past two centuries, but rather has decreased in spirituality and in obedience to the moral government of God; in fact most agree that the world has been steadily “falling away” from the influence of the Gospel, and that the prevailing spirit today is antichrist! Accordingly, few today hold to a postmillennial view.

Still others believe in a literal reign on earth, but hold that the “thousand years” should be understood only figuratively. In this view the “Millennium” began with the first coming of Christ and runs parallel with the Gospel Age. Christ thus rules from heaven rather than earth. Consistent with this view, the devil is not actually bound in a pit for a thousand years, but rather is only restricted by the influence of the Gospel. Christ’s second coming represents therefore His final judgment upon the earth, after which He creates all things new. Those who hold this view thus interpret millennial passages allegorically rather than literally.

In all of these views, liberal interpreters attempt to relegate in one way or another the meaning of the Second Coming of the Lord and the Millennium to present human experience; whereas we see these important prophetic events both as actual and future. Our view is thus called *premillennialism*.

Vindication of God’s Sovereign Will, and the Faith and Suffering of the Saints

There is every reason to believe that the millennial passages in the Bible are speaking of and predicting a literal reign of Christ on the earth. First, a general rule of interpretation requires that a passage be taken naturally and literally unless sufficient proof can be shown otherwise. Accordingly, we have never read anything that convinces us that Christ will not return and establish a literal kingdom on earth which will last a thousand years. Even Augustine’s attempt in his *City of God* (5th century), which has since governed the thinking of Roman Catholics and most Protestants fails to make a convincing argument. Second, it is reasonable that Christ would desire to reign in the very earth that had been overthrown by sin and the power and deceivableness of Satan, in order to fulfill the very purpose for which God originally designed and ordained it. Jesus’ prayer in Matthew 6 indicates this: “*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, even as it is heaven.*” Otherwise, are we to think

that God completely abandoned the earth to Satan and the consequences of sin, with no redemption and restoration in mind through Christ? This does not square with God's justice and majestic honor, for the present earth itself will be the scene of Christ's triumph of righteousness and the vindication of His creative purpose. Thirdly, the Millennial Reign is designed to be a just reward for the saints of all ages who suffered in the earth, endured persecution and martyrdom, and yet remained faithful to God. The very earth that He had created for them to enjoy and maintain is thus conquered, subdued, and finally given to the saints as a precious reward and possession (Daniel 2:44; 7:13-27; see also Ps. 149.1-9; Rev. 19.11-21). The Millennial Reign on earth was thus the general belief of the early Church Fathers. The comment of Irenaeus (A.D 180) will suffice:

“It is fitting for the righteous to be the first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers. It is fitting for them to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards. For it is just that in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted (being proved in every way by suffering), that they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the creation in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again; and in the creation in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign. For God is rich in all things and all things are his. It is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself, being restored to its primeval condition, should be without restraint under the dominion of the righteous.”

The Curse will be Lifted Satan will be Bound Peace will Reign

During this glorious reign of Christ and the saints on earth the curse will be lifted, though perhaps not as completely as it will be in the creation of the new heavens and new earth. Satan will be bound a thousand years in the bottomless pit (Rev. 20.1-2); and there is every indication that his demons will be bound with him in chains during this time (e.g., Is. 24.21-23; Rev. 9.1-11; and cp. Lu. 8.31 and 2 Pet. 2.4). The earth will be restored and revitalized. God's plan in the beginning will be fulfilled. The Prince of Peace shall rule, and peace and righteousness will prevail; and we are promised that of the *“increase of his government and peace there shall be no end”* (Isaiah 9:7; see also Ps.72.7-19). In this glorious reign on earth, the prophet declared,

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones 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’s 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” (Is.11:6-9).

“And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely” (Hosea 2.18; see also Job 5.23; Ezek. 34.25, 28).

These passages imply that the enmity between man and animals will be suspended, and the enmity within the animal kingdom itself will be suspended: and man and ravenous animals will return to a vegetation diet--*“the cow and bear shall feed [together]. . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox”* (see also Is. 35.9). The mutations of nature that came about through the rebellion and curse in Eden will be healed. The thirst for flesh and blood will be removed, or governed, and man and animal will dwell together in peace. Gentleness and righteousness will be the prevailing spirit during this Golden Age.

Prosperity, Simplicity, Justice

There will be abundance of everything that is good and profitable for man, and nothing that is sinful and wicked shall be able to express itself without rebuke and correction (Is. 33.13-20; 35.8-10; 65.21-23; Ezek. 47.1-12; Zeph. 3.11-13; Zech. 9.10; 14.16-19). There will be no more war; the weapons of warfare will be *“beat into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks [pruning knives]”* (Isaiah 2:4; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:3), an indication that a large part of the inhabitants on earth will return to a simple lifestyle consistent with God’s original creative purpose---that is, an agricultural economy. The prophet Isaiah says,

“Then shall He give the rain [for] thy seed, that thou sow to the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large

pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that [work] the ground will eat clean provender [cured fodder] which has been winnowed with the shovel and fan [winnowing fork]. And there shall be upon every high hill, rivers and streams of water . . . Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach [bruise] of His people, and heals the stroke of their wound” (Is. 30.23-26).

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad . . . And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing . . . they shall see the glory of the Lord . . . Shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a [deer], and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitations of dragons [jackals], where each day, shall be grass with reeds and rushes” (35.1-7).

“They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat . . . and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (65.21-23).

We may assume, then, that there will be a restoration of the physical earth and its atmosphere, with clean water and clean air to enhance the proliferation of all good things. Further, the righteousness of the Millennial government will prevent foreclosures on land and houses, and no unjust business practices will be allowed to stand. Equity, honesty, and perfect justice will rule the day!

Paradise Restored

Since the curse will be lifted, there will be a wonderful proliferation of all kinds of seed, similar to how it was in the original paradise. The rivers and streams will be purified, and new fountains opened up in the earth to turn deserts into gardens and fruitful fields (Is. 29.17; 30.23-26; 32.15; 33.13-24; 35.1-2, 6-7; 51.3; Ezek. 47.1-12; Hosea 2.21-23; Joel 2.18-26; 3.18; Zech. 14.8). Papias, a disciple of the apostle John in the late first- and early second century, seems however to have allowed his imagination to soar a little too high in his speculations about this Golden Age:

“ . . . [the] grapevines will have ten-thousand branches, and every branch ten-thousand twigs, and in each shoot there will be ten-thousand clusters, and in each cluster ten-thousand grapes, and in each grape will produce a gallon of grape-juice. In like manner, a grain of wheat will produce ten-thousand ears.”

Notwithstanding these exciting prophetic expectations, the earth at the beginning of the Millennium will be more or less war-torn and devastated: for it will have just experienced several years of God’s fiery judgment and indignation during the Great Tribulation. Thus, a large part of the work of the church and the saints under Christ during this time will be to restore and purge the earth of physical corruption and pollution---to restore the health and beauty of the land. The saints will oversee and labor to “*beat swords into plowshares,*” turn “*spears into pruning hooks,*” and sit on thrones to judge and establish righteousness and divine order throughout the earth (Rev. 2.26; 3.21; 20.4; cf. also Mt. 19.28; 1 Cor. 6.2; 2 Tim. 2.12).

Sin in the Millennium

It is important to understand that though the curse will be lifted and paradise will be restored to a great degree, still all will not be as perfect as it will be after the creation of the new heavens and new earth following the Millennium (Rev. 21.1-5). For though sin, sorrow, and death will be suppressed, the residue of these defections will remain, if only in limited form (Is. 60.12; 65.20-21; Zech. 14.16-19): for men will remain free to choose to accept or reject salvation, and thus free to choose to serve God or not to serve Him. Nevertheless, the eternal disposition of God against sin will continue to prevail through the Millennium (Ex. 34.6-7; Ecc. 8.11-13; Is. 3.11; Nahum 1.3): and men will be governed and forced to abide by the laws of God: for “*He shall rule all nations with a rod of iron*” (Ps. 2.9; Is. 9.6-7; Rev. 2.27; 12.5; 19.15).

The presence of sin will enter the Millennium through the children born of the saints who resist and survive the persecution of the Antichrist and his armies during the Great Tribulation. For the children of Millennial saints will be born with the nature of sin and free will, and many apparently will choose to resist the offer of salvation and the prevailing righteousness in the Millennial Kingdom (Is. 65.20; Zech. 14.17-19).

The powerful nature of sin may be seen also at the end of the glorious Millennium, when Satan will be “*loosed out of his prison, and shall go out and deceive the nations . . . and gather them together to battle: the number of whom shall be as the sand of the sea*” (Rev. 20.7-8).

These multitudes from all over the earth will follow Satan to make war once again---and for the last time!---against Christ and His saints. They will “*compress [surround] the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city [earthly Jerusalem]*” (v. 9): then apparently in a moment, “*fire [will come] down from God out of heaven, and devour them*” (v.10). This will mark the end of human life on earth.

Ruling and Reigning with Christ

We have seen that Christ shall rule with a “rod of iron” in the Millennium (Rev. 2.27; 12:5; 19:15); and His saints will rule and reign with Him (Dan. 7.13-14, 18, 22, 27; Mt. 19.28; Lu. 19.16-19; 22.29-30; 1 Cor. 6.2-3; 2 Tim. 2.12; Rev. 2.26-27; 5.10; 20.4-6; 22.5). Jerusalem will be the center of the Millennial government (Is. 2.2-4; Jer. 3.17-18; Joel 3.16-18; Zech. 2.12; 14.8-21). His sovereign holiness will hold sway universally over the earth, and His counsel---“*the sword of His mouth*”---will prevail. This language is used, *first*, because Christ shall return in great judgment and power, and *second*, because sin will still be present in many of the un-glorified inhabitants of the earth during the thousand-year reign. Thus His government will be exercised to suppress sin and relegate sinners to His righteous law and judgment. The sinful element in the earth will be minimized however for several reasons: 1) “*the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth like the waters cover the sea,*” that is, there will be a universal consciousness of the presence of God and His law; 2) Christ will dwell in the midst of His people; 3) the tempter and his demonic powers will be bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3; Is. 24.21-23); 4) the spirit of antichrist and the great Babylon (false religion) will have been judged and removed from the earth (19:15-21).

We see then an important reason for the present existence of the church. We are in training now to reign and rule with Christ in the Millennium. There will be various positions assigned to the saints in the government of the millennial kingdom (Dan. 7:22, 27; Mt. 20:20-23; Lu. 19:17-19; 22:28-30; Rev. 3:21), all answerable to the King of kings. Jesus said, he that is faithful now over little, shall in that day be given authority over “*ten cities*” and others over “*five cities*” (Lu. 19:17-18).

Reigning over Whom?

A further word should be given here in regard to this subject. Various opinions by those who hold to a pre-millennial view of Scripture have been advanced to answer this question. Dispensationalists have various

views that inevitably attempt to hold to the Old and New Covenants at the same time. We find many difficulties with these views, some of which are confusing and clearly irreconcilable with the Scriptures---particularly the notion that the Jews will be eternally saved on the basis of their former standing with God under the Old Covenant. While it seems apparent that a “remnant” of Israel will be spared, their salvation is based on their faith in Christ (Zeph. 3.13; Rom. 11.1-7, 20-36).

Who then shall inhabit the earth in those days? First, as we have already noticed, it will be all of the “*dead in Christ*” raised in the first resurrection (1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 20:4-6). Some refer to this group as the “kingdom saints.” Paul said, “*the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air . . . and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” This is a precious promise. We have not made it yet, but then in this glorious rapture, we are told, “*and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” These same saints then will return with Christ when He returns to the earth (Rev. 20:14). Second, the apostles were ordained to “*sit on thrones [to judge] the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Luke 22: 29-30). Thus, a “remnant” of historical Israel seems to be in the picture in this Golden Age. The Millennium will be a reward for the elect and martyrs of this nation, because they have endured great persecution for identifying themselves with God throughout history (Gen. 12:3; Ex. 19:5-8; Lu. 22:28-30; Rom. 3.1-31; 11.1-36), and because God had made a covenant with them in regard to the land of Canaan, present-day Palestine (Gen. 12.7; 17:7-8): but in the final analysis Jews will go to heaven only on the basis of faith in Christ.

But the Millennial inhabitants will not be limited to the elect in Israel. Many of the “nations” of the world will populate the Millennial Kingdom (Is. 2:2-4; 27:13; Zeph. 3.12; Zech. 2.11; 8:22-23; 9:10). What nations? Apparently all nations. What is implied it seems is the faithful followers of Christ and the church in every nation in contrast to the followers of the antichrist in these nations who will be judged and destroyed (Is. 60: 3-5; 12-14, 21, 22; 66:19; Zech. 8: 22-23). These “blessed saints” will include those in both Old and New dispensations (Gen. 12:2, 3; 17:6-8; 18:18; 22:18; 27:29; Ex. 23:22-33).

Longevity of Life will be Restored

We have noticed that human life will continue to exist and proliferate during this Golden Age in the earth. But according to the prophet Isaiah, a prolonged life span will be the rule of the day, as it was in the age of the patriarchs before the Great Flood. Death will be so unexpected that if a

person dies after living only one hundred years, he/she will be considered as having died as an infant.

“There shall be no more thence be an infant of days, nor an old man who has not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed . . . For as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Is. 65.20-22).

Again, the power of sin is noticed. For even in the presence and glory of the visible Christ, and the reality of universal goodness and righteousness that permeates the earth, some men will still choose to reject salvation and remain sinners: and, as noticed earlier, they will again align themselves with the devil at the end of the Millennium in a revolt and foolish attempt to overthrow our omnipotent God and His eternal plan. But they will fail in this final rebellion against God! (Rev. 20.7-9).

Universal Health Plan

“And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and that side, shall grow all trees for meat [food], whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months [every month], because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat [food], and the leaf thereof for medicine [healing]” (Ezek. 47.12).

Since the root of sin will remain and continue through the Millennium in the unregenerate, and also the potential for sickness will remain even in the saints who are still in their fleshly bodies, God in His great wisdom and mercy designed a remedy suited to the grace and glory of the Golden Age. There will be trees apparently not unlike the trees in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2.9, 16) that will remain perpetually green, providing not only an endless source of fresh fruit and all kinds of food, but leaves and herbs inherent with medicinal powers (cf. Zech. 13.1; Rev. 22.1-2). But note also there will be healing power in the purified waters of the rivers and streams (Ezek. 47.8-10; cp. Gen. 2.10).

Enhanced Illumination and Communication with God

Communication with God will be supernatural and enlightened, and requests will be answered speedily, even before they are fully vocalized. Says the Lord, *“And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear”* (v. 24). This is because our knowledge of the Lord will be greatly increased and our God-consciousness heightened: *“for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”* (Is. 11.9). The saints caught up in the Rapture will be glorified, and the rest of the saints, still in the flesh, will not be bothered by the tempter, and will enjoy a more intimate relationship with the reigning Christ on earth: for *“He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them”* (Rev. 7.15). And again, *“Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God”* (21.3).

Precious Inheritance

This is the kingdom that Jesus promised to His church, saying, *“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”* (Luke 12:32). And again, *“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Mt. 25.34), and still again, *“Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your Lord”* (v. 23). This is the kingdom that God has appointed to His saints for a thousand years.

“And they lived and reigned with Him a thousand years!”

Let me ask our friends and visitors in this great Assembly here today: Is this kingdom your inheritance? Are you included in this glorious prophecy? Are you one of the “they” who will live and reign with Christ? Have you accepted the King of glory into your heart? Or are you like Esau in the Old Testament and the prodigal son in the New Testament? Are you squandering this precious gift and inheritance that Jesus purchased for you at Calvary?

Section III

Plain Dress and Modesty

“ . . . adorn [yourselves] in modest apparel . . . not with gold, or pearls, or costly array [clothing]”

Once again it seems necessary to say something in support of our stand on plainness and humility in regard to dress, cosmetics [mascara, lipstick, etc.], and jewelry. For the enemy seems always to have his arsenals aimed to undermine and contradict our counsel and teachings on these things. But I am not fooled in the least to think that Satan’s primary interest is in these things. Not at all. Rather, I believe he knows that if he can get us to lower our standard on these things, that it will weaken our resolve and commitment to “[walk circumspectly before the Lord]” in other things, and thus the door will be opened for him to undermine and contradict more important teachings. But “*we are not ignorant of his devices,*” and therefore we intend to reinforce our position on these things on the authority of the Scriptures and by a right use of reason and tradition.

We have shown sufficiently in our literature---*Voice of Zion, Abstract of Faith*, School of Ministry courses, Sunday School literature, and the annual addresses of the Presiding Bishop---that our position on plainness is scripturally sound and necessarily a part of the “all things” message that Christ commissioned us to proclaim and teach to the nations. And we have shown also that our Church Fathers in the early centuries of the church---Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Novatian, Commodianus, Arnobius, et al.---were fully agreed with our stand, for they explicitly denounced luxurious dress and wearing of facial paints, jewelry, etc. (see *VOZ*, June 2010, pp. 4-11, 21-23; May 2012, pp. 4-7; October 2012, pp. 4-7, 15-16; and cf. also 2 Thess. 2.15; 3.6).

These Church Fathers agreed with all of the sacred writers that spiritual wisdom, knowledge, godliness, meekness, humility, righteousness, integrity, and “*a meek and quiet spirit*” are more excellent ornaments than gold and pearls and jewels and costly array---which things, says the apostle Peter, are “*in the sight of God of great price.*” You should, therefore, let love, gentleness, meekness, faith, mercy, and goodness adorn you. And these graces look and stand out better when they are not covered over and cluttered up with all the other stuff.

The wise man wrote that believers should seek for spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding, for “*they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck*” (Prov.1.9). And again,

he says, adorn the wisdom and the graces of the Spirit, for they shall be upon your *“head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory”* (4.9). Another prophet admonishes us to be clothed with the *“garments of salvation”* rather than expensive and luxurious cloths that wax old like rags, and be decked with *“the robe of righteousness”* rather than jewels and ornaments of gold and silver (Is. 61.10). Again, the Psalmist says, *“For the Lord . . . will beautify the meek with salvation”* (Ps. 149.4); in fact, God’s people filled with His graces and crowned with holy glory are themselves the *“jewels”* of the Lord, His *special treasure* (Mal. 3.17). God’s design for His people is that they finally be given *“Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified”* (Is. 61.3). See, gold and jewels and costly attire glorify men, but spiritual wisdom and praise and joy and righteousness *glorify the Lord!*

It would seem that 1 Timothy 2.8-10 and 1 Peter 3.1-6 would be sufficient to justify our position in Zion Assembly. Read:

“I will therefore that men pray everywhere [in every locality], lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting [or disputing]. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness [propriety, humility] and sobriety [modesty, discretion]; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array [clothing].”

“Likewise, ye wives, be subject to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the Word, they may also without the Word be won by the conversation [conduct, lifestyle] of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation [conduct, lifestyle] coupled with fear [reverence]. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quite spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any amazement [terror].”

But in the common [independent and denominational] churches, where most of the members have grown up with and learned to accept and

practice worldly habits, it seems to be simply too much for the pastors and ministers to challenge the *status quo*---especially when most of their financial support comes from these members! So they bow to the consensus of opinion and merely wink at the Word of God concerning these matters; and thus they fail to fulfill their God-ordained responsibility to teach and guide their people in the principles and habits of holiness. Worse yet, most of them seem compelled by some alien power to twist and force the Holy Scriptures to comply with their errant behavior; and, consequently, they stumble into the error of the Pharisees, either willfully or unwittingly, making the “*the commandment of God of none effect by [their] traditions*” (Mt. 15.6). Some others, moreover, have set out to willfully and consciously “*walk in craftiness*” and to “*handle the Word of God deceitfully*” in order to evade the truth and to justify these errant practices (cp. Eph. 4.14 with 2 Cor. 4.1-2).

In observing these trends, it seems to me that people observe certain prominent Christian leaders and otherwise see large gatherings of Christians and notice that the great majority of them are decked out with gold and jewels and various ornaments, and on that basis conclude that these habits and practices must be acceptable with God. They then, in turn, interpret the Scriptures to comply with the behavior of the people; whereas, the people should be taught and led to conform to the teachings of Christ and the apostles (Acts 2.42; 1 Tim. 2.8-10; 1 Pet. 3.1-6; Ex. 23.2; et al.). We are warned about the twisted practice of some who “*[measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves to themselves]*” rather than measuring themselves against the Word of God (2 Cor. 10,12). Listen to the apostle, “*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*” (Rom. 12.2; see also 2 Tim. 3.15-16; Heb. 4.12).

“ . . . now put off thy ornaments from thee ”

What are we to make of the account in Exodus 33.4-6 in which the Lord commands the Israelites to “*put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do with thee.*” And then the response of the people: they “*stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb [Sinai].*” Now this command from the Lord was in response to the people making a *golden calf* while Moses was away in the mount with God. The disobedience and idolatry angered the Lord, as well as Moses. Even so, on the basis of their penitent spirit and Moses’ intercessions, the Lord had mercy on the people and agreed to allow them to go into the Promised Land.

But notice they first *“stripped themselves of their ornaments.”* Interestingly, some well-known Bible scholars say the significance of the ornaments lay in their symbolic representation; yet these are divided with each other on what the ornaments represented. Some say that the ornaments bore the images of false gods and therefore angered the Lord; whereas, others, like Adam Clarke and some ancient Jewish writers, say they were emblematic of spiritual things, and suggest that the name *Jehovah* was inscribed on their ornaments and thus were worn for Divine protection. But neither of these opinions can be confirmed from the text; they are merely speculations.

There is a rule of biblical interpretation on which most evangelical scholars are agreed; namely, the literal and most apparent meaning of a verse or passage is to be accepted unless there is sufficient evidence to prove otherwise; in these cases there is no need to search for sophisticated and hidden or mythical meanings. Accordingly, why should we not believe that the outward ornaments in this case were simply inconsistent with the spirit of holiness and thus ill fitted for the “peculiar people” whom the Lord had espoused? Certainly these ornaments made the Israelites resemble the people of pagan nations, which militated against their distinction as a peculiar people. It is quite apparent that the people of God had gradually conformed to the ways of the Egyptians during their long stay in that pagan land; for during this period the Egyptian men and women wore earrings, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, anklets, and all manner of jewelry and ornamentation. Yet the Lord had intended to *“put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel”* (Ex. 11.7). In Leviticus 18.3-4, the law made it perfectly plain: *“After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein you dwelt, shall you not do; and after the doings of the land Canaan, whither I bring you, shall you not do . . . You shall keep My judgments, and mine ordinances . . . and My statutes.”*

There is another lesson that might be gleaned here upon careful study of the passage. It seems rather strange for God to give the command in Ex. 33.5 *“put off thy ornaments”* when in v. 4 the people, under a spirit of shame and sorrow for their disobedience, had already decided not to put on their ornaments--- *“and no man did put on him his ornaments.”* The seemingly moot command, however, may be better understood in light of the Hebrew word, *yarad*, translated here as “put off”; whereas “lay aside altogether” may be a better rendering. God’s command thus intended for His people not only to cease to wear the ornaments at that time but to do away with them altogether. Accordingly, Keil and Delitzsche in their *Commentary on the Old Testament* render v. 6 thusly, *“The children of Israel spoiled themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onwards.”*

And the *Pulpit Commentary* derives this same meaning from the original text, that is, that laying aside their ornaments was not a one-time act but the adoption of a sacred principle, namely, to cease to wear the ornaments onward or henceforward.

Now if wearing these ornaments was unsuited for a people who were under conviction for their sins and being called to repentance, why would they afterward under grace then put them on again? or, to put it another way, if stripping themselves of their ornaments was a necessary part of their repentance and consecration, why would this principle and practice not apply equally once they were again in good standing with the Lord? If soberness and humility required “*putting off [their] ornaments,*” why would the same standard not be applied under a perpetual state of sobriety and humility in justification and especially in sanctification?

Why is it necessary to think that there is something more in God’s command to “*put off thy ornaments*” than the simple and most obvious meaning, namely, that the ornaments symbolized pride and the worldly ways of pagan Egypt?—whether or not idolatry was involved. The ornaments were emblematic of the callousness, obstinacy and worldliness the Israelites had fallen into while in Egypt. They had adopted the ways of Egypt and became “*a stiff-necked people.*” It was only fitting then to “lay aside their ornaments” as a token of their sincerity and genuine sorrow in asking for forgiveness and seeking reconciliation with the Lord—seeking to be restored as His “peculiar people.”

“Change Your Garments”

While we are on this subject, it seems fitting to say something in regard to “*putting on of apparel*” and “*costly array.*” Recall the occasion of God reminding Jacob of the vow he had made with Him at Luz (Gen. 35.2-4). Here Jacob had received a revelation of the church, the house of God: and thus he renamed the place *Bethel*, meaning “House of God” (28.11-22). But thereafter he gradually forgot the revelation and the glory of the whole scene, including the vow he had made to the Lord. But God did not forget! And thus He caused Jacob and his family [*“Israel”*—see 33.19-20] to return to the Bethel and to make an altar to restore the people’s relationship with God: and to encourage them to live up to the terms of their covenant.

Significantly, the Lord commands Jacob and his family to “*Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments*” (35.2). Accordingly, the Israelites “*gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were*

in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem” (v. 4). These *strange gods* were perhaps inscriptions of gods in the form of amulets or *teraphim*, for we know that Rachel had stolen the “images” of Laban, her father, before she left with Jacob to go to Canaan. But again, as in the case just noticed above, whether or not the jewelry and ornaments were connected with idolatry, they were associated with pride and worldly fashions that militate against the church’s efforts to restore the image of Christ in fallen humanity.

The parts of the command to put away strange [Canaanite] gods and be clean are understood fairly well by most Christians; but the part about “*change your garments*” has not received the attention it deserves. What thus is the significance of “*change your garments?*” The most obvious explanation is that the change of garments typifies purity and a clean heart. With this we cannot disagree (see Ex. 19.10); but there seems to be more here indicated. It is necessary not just to *clean* the clothes one may be wearing, but to *change* clothes. Like in the case we just noticed above when the Lord called Israel to repent to obtain His favor, and thus required of them to “*lay aside the ornaments*”; so also here it was unfitting to a condition of conviction and repentance to wear festive clothing or, for that matter, expensive and loud clothing: for these practices strike of pride and arrogance. It is more appropriate to put on sackcloth when one is acknowledging his sins and seeking to reconcile with God.

And this explanation perfectly agrees with the Divine judgment in the prophecy of Isaiah 3.16-24.

“Moreover, the Lord says, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover [uncover] their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery [finery] of their tinkling ornaments . . . [headbands], crescents, chains [pendants], bracelets, mufflers [veils], bonnets [headdresses], [perfume boxes] and the ornaments of the legs, charms, amulets, earrings, rings, nose rings, changeable suits of apparel, [festive garments], [purses, mirrors] . . .”

Can it be any plainer? The ornaments are emblematic of the pride and haughtiness of the women wearing them [or of men who wear them for that matter]. Note the descriptions “stretched forth necks,” “wanton eyes,” “walking and mincing as they go,” “bravery of their tinkling ornaments,” etc. These terms speak of pride, arrogance, and seductiveness; that God’s

people had been pulled into the practice of adorning themselves with the latest fads and fashions of the world, and thereby had manifestly drifted away from their consecration as a peculiar people; and, moreover, were consequently neglecting their spiritual well-being and duties in the church. Now notice how similar is the judgment of the Lord in vv. 17-18 with the judgments we noticed above in Genesis 35.2-4 and Exodus 33.4-6: “*Therefore the Lord will smite the daughters of Zion . . . In that day the Lord take away the bravery of their ornaments . . .*”

All of the texts that we have examined in this section unmistakably look to Paul’s counsel and commands (1 Tim. 2.8-10), and also to Peter’s (1 Pet. 3.1-6) for their ultimate fulfillment; or otherwise they are clearly in agreement with their counsels and commands. For it is only reasonable that a *peculiar people* would appear peculiar and thus be manifestly distinguished from the ways and customs of the world. Neither gaudy nor luxurious attire agree with humility, sobriety, gravity, deep spirituality, *a meek and quiet spirit*, and the image of Christ. The two women in Revelation 17 and 19 are clearly set over against each other. One is loudly dressed in purple and scarlet color, intoxicated, and decked with gold and jewels and pearls; she thus is identified with whoredom and uncleanness. The other woman is dressed in fine linen clean and white, and thus is identified with purity and righteousness. The first woman is Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots, the second is the Bride of Christ.

We have thus decided together in Zion Assembly, under the sobering and convicting power of the Holy Ghost and in light of the Holy Scriptures, to identify ourselves with the woman dressed in fine linen, clean and white!

Section IV

Looking to Christ and the Church for Guidance and Understanding in these Last Days

We noticed earlier the tremendous surge in this generation in regard to lying, greed, evil speaking, blasphemy, treachery, violence, and every form of sinfulness and moral degradation. The present ongoing presidential campaigns in the United States have only accentuated these “works of the flesh.” Have you ever witnessed such hypocrisy and contradiction of truth and grace and decency! The representatives of the two major political parties seem to reach new lows each day in attempting to destroy the credibility and reputation of the representatives of the opposing party---and in so doing usually do a pretty good job inadvertently of sabotaging their own reputations. To be sure, their deplorable words and

actions have made the United States a showcase in the eyes of the world of how not to behave! I do agree, however, with both party nominees on at least one point: each has said the other is unfit to be president.

What has become apparent is that Americans no longer expect their president to be a role model of morality nor an advocate for righteousness and godliness. The prophecies of “perilous times” and apostasy are painfully obvious, and being fulfilled before our very eyes!

Speaking about the lying spirit that has permeated the culture of this nation, some have been surprised to learn that the nominee of one party apparently believes it is a small thing to tell lies. This person has lied and lied, and then lied about lying. According to plain facts now in evidence, it turns out that in regard to a particular scandal this prominent leader lied in order to conceal several other lies, all of which were told to help prove that she is not a liar. On the other hand, it is argued that the nominee of the opposing party does not tell lies. It is admitted, however, that he often changes his mind and his position on issues, but this behavior just shows he is flexible. It is admitted also that he sometimes misrepresents the truth and often embellishes and exaggerates stories to get across his point; and that some of his surrogates have lied about their accomplishments and also lied in his behalf in hopes to get him elected. Yet it is argued that he is not responsible for their lies, though he gave them place to speak in his behalf in his campaign to be president.

I am reminded here of the observation of one political analyst: “All political parties die at last of swallowing their own lies!” And I think it was Adolph Hitler in *Mein Kampf* who said, “If you wish the sympathy of the great masses, then you must tell them the crudest and most stupid things.” Have you ever heard such stupid suggestions made by some leaders today to resolve the current woes in America. In regard to the violence and killings in Chicago and other large cities, the answer is almost always: train more cops, increase the police force; and appropriate more money to educate youth.

Surely God’s people ought to know that ten million more policemen or ten billion more dollars spent on profane education is not going to take the hate, anger, and murderous spirit out of sinful men. Those suggestions are like putting a band aid on a man that just got run over with an 18 wheeler. Nor can the problem be solved by taking away the guns, which the history of man has proven. After all, Cain didn’t shoot Abel! Take away guns and a violent person will kill you with a rock or knife or some other weapon. Again, we are not wrestling against flesh and blood but against demonic powers! (Eph. 6.11-18). Nor are the weapons of our warfare carnal (2 Cor. 10.4). I think it was the Duke of Wellington who

said, “Educate men without religion and you make them but clever devils.”

What is needed in America and every other nation, more than anything else, is old-fashioned, Holy Ghost-filled revival, in which sinners are convicted by the Spirit of the Lord and transformed into saints in Christ! Clearly, what America needs is nothing less than the restoration of our traditional Christian roots and Christian culture. That is the only hope for this nation or any nation! The laws of kings and nations must agree with or be compatible with God’s laws. For no people can have the favor of God otherwise (Amos 3.3; Ps. 33.12; Prov. 14.34)

Yet it seems that every immoral thing today is either overlooked or approved by society, as long as it is not illegal. People today no longer think it a serious matter to transgress God’s laws, but they believe it is an outrage to transgress even the smallest clause in the Constitution of the United States. Apparently *We the People* are now more concerned with staying out of jail than staying out of hell! Most people today are clamoring for civil rights without spiritual and moral responsibilities, and for mercy without justice and moral accountability.

We witnessed the lying spirit that has infected this generation also in the recent Olympic Games. There were many acts of violence in the city of Rio de Janeiro connected with the Olympic players. But the most outlandish was the lying conspiracy concocted by four American swimmers to cover up a night filled with acts of debauchery and vandalism. Significantly the initial reports by CNN and other networks made light of the swimmers’ degenerate behavior. Moreover, to make matters still worse, the most celebrated of the four Olympians continued to lie to reporters before the whole world on international television. It was not until the Rio police and detectives proved beyond any doubt that the calculated tale was nothing less than a flat-out lie that the swimmers admitted to the whole sleazy and sordid affair.

But should God’s people be shocked or discouraged by such behavior? For, first of all, we have been warned by the sacred writers that this evil day was coming; and secondly, rather than being shocked by the flood of wickedness, we should see it as an opportune time to shine for the glory of the Lord: for it sets the stage for the great coming together of God’s people into “one fold.” The apostle said, “*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*” (Rom. 5.20); and “*For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee*” (Is. 60.2). See, in the midst of the darkness the light comes forth! “*God commanded the light to shine out of darkness . . . in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor. 4.6).

Again, “*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Mt. 5.14-16). Thus also the words of the Psalmist, “*Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness*” (Ps. 112.4).

It is difficult not to recall here Disney’s celebrated *The Lion King*. For after the evil lion, Scar, and his hyena minions succeeded to kill the good and noble king, Mufasa [Scar’s brother], and to exile Mufasa’s son, Simba, and take over the Pride Lands, the kingdom soon came to ruin. Darkness ascended from the deep. The moral of the story is that when immoral leaders and “hyenas” take over, the kingdom comes to nothing! The only hope for any nation is to promote noble men with noble character and noble ideas and elevate them to positions of authority and leadership.

I admit that I’ve been a little surprised by some of the comments made by our people this year in regard to partisan politics; particularly because we have been cautioned by the General Assembly not to get caught up in the politics of the secular world around us. More especially we have been counseled not to become enthusiastic advocates for one political party over against another: for political parties play fast and loose with truth and honesty, and no party represents or even understands our peculiar worldview in the Body of Christ, nor is compatible with the prophetic vision and mission that Christ has entrusted to us, and commissioned us to proclaim to the nations. In fact, the very idea of political parties is contrary to the way Jesus taught His church to think and act. For political parties--“partyism”---by their very nature breed contentions, dissension, and divisions; or otherwise occasion compromises of truth and righteousness in order to avoid gridlock, filibusters, and divisions. To sum up His views in a single statement, Jesus said, “*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.*” (Mt.22.17).

Now recall the resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 2009.

“We would like to take this opportunity to commend our Presiding Bishop’s annual address to this Assembly. Within his address he mentioned the political climate of the present day, both in America and in the world at large. Because of this climate we have seen a major divisiveness between parties and the factions that it has caused. Therefore, we recommend to this Assembly that no member line up too zealously behind any political party: for all political parties, perhaps some more than the others, are being led to one degree or other by homosexuals and morally bankrupt men and women who are infected by the spirit of Antichrist. We

recommend that you vote your Christian conscience, but that you avoid partisan politics---and by all means do not bring the spirit of the world into the church.” (*General Assembly Minutes, 2009*, p. 31)

This advice has probably never been more fitting than now, particularly here in the United States; for the political climate has become greatly influenced by the spirit of antichrist: and thus the leaders of all of the political parties are advancing political ideas and suggesting social programs that are sinking the United States and the world deeper into spiritual deception and moral corruption, and leading the world down the path to Armageddon!

We may conclude then that Caesar is preoccupied with his things, and the church should be preoccupied with the things of God. Our ways are not the world’s ways. Jesus said, “[*My church is*] *not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (Jn. 17.16). And again, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (Jn. 18.36). So let me caution us here not to get caught up in worldly politics, for politics tend to entangle believers in the spirit of *this present [age]*; and, if allowed place in your life, will make you worldly-minded and worldly acting.

The rhetoric coming out of these political camps is demeaning, vulgar, demoralizing, and hypocritical. I heard a celebrated representative of one political party say in her speech a few weeks ago in her convention, that, when there are disagreements and arguments over issues, the leaders of her party always take the “high road.” Not surprisingly, the convention delegates cheered ecstatically. Now that was really interesting, since that party has promoted abortion on demand, homosexuality and homosexual marriages, freaky transgender operations, and in general a liberal and socialistic agenda---politically, socially, and economically. On the other hand, the leader of the other major political party promotes by his rhetoric, and more especially by his lifestyle, divorce and remarriage---he has three living wives; a record of corrupt business practices; a vulgar and profane mouth; and celebrates popular fashion and filthy lucre over against truth and righteousness. And yet he was hailed in his convention a few weeks ago as an exemplary father and family man and a brilliant businessman; and thus was nominated by his party to be the leader of the “free world.”

The leader of one party is promising to “make America great again,” while the leader of the other party is claiming that America has never ceased from being great, and thus, accordingly, all we need is to continue on the path that we are on. Well, it is obvious to me that the leader of the one party has her head stuck in the sand: for America is

clearly on a path that will inevitably provoke God's judgment and wrath. For without question America now resembles Babylon and Sodom more than New Jerusalem. On the other hand, how can the leader of the other party "make America great again" if he doesn't know what made America great to begin with---namely, sincere worship of the only true God, and His Son, Jesus Christ; the prominence of the Bible in the political life of the nation; the proclamation of the true Gospel; social life built around the spiritual authority and wisdom of the Bible; the promotion of biblical holiness!

I've heard the leaders of both major political parties promise, if they are elected, that they will create jobs, lower taxes, and fix the crumbling infrastructure of the nation---repair bridges, get rid of the "pot holes," build new roads, purify city water systems, and so on. But what is needed in America far worse at this moment is to get rid of all the "hell holes," clean out the moral gutters of the nation, tap into the Water of Life that flows from the Throne of God, restore the Highway of Holiness that leads to the City of God, and build bridges between earthly "Egypt" and "heavenly Jerusalem!"

Again, I hear the leaders of the Republicans and Democrats often say, "We need to have a conversation about race in this country . . . We need a conversation about guns . . . about jobs . . . foreign policy . . . terrorism . . . gender distinctions . . . marriage . . ." Well, our answer is: We need to put Christ back into whatever conversation we are having! For in Him "*we live, and move, and have our being*" (Acts 17.28). And again, "*All things [were created by Him], that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were made by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist*" (Col. 1.17).

Again what we need most in America right now are not more jobs, lower taxes, socialized medicine, a great wall to keep out illegal immigrants, a more powerful military, nor any of the other suggested political solutions for America's woes. Rather, what we need is more Christians---more true saints of God and more saintly churches that stand uncompromisingly upon the teachings of Christ and the apostles! For believers transformed by the power of God into the image of Christ make better citizens; and they know how to get the favor of God: and if we have His favor, this nation will rise again to a preeminent place of honor and power and prosperity in the world! "*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance*" (Ps. 33.12).

But you may be saying, I'm voting for a political leader not a religious one. This statement has been made in recent months by several

celebrated religious leaders in renown Christian institutions. They admit that both party leaders are more or less unscrupulous and corrupt, yet they are endorsing or supporting one or the other; for they imagine that he or she might be able to create jobs and protect the nation from acts of terror. “Blind guides!” Makes one wonder what Bible these religious leaders are reading! For the Scripture says, “*When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bears rule, the people mourn [groan]*” (Prov. 29.2). And again, “. . . *when the wicked rise, a man [must hide]*” (28.12). And again, “*By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked*” (11.11).

We could quote here also, almost endlessly, the sentiments of many illustrious American statesmen who from the foundation of this nation kept its citizens mindful that the progress of the United States---politically, economically, and spiritually---depended entirely on the favor and gracious providences of Almighty God. Even the Supreme Court in 1892 in the case of the *Church of the Holy Trinity vs. United States* ruled that this is a “Christian nation,” and stated its ruling at length in emphatic and explicit terms. American statesmen knew that “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach [disgrace] to any people*” (Prov.14.34); and that “[*the nation whose God is the Lord is blessed*]”: and that God, says the inspired psalmist, is not Allah, nor Shiva, nor Krishna, nor Vishnu, nor Aphrodite, nor Marduk, nor Zeus, nor Astarte, nor Cupid, nor Isis, nor any other god or goddess vainly imagined, but rather the only true God---*Elohim Jehovah* (Ps. 33.12).

In my office are pictures and busts of some of America’s most noble Founding Fathers, underscored with some of their most outstanding statements. One quote is from our first president, George Washington. He declared, “It is the duty of nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His favor.” Another quote from President Lincoln says, “I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord’s side.”

Daniel Webster in 1851 reminded Americans of the importance and centrality of Christian faith in the success and sustainability of this nation. He wrote,

“Let the religious element in man’s nature be neglected. Let him be influenced by no higher motives than low self-interest, and subjected to no stronger restraint than the limits of civil authority, and he becomes the creature of selfish passion or blind fanaticism.

On the other hand, the cultivation of the religious sentiment represses licentiousness, incites to general benevolence, and the practical acknowledgement of the brotherhood of man, inspires respect for law and order, and gives strength to the whole social fabric, at the same time that it conducts the human soul upward to the Author of its being.”

Perhaps, however, the most evident sign of the spirit and mindset of this nation was manifested in the First Continental Congress in Carpenter’s Hall in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774 just before this nation was born. Significantly, prayer was invoked to petition the King of Kings and Lord of Lords for His favor and providential guidance. This prayer (quoted below) is rather amazing in itself, but what is more amazing is the Spirit that filled that sacred hall following the formal prayer, that moved many of the leaders of the Colonies to fall upon their knees and continue for an extended length of time to spontaneously cry out to God for His assistance and guidance, acknowledging at the same time their insufficiency and complete dependence upon Him!

“Lord, our Heavenly Father, High and Mighty King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth, and reigns with power supreme and uncontrolled over all the kingdoms, empires and governments; look down in mercy we beseech Thee, on these American states, who desire hence forth to be dependent only on Thee; to Thee, they have appealed for the righteousness of their cause; to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support which Thou alone can give; take them therefore Heavenly Father, under Thy nurturing care; give them wisdom in council and valor in the field; defeat the malicious designs of our cruel adversaries; convince them of the unrighteousness of their cause; and if they persist in their sanguinary purpose, O let the voice of Thy own unerring justice, sounding their hearts, constrain them to drop the weapons of war from their unnerved hands in the day of battle! Be Thou present, O God of wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation. That the scene of blood may be speedily closed; that order, harmony and peace may be effectually restored, and truth and justice, religion and piety prevail and flourish among Thy people. Preserve the health of their bodies and vigor of their minds; shower down on them and the millions they here represent, such temporal blessings as Thou sees expedient for

them in this world, and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Savior.”

Returning to our Christian roots and acknowledging our complete dependence upon the Lord is surely the only hope for the United States, and, for that matter, any nation. I am reminded here of the well-known passage in 2 Chronicles 7.14:

“If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

But will America repent? We hope so; and we will continue to pray for a miraculous turn-around in this nation: for *sin is a reproach to any people*. But, if America does not repent, we should not be discouraged or lose hope: for our ultimate hope is not in America, nor do we have our fortunes entangled with the successes or failures of America. Therefore, while we will continue to intercede in prayer for the United States and every nation, our primary focus must be on the Lord’s Zion, and on the mission that He has given to us; namely, to proclaim the Gospel to all nations, and baptize and disciple believers (Mt. 28.18-20). After all, Jesus is coming back after His church, not the United States nor any other political nation. He is returning for that peculiar “righteous nation” that will “[bring forth the fruits of the Kingdom of God]” (Is. 26.2; Mt. 21.43).

Brethren, it’s time to wake up and let the Lord “*reveal His secret unto His servants*” (Amos 3.7): for “*His secret is with the righteous*” (Prov. 3.32). “*For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*” (Is. 2.3). “*Ye are the light of the world. [Therefore let your light so shine] to give light unto all who are in the house*” (Mt. 5.14-15). See, God reveals His mysteries to His people and has deposited His truth in His church. “*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known [through] the church the manifold wisdom of God.*” (Eph. 3.10). “*I will give thee [the church] for a light to the Gentiles, that you may also be My salvation unto the end of the earth*” (Is. 49.6; see also 2 Cor. 3.2-3).

It is thus that we should boldly proclaim with the prophet, “*Awake, awake; put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old (Is. 51.9); and again, “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments . . . Shake thyself from*

the dust; arise, and sit down . . .” (Is. 52.1). Observe; God’s church has the answers, not Caesar, not the leaders of the nations of this world! Let us not look, therefore, to the political arenas of this world for answers, and certainly not for a “Messiah” to come out of any political system or particular political party to save America and the world. Rather we should look to *“the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth!”* We should follow the counsel of that *“Righteous Nation that keeps the truth!”* For it is through the church that Christ *“[makes known His] manifold wisdom!”* (Eph. 3.10). It was on the basis of this understanding that the apostle commended the Thessalonians: *For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which . . . are in Christ Jesus”* (1 Thess. 2.14).

We conclude, then, that the world is traveling in its orbit, and the church in her orbit. The nations have their worldly agenda, and God’s holy nation has her prophetic and heavenly mandate. Hear the prayerful wisdom of our Lord: *“I have given them [the church] Thy Word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your Word is truth”* (Jn.17.14-17).

Section V

“Take Heed Lest [You] Fall”

Guard Your Hearts---Weigh the Consequences of Your Actions

In view of the “perilous times” in which we live---a time in which the spirit of lawlessness is filling the earth and unclean spirits are pouring forth from the mouth of the Dragon---we should be especially careful to keep ourselves *“in the love of God”* and to keep *“[prayed-up] in the Holy Ghost”* (Jude 20-21). Remember the words of the apostle Paul, *“Wherefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor. 10.12). Weigh also the inspired counsel of the writer of Hebrews, *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the Word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression . . . received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation”* (Heb. 2.1-3).

Years ago the church had a standing body of advice called **“Advice to Members.”** It might be good here to revisit some of that good counsel. Several admonitions directed our attention to keep ourselves consecrated

in holiness, and to be careful not to allow worldly attractions and inappropriate personal relationships to lead us astray.

“You should not permit yourselves to be trapped by worldly attractions . . . Dabbling in worldly amusements . . . [may] give the devil a foothold or place in your life . . . Younger members should not keep company . . . intimately with worldly outsiders . . . Great care should be taken, with much prayer and consideration, regarding matrimony. A member who may have a living companion should not marry another under any circumstances even if divorced. Neither should a member marry anyone who has a living companion although such a person may be divorced . . . These are the last days and perilous times have come, so it will require much watchfulness and humble prayer on your part to so live and act that you will never bring reproach on the worthy name of Christ and His Church that you so much love. Never form too close an intimacy with the opposite sex even if they are brothers and sisters in the Lord. Give no place to the adversary. Abstain from the very appearance of evil.”

In the past few years we have had several ministers to err in various ways by becoming slack in prayer and failing to keep up their personal devotional life. Their sins and errors have ranged from inappropriate sexual relationships and misconduct to becoming insubordinate and unruly in regard to the governing authority of the church. Some have had to be disciplined by the Presbytery; the credentials of a few have had to be revoked; and, it grieves us to say, the ministries of some have been ruined perhaps beyond repair. Again, hear the words of the apostle: *“take heed unto thyself, and to the doctrine; continue in them: for in so doing [you will] save both [yourself], and them [who] hear [you]”* (1 Tim. 4.16). And again, *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away”* (1 Cor. 9.27).

We should not take our salvation for granted. Remember, we are on probation; thus we may lose our joy and peace and even forfeit eternal life if we do not remain sober and vigilant (1Cor. 10.1-12; 1 Pet. 5.8). In fact, we have seen many persevere through many trials and afflictions to serve the Lord, only later to fall by the wayside and forfeit their inheritance, disqualifying themselves for heaven! (Jer 2.21; Mt. 13.20-

21; 15.3-8; Gal. 3.1-4; Col. 1.21-23; Heb. 10.38-39; 2 Pet. 2.1-6, 20-22; Jude 4). Take heed then, brethren, for the Holy Spirit will not dwell in an unclean temple (2 Cor. 6.14-18). Pollute the temple and He will depart! (2 Pet. 2.20-22). Let us then guard our hearts and weigh the consequences of unwise and sinful behavior. Behold how many, like Judas, have fallen! (Lu. 22.3; Acts 1.25); and others, like Samson, who “[knew] not that the Lord had departed from [them]” (Judges 16.20). Still others, like King Saul, were in the beginning of their ministries “*little in their own sight,*” but then became puffed up with pride and temporal power and distracted by greed and the love and allure of money (1 Sam. 15.17-23; Is. 56.11; 1 Tim. 3.3, 8; Jude 11). *How are the mighty fallen! How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!* (2 Sam. 1.19, 25).

Section VI

Church Government and Gospel Discipline

Discipline is a vitally important part of the church’s ministry. For Jesus said, “*It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come*” (Lu. 17.1; Mt. 18.7). In other words, disputes and cross-feelings between brethren on this side of the Rapture are inevitable, even within the fellowship of the church; and thus the government of the church is to intervene and judge in disputes and when ill-affections arise between brethren (Mt. 18.15-20; Jn. 20.23).

The primary aim of discipline and counsel is to correct and save (Mt. 18.15; Gal. 6.1; 1 Cor. 5.4-5; Jas. 5.19-20). Thus Jesus said, when confronting and successfully restoring an erring brother, “*thou has gained thy brother.*” The explanation of James, the Lord’s brother, is more emphatic, “*Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him. Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death*” (Jas. 5.19-20).

Jesus and the apostles make it plain in their teachings, however, that some erring brethren will not respond gracefully and in humility to the wise counsel of “*those over them in the Lord.*” They are either carried about by a stubborn spirit or a spirit of deception or a carnal spirit, any one of which will seduce and compel them to depart from the faith---to *err from the truth*. In these cases, the church is to “*deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Cor. 5.5,7).

It is important to understand that the government of the church cannot keep a man or woman from doing wrong if he or she has a mind and disposition to do so. But the government can keep the church

from erring with the person. This is the second most important aim of discipline---to keep the sheep from being led astray by an erring minister or influential person. There are many examples in the New Testament that teach and encourage us to follow the church---“*the pillar and ground of the truth*”---rather than contentious, disorderly, unruly, and seditious persons (cf. Mt. 23.13-36; Rom. 16.17-18; 1 Cor. 5.1-13; 2 Thess. 3.6,11; 2 Tim 2.16-21, 25; 3 Jn. 9-11; 2 Pet. 2.1-3; Jude 3-13).

We should not be discouraged or disillusioned, therefore, when we hear reports of a minister or prominent person in the church having to be corrected and disciplined. In fact, we should rejoice: for this shows that the church is fulfilling its God-ordained function and purpose. Faithful correction and adherence to discipline gives evidence that Zion Assembly is alive and well and fulfilling her calling to restore the principles and practices of the New Testament church.

On of the most prominent prophecies about Christ in the New Testament came from John the Baptist, in which He depicted the Lord with a “fan in his hand . . . [purging] His floor . . . and [gathering] His wheat into the garner: but [burning] up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Mt. 3.12). The “fan” in this illustrious picture of Christ is a winnowing fork that was used in Bible times to separate the wheat from the tares and chaff. Interestingly, the Temple was built upon Mount Zion which had been aforetime used as a threshing floor. The prophetic image therefore sees the church as the place for purging and separation---a place where the deceived and insincere and hypocritical will be separated from the faithful and devoted saints of God: and this purging will continue until the church is perfected. Note also that Christ is seen as the Head of the church and chief engineer in this process. John probably had the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah in mind when he preached this message:

“But who may abide the day of His [Christ’s] coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3.2-3).

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (Is.33.14).

We may be sure also that as we approach the coming of the Lord, many ministers and leaders will be deceived and fall into error and depart from the faith. We have been forewarned of this by Christ and His apostles (Mt. 24.4-5, 9-13; Acts 20.29-31; 1 Tim. 4.1-3; 2 Tim. 3.1-8; 2 Pet. 2.1-3; Jude 3-13). Indeed, we should live with expectations that a great shaking is imminent; that a glorious power is going to shake loose and remove from the church everyone who does not have a true revelation of Christ and a sincere and perfect heart to love and serve Him, including a pious and respectful attitude toward His church; that is, a sincere and manifest affirmation to receive the counsel of the church and to keep her decrees (Acts 15.3-16.5; Rom. 16.1-2; 2 Thess. 3.4-6, 14).

“See that ye refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12.25-19).

Section VII

Sacredness, Intimacy, and Dignity of Marriage The Intrusion of Surrogacy in Child-Bearing

I mentioned in Section I the ethical and moral problems caused by certain developing technologies and practices in contemporary medical science, including the fact that medical science has become an accomplice in the killing of the unborn and the outrageous practice of pretending to transform men into women and women into men. While everyone here today may agree that these practices are savage and abominable, yet there are other practices by modern medical science in which the underlying evil is not so apparent. One such evil involves *in vitro fertilization*, the process by which an egg is fertilized by sperm outside the body (thus the term “test-tube babies”). Without getting sidetracked by the wide range of ethical issues implicated in this process, our particular concern here is in regard to the sacredness and intimacy of marriage. Modern technology has

made it possible to substitute in the place of the normal sex act in marriage a surrogate partner. In cases where the wife is sterile, the sperm of the husband and the egg of another woman may be monitored and fertilized in a liquid in a laboratory, and then implanted into the uterus of a surrogate “mother.” And in the case of the sterility of the husband, the sperm of another man may be implanted into the wife or in a surrogate “mother.” Or perchance it may be the sperm of the husband and the egg of the wife that is implanted in the womb of a surrogate. In any case, these practices violate the dignity and unity of marriage between the two spouses, and also the essential meaning and intimacy of the conjugal act between the spouses. Certainly involving a third party in the procreative process deprives marriage of its purity and perfection. For God has solemnly united the man and woman in an intimate “one flesh” relationship (Gen. 2.21-24; Mk. 10.6-9), and procreation is blessed only in this context (1 Cor. 7.2-5 10-11, 14, 17).

The involvement of a third party in procreation also deprives the child of normal parental origins and a normal family relationship; which in turn may lend itself to one degree or other to disorder and injustice in the larger context of society as a whole.

Since *in vitro fertilization* involving a third party surrogate has become so prevalent in contemporary society, it seems incumbent upon the church to offer some counsel and guidance to warn our people about the moral and spiritual implications of this practice. Without question it is a perversion of God’s natural order in creation, and infringes upon the unity and procreative aspects and meaning in marriage. We see it as a crafty deception of the devil to corrupt the sacredness and intimacy of marriage. Implicating a third party in the procreative act has even been labeled by some as second-hand adultery and/or fornication. Be that as it may, we are endeavoring in Zion Assembly to restore and perfect the divine institutions of marriage and the family, and *in vitro fertilization* involving a third party definitely infringes on these noble aims.

We acknowledge of course that some may have fallen into this error quite innocently, even as others who may have missed the mark and transgressed against God’s law in other ways without realizing it; yet it is up to God’s church, His government---“*the pillar and ground of the truth*”---to shine the light on His *Word of Truth*; and lead His people “*into all truth and righteousness.*”

I have been counseled by the Committee that perhaps some further Scriptural foundation needs to be laid before our people in regard to this topic: for many have not heretofore given much consideration to it. The

major points at issue brethren are these: the purity, sacredness, intimacy, and dignity of marriage between a man and woman for life. We have dealt with these. But also the sovereignty and omnipotence of Christ are at issue, as well as the faith and patience of the believers whom God has ordained to be *one flesh* in marriage. For the Scriptures set forth in the plainest terms that God is the author of life: He “*opens the womb*” and He “*closes the womb.*” Study carefully the following passages:

“*And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren*” (Gen. 29.31).

“*And God remembered Rachel, and . . . hearkened to her and opened her womb*” (Gen. 30.22).

“*And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son*” (Gen. 18.10-14).

“*But unto Hannah he gave a worthy [double] portion; for he loved Hannah: but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked here sore [severely], for to make her fret [miserable], because the Lord had shut up her womb . . . And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore [in anguish].” And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou will indeed look on the affliction of Your handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Your handmaid, but will give unto Your handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life . . . Then Eli answered and said [unto Hannah] , Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou has asked of Him . . . So the woman went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more s . . . and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, when . . . Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord” (1 Sam. 1.5-6, 10-11, 17-18)*

“*And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she has also conceived a*

son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible . . . And it came to pass, that, when Elizabeth heard her salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb” (Lu. 1.36-37, 41-42).

The second thing to notice is the emphases placed on the womb of the mother; that in fact the womb and the mother are one and the same: for it is in the womb that the mystery of life is developed and nourished through birth. Again, study carefully the following passages:

“The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? And what, the son of my womb? And what, the son of my vows?” (Prov. 31.1-2).

“As thou know not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou know not the works of God who makes all” (Ecc. 11.5).

“Your hands have made me and fashioned me together round about . . . Remember, I beseech You, that You have made me as the clay; and will You bring me into dust again? Have You not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? You have clothed me with skin and flesh, and have fenced [knit me together] . . . You have granted me life and favor . . .” (Job 10.8-12).

“But thou art he who took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly” (Ps. 22.9-10).

“Thus says the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will . . . Pour My spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thy offspring . . . Thus says the Lord, thy redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord who makes all things; who stretches forth the heavens alone; who spreads abroad the earth by Myself” (Is. 44.2-3, 24).

“And now, says the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him . . . Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee” (Is. 49.5, 15).

We advise then; in cases in which married couples are unable to have children, that they pray for miraculous healing and divine intervention, and to accept the inevitable as the will of God. As in many areas of concern---health, material prosperity, temporal success, etc.---the Lord, for His own wise reasons, may deny the wishful desire of one and yet grant the same to another. Either way, we *“live by faith in the Son of God”* and should accept our deprivations and adverse circumstances in this life with grace and hope---*“all for the glory of God”* (Heb. 11.6; 1 Cor. 10.30-31; 2 Cor. 4.8). And while it may be emotionally disappointing for a couple not to be able to procreate children, yet God gives special grace under these circumstances: for He is the author and finisher of life! *“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand”* (Deut. 32.39). It seems clear in the Scriptures that the ability to procreate children is a blessing rather than a “right.” *“[May] God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a multitude of people”* (Gen. 28.3; see also 1.28).

Our conclusion then is that our ministers and members in Zion Assembly should not give place to a third party surrogate in the child-bearing process; but rather maintain the unity, sanctity, dignity, and personal intimacy of marriage and procreation. We advise further, that barren couples may consider adoption and/or obtain fertility treatments or surgical procedures to increase the possibility of bearing children normally.

If the Assembly Business Committee deems this counsel wise and fitting for the church at this time, a recommendation may be drawn up and presented to the Assembly for consideration.

Section VIII

Moving Forward to Fulfill Our Vision for the International Properties

Most of you are aware that an opportunity came open a few months after the Assembly last year---in January---that prompted us to modify our plans to raise funds to pay-off our indebtedness on the International

Properties and then to acquire another loan to construct the two-story extension of our International Ministries Complex. This extension is to accommodate more office space and facilities for our envisioned Bible college. We had hoped to break ground for this project in this Assembly and to celebrate our progress!

But as it happened, the property that adjoins the church's property next door (Lloyd's Used Car lot) suddenly became available to purchase. We felt that we could not let this opportunity pass by, so we invoked for the first time in the church's history a "Minister's Council," virtually a "called Assembly," based on a decree passed in the Assembly in 2011.

Thus, in the called meeting held on January 16, 2016, the Council agreed unanimously to purchase the property for \$160,000. To effect this transaction, the Council also agreed to put down \$30,000 and acquire a new loan for \$220,000, which would be sufficient to pay-off the existing indebtedness of about \$60,000 and to purchase the property next door for \$160,000.

Our plan for the on-going development of the property is, first of all, to pay-off the present existing loan; second, to make a new loan to construct on the west side of the property the two-story extension for additional office and storage space, fellowship hall, library and archives, and Bible college facilities (which has already been approved by the Assembly); and third, to construct on the east of the property an Assembly tabernacle whenever we determine that it is prudent and feasible to do so.

This is where we are at this point. We owe a little more than \$207,000 on the existing loan. We have a little more than \$40,000 in the College and Tabernacle funds that we can put toward this loan. This leaves a balance of about \$167,000 needed to pay-off our loan and move forward to fulfill our vision. Our second goal, coincidentally, has already been approved by our bank---United Community Bank; the officers have agreed to loan us whatever we need up to \$950,000 to construct the two-story extension.

Now I have a three-fold plan to move forward to accomplish our goal. First, we have about \$20,000 in outstanding pledges by our people that have not been paid. Some of these go back two years or more. So let me encourage our people, first of all, to do your best to make good on your outstanding pledges. Second, we did what the Assembly asked us to do in preparing a brochure to boost contributions from fellow believers and friends outside the church. (I will say a little more about this in a moment). Third, we inaugurated a program that we called *The Prophets Plan*. We called it by this name because the "sons of the prophets" under Elisha's inspirational leadership took it upon themselves to cut trees and hew them

to construct a larger building for their school of ministry (see 2 Kg. 6.1-4).

In remarking on these events, I mentioned two things in the annual address in 2011 that stood out in regard to the efforts of the “school of the prophets” under Elisha.

“Two things are apparent in this account: 1) they were not lazy preachers, but rather hard workers and industrious. They cut down trees with axes, and hewed them into “beams” that fit into the new structure; 2) they all joined in the work, in love and unity, and with a sense of duty and obligation to realize their corporate vision---the construction of a new building for their school. It is hard not to see in this story an illustration of David’s words in Psalm 133:1-3: “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like . . . the dew that descended upon . . . Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing*” (**Assembly Minutes 2011**, p.73).

The Prophet’s Plan has been a great blessing. More than \$150,000 has been raised through this plan since 2011. But this plan was never intended to be a one-time effort; it was established to be an on-going fund-raising *help* in the church---“to help us finance the addition to our International Ministries Complex.” So rather than come up with some new plan, we simply want to encourage our people to continue to implement this plan.

The Prophet’s Plan is simple. We estimated that a tree in Elisha’s time, along with the hewing and putting it in place in their new school facilities on the banks of the Jordan River, would have cost roughly about \$800 in modern currency. The plan is thus simple: we are encouraging our ministers and faithful members and friends to buy a tree, that is, to give a donation of \$800, the equivalent cost of a tree in the days of the “sons of the prophets” under Elisha’s leadership. And the Lord may move upon some of our people to buy two (\$1600) or three trees (\$2400) or more!

How many believe that we can work together to pay-off this loan this year, and be ready in the next Assembly to break ground and begin construction on our big, impressive two-story extension? I believe we can, and we will!

“The main thing brethren is to get in the spirit of it, like the sons of the prophets did in Elisha’s day. There is nothing that we cannot accomplish together if we get in the spirit of it. That’s how the magnificent temple of God was built on Mount Zion in Solomon’s day. It was first in David’s heart, and the vision and affection for it then took hold of the people of God. The spirit

of giving got into David and then all the leaders and the people, and they gave in today's currency more than two trillion dollars (\$2,000,000,000,000)---in gold, silver, precious jewels, brass, iron, marble, and precious woods---to build a house worthy of the true and living God! The account is given in 1 Chronicles 29. The key to it all is shown in vv. 2-14, namely, they caught a vision of God's house, and the vision conditioned their affections and will to make it a reality! David said, *'I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God'* (v. 2). And the people *"offered willingly . . . and gave . . . to the treasure of the house of the Lord"* (vv. 6-8). And when all was given, *'Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly . . . with a perfect heart to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy'* (v. 9). And when Solomon built the house of God there was nothing like it in all the earth!

Share the Vision!

Finally, brethren, let me encourage you boost this program when you get back home. Utilize the brochures that have been prepared for this purpose. They are self-explanatory and inspirational. Frankly, I have been disappointed that so little has been accomplished through this means. Apart from our Assembly boosts, hardly anyone has made any effort to raise funds to help us fulfill this grand and noble vision. But I know it will work if we put a little effort into it: for I have already proved it. I gave a brochure to Chris King, the owner of King Ford in Murphy, North Carolina. About two weeks later the International Offices received a \$500 check in the mail. I told my daughter Lynn and her husband about our vision and gave them a brochure; about a month later we received a check for \$1000. And we received another check for a \$1000 from a minister in another organization whom I had given a brochure and shared our vision for a Bible college.

I am firmly convinced that there are thousands of people out there who desire to give to such a noble and worthy cause. They just need to be informed and encouraged by someone who believes in our vision and takes the time to zealously boost it. Enthusiasm is contagious. Spread it!



International Appointments 2016-2017

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[This council was nominated by the Presiding Bishop and unamously approved by the General Assembly]

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Joseph Steele, Joel Brooks, Rick Ferrell

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General Treasurer.....	Vicki Neill
Communications/Media Ministries.....	Scott Neill
Sunday School Director.....	Donna Pounders
Shepherding Ministries Director.....	Byron Harris
School of Ministry Director.....	Bruce Sullivan
Ladies Ministries Director.....	Kim Erwin
Sunday School Literature Editor.....	Todd McDonald
Youth Ministries Director.....	Miguel Garcia, Jr
Children's Ministries Director.....	Cheryl McDonald
Executive Secretary/Office Assistant.....	Marie Crook
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Haiti	Saintaniel Hostelus
Honduras	Jonatan Hernandez
India (South)	V. Binoy Joseph
India (Mid-East)	Talari Padma Rao
India Central	John Babu Rao Ganta
Indonesia (Mission Rep.)	Boonyong Bureenok
Ivory Coast	Amos Agbonifo
Kenya	Elijah Wafula
Liberia	Amos Agbonifo
Malawi	Maliele Dzuwa
Mexico	Danny Ramirez
Mozambique	Maliele Dzuwa
Myanmar (Burma)	Boonyong Bureenok
Nicaragua	Freddy Garcia
Nigeria	Yomi Adekunle
Pakistan	Boonyong Bureenok
Paraguay	Jorge Estroz
Peru	Yum V Munoz Quispe

Philippines	Domingo Resurreccion
Rwanda (Mission Rep.)	Edward Agar
South Africa	David November
South Kenya ...(regional overseer).....	Joanes Oboo
South Sudan	Elijah Wafula
Tanzania	Edward Agar
Thailand	Surisak Bureenok
Togo	Amos Agbonifo
Uganda	Maurice Ogada Odede
Uruguay	Jorge Estroz
United States	L.W. Carter
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International Churches/Missions

Nation/Provinces	Churches	Missions
Argentina	6	3
Bangladesh	3	3
Benin	1	1
Bolivia	2	0
Burundi	6	3
Cambodia	3	5
Cameroon	3	1
Canada	1	0
Chile	13	2
Costa Rica	0	1
Dominican Republic	11	3
Democratic Republic of Congo	23	6
England	0	1
Ethiopia	2	2
Ghana	3	2
Guatemala	12	3
Haiti	310	25
Honduras	9	4
India Mid-East	15	4
India Central	25	2
India South	27	2
Indonesia	1	0
Ivory Coast	1	1
Kenya	25	2
Liberia	1	0
Malawi	51	42
Mexico	5	5
Mozambique	15	5
Myanmar	1	5
Nicaragua	5	1

Nigeria	24	2
Pakistan	1	0
Paraguay	1	0
Peru	2	0
Philippines	7	9
Rwanda	0	1
South Africa	3	5
South Sudan	3	1
Tanzania	51	12
Thailand	16	6
Togo	3	10
Uganda	2	3
United States	45	11
Uruguay	1	1
Zimbabwe	3	2
Zambia	0	1

44

794

297

In addition to these statistics, the the church has 1024 ministers and 84,376 members in a total of 44 nations and provinces. Some members exist in nations where no church has yet been established.

Bishops

Adekunle, Yomi
Agar, Edward
Agbonifo, Amos O.
Avila, Juan
Brooks, Joel
Brown, Tom
Carter, L. W.
Chavez, Ricardo Valenzuela
Clement, Erasto
Cook, Claxton
Dalton, Rocky
Ferrell, Rick
Fields, Charles
Ernesto, Espinoza
Ganda, Kenneth
Gomba, David
Graves, Ricky
Hostelus, Saintaniel
Jones, William
Kelton, Clifford
Massey, Ron
McDonald, E.A.
McDonald, Todd
Misago, John Karegea
Neill, Scott
Oboo, Jonaes Okal
Pierre, Sandraud
Phillips, Wade H.
Ramirez, Daniel
Resurreccion, Domingo
Sarry, Pete
Sebutoto, Audax Petro
Snyder, Zachary
Steele, Joseph
Sullivan, Bruce
Wafula, Elijah
Webster, Davis
White, A.B.

Deacons

Akara, Vincent O.
Ashley, Dave
Carasco, Sam
Clary, Kevin
Creary, Nevil Sena
Davis, Clyde (Eddie)
Davis, Jimmy
Dickson, Ray
Everett, Patrick Meredith
Ezakiel, Paulo
Green, David
Green, J.L.
Jaramillo, Robert
Llaneza, Robert
Martinez, Luis Acberto
Marwa, James
Mapambano, Stivin
Mlengera, Meshak
Monday, Sam
Moore, Wayne
Nyambaso, Kisyeri
Odoyo, Alfanyo
Okoth, Elisha
Okomgo, Elphace
Oombo, James Opany
Omity, Makori
Omwando, Peterson O.
Onwaga, Joash Odongo
Reid, William
Reitler, Edward
Spicer, Chad
Villers, Tom

Male Evangelist

Abeka, Daniel
Abura, Lazaro Orango
Achacha, Julias
Adebayo, Según
Adegboyega, Idowu Israel
Adebowale, Elijah Idili
Adelere, Adediran Solomon
Adera, John Odhiambo
Aderemi, Aderoju Timothy
Agbe, Nyakou
Agbonifo, John Idemudia
Agullana, Arnel Ganno
Agwanda, Josh
Akali, Ezakia
Akilolu, Taiwo Francis
Akuom, Sulman O.
Akwanya, Gerald
Alanya, Michael
Alfredo, Robert B.
Aluodo, Richard
Amando, Julio
Amos, Adetokun
Armand, Behanzin A.
Aremu, Abraham
Ayobami, Sanni Olusegun
Awiti, Daniel Oshiambo
Bagonle, Adebowak Elijah
Ballios, Jorge antonio
Bamidele, Ademibawa Moall
Barbour, Roger
Barker, Charles D.
Barrios, Jorge Antonilo
Benjamin, Ammanaboyina China
Betin, Akpatcho
Bor, German
Brown, Brooks Lee
Bundgere, Daniel Eliaz
Bureenok, Surisak
Carrasco, Sr., Raul
Catig, Teofilo
Chandra, Murala Surya
Childers, Daren
Christophe, Essee
Clary, Kevin
Coello, Jose elis Orlando
Cook, Joseph Norris
Corrales, Eugenio Cespedes
Correll, Michael
Cortez, Carlos Jesus
Cortez, Luis Orlando
Creary, Nevil Sena
David, Oyadokun Olatundo
David, Samuel C.
Davis, John J.
Deakle, Tod
Diram, Joseph Oje
Dogbeda, Nouwe Kami
Ebenezer, Adebisi Oluseye
Edward, Orobosa Kelly
Elisha, Chokka
Emanuel, Abioye Aladimeji
Espinoza, Carlos Adan Garcia
Estacio, Mario,
Etta, Silas
Eyong, Eric Eyong
Ezakiel, Paulo
Fisayo, Nathaniel
Fredic, Duniani Asukulu
Gaba, Elias
Galvan, Nestor
Ganta, John Babu Rao
Garcia, Ivan Freddy
Garcia, Miguel, Jr
Garcia, Vincente
Garcia, Vitalino Martinez
Geda, Janes A.
Geremew, Eshete Esuendalew
Gill, Edwin David
Gomba, David
Gomez, Luis Orlando

Gonzales, Arthur
Gonzalez, Ruben Dario Fleitas
Graves, Trevor
Graves, Travis
Gregory, Daniel
Gregory, Jonathan
Gwara, Tom
Hall, Jonathan “Corey”
Ignacio, Melchor Gundran
Israel, Koumako
Jaramillo, Alex Raymond
Jaramillo, Robert
Jaynes, Robert Lee
John, Felix Kentangie
Kelly, Greg
Knowles, Wyburn Neal
Lopez, Virgilio Amador
McBride, Derrick
Morgan, Nigel
Mydonga, Frederick Ochali
Odongo, Moses Okoko
Okimyi, Kigina Daniel
Olal, Moris Anyanga
Olal, Michae Ngome
Orange, James
Otieno, Boaz
Otieno, Francis
Otieno, Okello
Otumba, Julias A.
Ouma, James Ng’anda
Ouyo, Julias Myerere
Owiti, Syprose
Oyando, Eucabet
Oyediran, Timothy T.
Oyonge, James M.
Ozuda, Isaiah Omonid
Paillaleo, Juan Huenul
Pailahueque, Jorge Enrique
Parker, James
Pastran, Manuel Antonio
Paulasa, Jorge Mario

Perez, Gladys
Perez, Jorge Enrique Estrog
Perez, Leonardo Mendez
Pounders, Bobby
Pounder, Daniel Joshua
Pounders, Jerry
Prakash, Yannabathula
Punda, Mika O.
Quezada, Erica Pilar Pinto
Quezada, Sofanor
Quillen, Joseph
Quispe, Yum Munoz
Rajoro, Peter
Ramirez, Hernandez Jonathan
Ramirez, Odalis Margoth
Rao, Nimmala Sanjeeva
Rao, Talari Padma
Rao, Yadia Mohan
Ratnam, Sirra Mani
Reel, Jerry
Rodriguez, Carlos Rafael
Ruiz, Jose Dionicio
Saez, Mario Alfonso Flores
Saka, John Onyango
Sakwa, Dan Ouma
Jacob, Obimbo Sakwa
Samson, Akinlolu
Samson, Akinola Akinlolu
Sanchez, Antiono
Sanchez, Carlos Lopez
Sanchez, Pedro Danilo
Senapati, Gabriyel
Sidker, Skuku Fanjon
Socia, Clarence
Solom, Pstyomi Adekunle
Solomon, George W.
Stephen, Ayoola Oloinka
Stonell, Raymond
Tabares, Werner
Taulinus, Fidel
Thompson, Allen

Tingler, Jerry
Tolentino, Jr, Fererico D.
Torres, Cesar Auyusto P.
Urcadiz, Daniel C.
Valdez, Wilber Santos
Viswanatham, Biddika
Wagner, Ricardo Astorga
Wale, Adeyemo Femi
Walowa, Joshua O.
Wambogo, Janes Mbagu
Wase, Teketel Zewde
Wilcox, Bruce
Zavala, Gilberto
Zuilenam, Quillermo Lionlaf

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Antango, Jane
Arguetta, Noemy
Atieno, Monica
Bolano, Adejane J.
Clardy, Dorothy
Daudi, Lensa
Davis, Andrea Faye
Dorkas, Joseph
Dorkas, Oyediran Tunrayo
Edward, Veline Nelson
Elizzbeth, Llesanmi Omodasola
Elizabeth, Alabi Opeyemi
Erasto, Rose, Atieno
Esther, Omotomilola Temitope
Erwin, Kimberly J.
Faida, Rebecca
Fayoke, Asummo Omotola
Flores, Claudia Irene
Folasade, Ajayi Cecilia
Folasade, Osobu Paulina

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Grace, Sanni Iyabo
Gifford, Majorie
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Jandura, Memory D.
Jones, Pamela Lynn
Joselyn, Treva
Kimble, Shirley
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Maciel, Olga Beatrice
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McKee, Ofelia
Morgan, Suson
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Odhimago, Roseline Achiong
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Periera, Rebecca
Pounders, Donna
Quillen, Jeannie
Reitler, Brenda
Rivera, Barbara
Romo, Reina
Sadler, Florence
Sandra, Lecruz Martinez
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Snyder, Kari Elaine
Stephenson, Tina
Suna, Susilia
Tomi, Opakunle Florence
Williams, Linda
Wilson, Nancy
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ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Note: The following has been accepted by the General Assembly in proper order that is by agreement in one accord.

INTRODUCTION

Zion Assembly Church of God is a Spirit-filled body of believers who have covenanted themselves together with God to accept and obey the teachings of Christ and His apostles (Exodus 19:3-6; John 14:6, 8; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:24-32). This commitment is firm, even in this present time of apostasy, when so many are “falling away” and “[departing] from the faith” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2; 3:1-12; Jude 3-19).

The ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to live and worship together in this “most holy faith,” to walk in truth, to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” “and to cultivate among themselves the graces of love and holiness.” They seek for the perfections of Christ in their fellowship, and by His grace and power to conform to the image of Jesus Christ so completely that when He appears they shall be like Him (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:1-17; 1 John 3:2).

Besides this internal disposition to cultivate mutual love and care within the household of God, the ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to labor for the unity of all believers, until all “see eye to eye,” “speak the same thing,” “walk by the same rule” (Isaiah 52:8; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 3:16). In this manner, they seek to carry forward the apostolic vision: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Zion Assembly has further obligated itself to publish and to proclaim the full Gospel into all the world in obedience to Christ’s commission to the church (Matthew 28:19).

Note: The articles on *Man, Sin, Works of the flesh, Christian Perfection, Perseverance, and Antichrist* have been added to this edition of the *Abstract of Faith*. They were accepted by the 8th Annual General Assembly in proper order on September 10, 2011.

Church Membership

Membership in Zion Assembly Church of God is open to all believers whose testimony is evidenced by the fruit of the new birth, and who are willing to covenant themselves together with Christ and the church to walk in the light of the Gospel. Candidates become members by the following solemn obligation:

Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses, that you will accept this Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, with the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and agree to walk together as one body in the light of the Gospel to the best of your knowledge and ability?

In response to this covenant formula the candidate answers, “I will by the grace of God.” The minister then lays hands on the new member and offers prayer for divine guidance and strength; the congregation follows with an affectionate welcome and extends the right hand of fellowship.

Prominent Teachings in the Scriptures

Note: *The following statements are not meant to form a creed, or to be thought of as an exhaustive statement of beliefs upon which the church is built. They are simply an abstract of some of the important and fundamental teachings and principles set forth in the Holy Scriptures, which form an essential part of the church’s Rule of Faith.*

The Trinity—The Bible teaches that the one eternal God exists in three persons: namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These Three have distinct identities, yet they form one undivided Godhead, subsisting in the same nature (Romans 5:5; 15:16, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 5:19; John 3:5; Ephesians 2:18; Titus 3:5). The Father is God (Ephesians 4:6), the Son is God (John 1:1-3; 10-1; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 1:8), the Holy Spirit is God (John 14:17; 16:13; Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10), yet there are not three gods, but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The three persons of the divine Trinity work together in perfect unity for the salvation of man (John 3:5; 6:44; 14:6, 16, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), and God’s “only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Through Him, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received into glory, and now sits on the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Acts 7:55; 1 Timothy 3:16). Through Him alone men have access unto the heavenly Father. It is through His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross that we are saved. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). He is the spotless “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He is also the head of the church and the savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

The Bible—The Holy Scriptures—both Old and New Testaments—reveal God and His will for man. They are inspired, inerrant, infallible, and unchangeable (2 Timothy 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:16-21). The truths of the Scriptures are revealed by prophecy, type, precept, and example, illuminated through the power of the Holy Spirit. The teachings of the Bible, particularly in the light of the New Testament, are the Church’s final rule for faith, practice, government, and discipline (Acts 2:42; 2 Peter 3:1, 2). Walking in the light of God’s Word is the guiding principle and commitment of Zion Assembly Church of God. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

The Church—The church is a visible body of believers formed and incorporated by covenant with God to keep His commandments (Exodus 19:5-8; 24:3-8; Psalm 119:57; John 14:15; 17:6, 8, 14; 1 Peter 2:9). It is theocratic in form and function, providing order and government through the Spirit and the Scriptures for God’s people (Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:7; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 12:28). The church is presently imperfect, spotted with backsliders and “false brethren” (1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:4; Jude 4). It is thus distinguished from the kingdom of God, the latter being the spiritual realm of all born again believers (John 3:3-8; Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13). One is “born” into the kingdom; he/she is “added to the church” (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:47). The church will succeed to proclaim the gospel into all the world (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16); will be perfected “with the washing of water by the word,” and will be presented to Christ glorious in holiness (Ephesians 5:26, 27). The General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church for the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts 15; 16:4, 5). The purpose of the General Assembly is

to promote unity and fellowship among the saints, to search the Scriptures for additional light and understanding, and to resolve differences in interpretations which tend to be divisive among the ministers and churches. All matters of faith, government, and discipline are discussed before the entire body of the church assembled and resolved in one accord with the manifest approval of the Spirit (vv. 12, 22, 28). This form and order is based on the precedent: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (Acts 15:28). All male members in good standing have an active voice in the Assembly. Women are a vital part of the church's life and ministry. In matters dealing with church authority, however, they voice their opinions through their husbands and church elders (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9; 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-17).

Man---Man is unique in all of God's creation. Only he was created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:27; 5:2; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 1 Corinthians 11:7; Ephesians 4:24), and therefore man has a unique relationship to God. His nature is composed of soul, spirit, and body (Job 32:8; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 10:28; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12), though "soul" and "spirit" may be fully distinguishable only to the Spirit of God (Hebrews 4:12 and compare John 12:27 and 13:21). Of all the living things on earth, only man has God-consciousness and an immortal soul (Genesis 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:45). He thus has an everlasting destiny in heaven or hell, with eternal life or everlasting death and damnation (Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:4-6; 21:7, 8). He was created by divine decree in one day; he did not therefore evolve, nor does he exist by chance. Moreover, the uniqueness of man is seen in that he was given authority in earth over all living things including animal life (Genesis 1:26, 28). This uniqueness is partly why the Psalmist exults, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14), and why he asks, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (8:3, 4).

Man was created *male* and *female* (Genesis 1:27; 2:18, 21-25) in order that the genders might come together under divine institution as husband and wife (2:21-25; Mark 10:6-9) to procreate the race of man---to "be fruitful, and multiply" (v. 28; 9:1)---and to provide comfort and companionship for one another (Proverbs 18:22; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Ephesians 5:22-25, 28-31; 1 Peter 3:7). This is the divine order for man, making *fornication* (pre-marital sex, homosexuality, incest, bestiality) and *adultery* (unfaithfulness in marriage, and divorce and remarriage while one's first companion is still living) vile corruptions of God's expressed will and design for man (Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:28; Mark 10:7-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 39).

Included in man's God-consciousness is an innate sense of morality---of moral right and wrong---and a sense of accountability for his behavior (Acts 17:28-30; Romans 1:19, 20; John 1:9). Moral responsibility and accountability are predicated on the nature of man's God-consciousness and free will, that is, his ability to choose and act in obedience or disobedience to God's revealed will (Joshua 24:15-25; 1 Kings 18:21; Ezekiel 20:39; Luke 13:35; John 3:36; Revelation 22:17).

Man was created holy, in the moral image of God (Genesis 1:27, 31; 5:1, 2), but his fall in Eden plunged him into sin and corruption. His fall was predicated on the fact that he has free will. Adam chose, under the influence of Satan's seductive power, to disobey God. Because man is a race, unlike the angels, sin was transmitted to all men through Adam's transgression (Genesis 3:6; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21). His redemption and reconciliation to God was made possible by the sacrifice of Christ (Romans 5:15-19).

Christ is the second man Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45). He is therefore called the Son of Man as well as the Son of God (Matthew 12:8; 16:13; Luke 1:35; John 1:14; Colossians 1:15, 19; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 1:8). In Him God and man exist in one person (John 1:1-3, 14; Philippians 2:5-8). The first Adam failed and plunged man into sin; the second man Adam, Christ, lived triumphantly over sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15), making it possible for us also to triumph over sin and be saved (Isaiah 53:4-9; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:21-24). He that believes and repents and is born again shall be saved (John 3:3-8, 16; 10:28). Christ is the perfect man, and all men can be made perfect in and through Him, our redeemer and sanctifier (Hebrews 2:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12).

Sin---Sin is a real and expressed evil. It originated in Satan in heaven (Isaiah 14:12-14; John 8:42; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:7-9), and in man in the Garden Eden when Adam rebelled and transgressed against God's explicit command and ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:6, 17). Sin is thus willful rebellion against the law of God (Exodus 35:19; Psalm 51:3; Hebrews 4:7; 10:26; 13:18; 2 Peter 3:5) It may be defined as *lawlessness* (Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; Galatians 3:19; 1 Timothy 1:9), *transgression* (Psalm 119:158; Ephesians 2:1; 1 John 3:4), *disobedience* (Romans 8:7; Titus 1:16; 3:3; 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 2:7,8), and *rebellion* (Psalm 78:8; Lamentations 1:18; 3:14; Daniel 9:5). Sin exists also in unbelief (John 3:18; Titus 1:15; 1 John 2:22-24; Revelation 21:8).

Unlike the angels, mankind is a race; thus when the first man Adam sinned, sin was transmitted to all men through him (Romans 5:12). All men are therefore born with the sin nature and thus with the propensity

to sin (Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Ephesians 2:3; 1 John 1:8). None are exempt, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Sin exists in two forms: 1) in the very being of man, in his rebellious nature (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 2:3); 2) in actual acts of transgression (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). Sin is conceived in the heart and is expressed in thought (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19), word (Matthew 5:22), and/or deed (Romans 1:32).

Death and everlasting damnation is the penalty that God imposed upon mankind for sin (Romans 6:23). The Good News is that the shedding of Jesus’ blood, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection provided the remedy for sin (Romans 5:15-19; Hebrews 9:22). By grace, through faith in Christ, transgressions are forgiven and the “old man,” the sin nature, is crucified.

In justification, actual transgressions are pardoned and washed away (Romans 3:28-30; 5:1; Ephesians 2:5; 13-18); in sanctification, the very nature of sin rooted in man’s heart is uprooted and removed (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Colossians 3:3-10). The sanctified believer is thus made free from sin (John 8:36).

Works of the Flesh---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 such like” (Galatians 5:19-21). The apostle Paul sets forth three general categories of carnality [“works of the flesh”]: 1) sensual and sexual sins, which include adultery, fornication, immorality, impurity, unfaithfulness, and lewdness of all kinds, which may be committed before and/or during marriage; 2) sins of spiritual deception and demonic seduction through false religion, which include idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, necromancy, magic, enchantments, palm readings, superstitious rituals of paganism, and new age teachings and practices; 3) sins that stem from a malicious and spiteful spirit, which include hatred, enmities, wrath, strife, jealousy, uncontrolled anger, murders [actual or harbored in the heart], bitter disputes, dissensions, factions, heresies, seditions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and ranting and rioting.

The list of the “works of the flesh” given by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5 is not a complete list of sins. There are many more subtle works of the flesh and of the spirit that are not so “manifest” or obvious, including greed, covetousness, stealing, extortion, gossip, slander, whisperings, and evil speaking. The apostle thus adds to his list of sins

the words, “and such like.” His point in bringing these sins to the attention of the church, and identifying them in particular, is to make us more conscious of the destructive nature of sin, and to set forth God’s remedy for sin in Christ. Deliverance from the powerful works of the flesh cannot be obtained through the law and practices of religion, but only “through sanctification of the Spirit” and the Word of God (Galatians 5: 16-18, 24; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). The sanctifying power of Jesus’ blood received by faith through the Holy Spirit is the remedy! The “old man” must be crucified in order for the believer to be made free from and victorious over sin (John 8:36; Romans 6:6; 8:1-6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 2:11, 12). Further, the old man is kept crucified by our daily consecration and “walk in the Spirit” according to the Word of God (Galatians 5:16, 25; 2 Timothy 2:21-23)

Salvific Work of Grace

Conviction is a revelation to man by the Holy Ghost of the righteous judgment of God. Through conviction, unregenerated souls see themselves as sinners before God, experience guilt, and realize their separation from Him who is holy, just, and good (Isaiah 6:1; John 6:44; Acts 2:37, 38). True repentance can be made only through the work of the Spirit in conviction (John 16:7-15; 1 Corinthians 12:3; see also John 8:32; 14:6).

Repentance is the act of confessing one’s sins before God, being willing to forsake them and to turn to Christ with all of one’s heart, mind, soul, and strength. True repentance can be made only in the spirit of “godly sorrow” (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10). Repentance is manifested by certain fruit “meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; Romans 6:2). The act of repentance should be followed by water baptism [see below] (Mark 1:4, 5, 15; Luke 13, 3; Acts 3:19; 5:30, 31; 1 John 1:9). Repentance is a prerequisite experience for justification.

Justification is the state of being void of offense toward God. It is made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is the act of God in forgiving the transgressions of a penitent sinner. Justification is the result of repentance and faith (Romans 8:1, 2; 3:23-26; 1 John 1:7). The genuinely justified person has “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1, 2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration (Born Again) is the act of God in creating new life in the heart of the believer through the Holy Ghost. It is a definite and instantaneous experience. Man is dead in sins and trespasses through Adam, and can be quickened or regenerated only through faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5; Colossians 2:13, 14; John 5:24). Regeneration is the same as the new birth. “Born Again” is another term for regeneration. The result of this experience is that the believer becomes a child of God. It is through this new birth that one becomes a part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said: “Ye must be born again” (John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23). The new birth is a prerequisite condition for the experience of sanctification.

Fruit of the Spirit is of divine origin. It is the very life of God poured into the heart of the regenerate believer. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22, 23). We are admonished in the Scripture to walk in the Spirit and not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11).

Divine Healing is provided for all in the atonement. Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross provides healing for the whole man, including his body. Divine healing is effected by faith without the aid of medicine or surgical skills. In cases where one is healed through the assistance of physicians, medicine, herbs, etc., God is still to be praised: for it is God who heals in any case. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:2, 3; Isaiah 53:4, 5; Matthew 8:17; 2 Peter 2:24; James 5:14-16).

Subsequent Grace

Sanctification is the second definite work of grace wrought in the regenerated heart by faith. In sanctification, the carnal nature is eradicated (“the old man is crucified”) so that the believer no longer has the inclination or propensity to sin; that is, in sanctification the desire to sin is removed (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12, 13; Romans 6:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). Sanctification enables the believer to bring his/her body under subjection to Christ, and to live a life consistent with the spirit of holiness and in accordance with the Word of God. Sanctification is a prerequisite condition for the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Holiness is the result of sanctification. It is a state of grace and purity in which perfect Christlikeness is desired and pursued (Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 7:2). God has called us unto holiness (Thessalonians 4:7). “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15, 16). “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14; see also Luke 1:74, 75; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Titus 2:11, 12; Eph. 1:4; 4:13, 24). Paul expressed his desire to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28). Christ is returning for a church that is glorious in holiness: “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27; see also Psalm 45:9-13).

Christian Perfection---The perfection of the believer is the call and aim of the Gospel (Matthew 5:48; John 8:36; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Colossians 1:22; Hebrews 6:1; James 1:4; Jude 24). Redemption anticipates purification and perfection, and this state of grace is to be attained “in this present world” (Titus 2:11-14). Christ gave His life and shed His blood to make believers perfect in Him (Hebrews 10:1, 14; 13:21), both individually and corporately in the body of Christ (Matthew 5:48; John 17:20-23; 2 Corinthians 13:9; Colossians 1:28; Ephesians 1:10; 2:14-22; 4:11-16; 5:27; Revelation 19:7, 8). This glorious experience has therefore been called “Christian perfection,” for it is attained in and through the grace of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The grace of perfection therefore glorifies God, not man.

It is important to understand that Christian perfection is not the same as absolute perfection: for only God is absolutely perfect (Exodus 9:14; 1 Samuel 2:2; 1 Chronicles 17:20; Job 11:7; Mark 10:18). Thus Christian perfection is defined and explained in the Scriptures in ethical terms, rather than in legal terms; that is, Christian perfection is a state of grace attained through a perfect relationship with God. As such, it is rooted in and springs forth from “perfect love” (Matthew 5:44-48; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17). Love is in fact the “bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14). Christian perfection is therefore essentially grounded in love and wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit (1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 15:17; 16:9; 19:9; Romans 5:5; Hebrews 10:22). Accordingly, a believer may err in mental judgments, be forgetful, be sick or afflicted physically, have moments of anguish and perplexity, etc., and yet not be charged with sin or willful rebellion and disobedience against God’s will and law (Romans 8:33; Ephesians 4:26; Hebrews 10:26). The human condition therefore does not necessarily militate against the saint’s perfect relationship with God and with his fellow man.

There is, moreover, growth in sanctification and in perfection unto a more glorious state of perfection in Christ. Thus the saint is transformed ever more perfectly by the Spirit of God into the image of Christ “from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Sanctified believers are admonished to continue to “perfect holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). The Good News is “we know that, when [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2; Ephesians 5:27).

Perseverance---Perseverance reveals the grace imparted to a believer to live in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in spite of any opposition or hardship that may challenge his Christian faith (2 Timothy 2:3-4). Although the word “perseverance” is used only once in some translations of the Bible (for example, Ephesians 6:18 in the King James Version) there are many other words that are closely related to it, such as *abide* (John 15:4-5, 7-9), *endure* (Matthew 10:22), *continue* (John 8:31-32), *steadfast* (Hebrews 3:14, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 2 Peter 3:17), *patience* (Luke 21:19), *overcome* (Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7). In each of these references, the words clearly imply a fight of faith for the follower of Christ. Therefore, perseverance is not an act of God for a believer, but the action of the believer in response to the command of Christ to continue in His Word and grace.

In considering perseverance, two questions immediately present themselves: 1) what is God’s role? 2) what is man’s role? Philippians 2:13 says that God works in us both to will and to do His good pleasure. But how is this work accomplished in us? It is by His grace. Paul shows that it is by grace that our walk with Him begins (Ephesians 2:8-9), and in another place that this same grace teaches us that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” and to “look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13). Further, God’s grace is able to keep us faultless with joy (Jude 24). It is important to understand, however, that man must respond in faith and accept the grace He has provided for him (Romans 10:9-10). It is at the crisis moment of transforming faith that man begins his walk with God; but just as man turns to God for saving grace, he must also seek Him for sustaining grace (Matthew 7:7-11, 21-27; Luke 8:15; 11:28; John 14:15, 23; Jude 24). Man’s perseverance depends on his continued desire to walk with the Lord (John 8:31; Colossians 1:23; Jude 21). This is shown further by the original New Testament word, *sozo*, that signifies “to save.” This word is expressed in three tenses: “I am saved,” “I am being saved,” “I shall be saved.” Thus, man must be willing to continue to “press” into

the kingdom of God, and to persevere at all costs in order to be finally saved (Luke 9:23; 16:16).

The commandment to persevere---endure, abide---in Christ carries eternal consequences. The inheritance of eternal life hinges on the Christian's decision to continue to seek the grace of God and to walk in obedience to His Word. We must be "willing and obedient" (Isaiah 1:19) and "willing to live honestly" (Hebrews 13:18). According to the apostle John, if an individual does not remain in the doctrine of Christ, he does not have God, and he that does not have the Son of God does not have life (2 John 9; 1 John 5:12); therefore the judgment for those who do not persevere is eternal damnation and separation from God (Matthew 25:41-46, Hebrews 10:26-27).

Practical Graces

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken, or the satisfying of one whom otherwise has been wronged (Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8, 9). This act alone does not save, but it gives evidence of a heart that has truly repented. Restitution glorifies the grace of God and supports the testimony of the believer. It also gives opportunity to reconcile with those who have been wronged. It is the fulfillment of the law of love (Romans 13:8). Some restitutions should be made only with great care and with pastoral guidance, in order to avoid further offense or injury.

Sabbath means rest. Observance of the Sabbath in the Old Testament (the seventh day) was instituted to point to the believer's spiritual rest in Christ under the New Covenant. The Old Testament requirement to keep the Sabbath holy is now superseded by the commandment: "Be ye holy," for in Christ the believer is enabled and required to live holy every day. Sunday is not the Sabbath, but is a day set aside by the church to give special attention to the worship of God and the fellowship of the saints (Hosea 2:11; Colossians 2:16, 17; Romans 14:5, 6; Hebrews 4:1-11).

Meats and Drinks---The prohibitions against certain meats and drinks in the Old Testament were not extended into the New Testament church. These ceremonial aspects of Mosaic legislation were "nailed to the cross" of Christ, and done away with in the covenant of grace (Colossians 2:13-17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 9:8-11). What one eats and drinks (with the exception of intoxicating beverages) is now a matter of conscience, and does not violate the nature and principles of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). However, one should be mindful of the Scriptural injunction:

“...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (See also: Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Tithing And Giving---Tithing is the giving of one tenth of one’s increase to Christ, our High Priest. It began as a voluntary act with Abraham, was required under the Mosaic law, and carried forward by Christ as a discipline for the New Testament church (Matthew 23:23). Tithes are to be brought to the house of God and properly distributed by the ministers having the charge of the treasury (Malachi 3:10). Freewill offerings are to be encouraged and regarded as a gift from the heart. Tithing and giving into the church are part of God’s plan to finance His work through the church on earth. We are required in the Scriptures to be good stewards of that which God has entrusted in our care (See also: Genesis 14:18-20; Luke 11:42; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Hebrews 7:1-21).

Swearing and Profanity—Taking an oath is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (James 5:12). Jesus said, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all...But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:34, 37; see also Exodus 20:7). An affirmation of the truth is sufficient; it is acceptable even in secular courts. Similarly, the use of profanity reflects an impure heart and has no place in the life of a child of God (Matthew 15:18, 19; Philippians 1:27; 3:20; 1 Peter 1:15; 2 Peter 2:7; James 3:8-10).

Intoxicating Beverages and Drugs—“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). The Scriptures teach against the consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating beverages because God has called us to perfect sobriety (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:2). Believers are admonished not to “...give place to the devil.” So-called moderate or social drinking certainly gives place to the adversary and thus believers should totally abstain (Ephesians 4: 27; see also: Isaiah 28: 7; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21). Much of what is said about intoxicating beverages is true also of drugs. The use of drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, opium, cocaine, etc., impair the body and is not in keeping with the teachings and principles of Christ and the Scriptures. These things defile the body and are inconsistent with God’s call to soberness (2 Corinthians 7:1; Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31, 32; Ephesians 5:3-8; James 1:21). Drugs used

for medical purposes should be taken only under the care and direction of a physician, and then only in good conscience.

Gambling (“Gaming”)—Due to the increase of lotteries and other forms of gambling, we feel that we should make it clear that Zion Assembly Church of God is opposed to gambling in any form. Gambling brings with it a negative effect on society and is immoral (Exodus 20:17; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10). This sin is associated with wasting time, money, and possessions. It also carries with it the stigma of greed and covetousness (see Exodus 20:17; Psalms 10:3; I Corinthians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10; Hebrews 13:5). Gambling of any kind (lotteries, casinos, sports betting, video poker, (slot) machines, on-line gambling, bingo, etc.) is denounced in principle throughout Scripture. It is also addictive, leads to increased crime, and often destroys marriages and homes.

Unequal Yoke—The Bible teaches against the children of God being unequally yoked with unbelievers. Binding ourselves with unbelievers in organizations and secret orders with an oath is contrary to the Spirit of Christ and the plain teaching in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:14-17). As the espoused bride of Christ, we have covenanted ourselves to give undivided loyalty to Christ. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 50:5). Membership in organizations which require an oath of secrecy should be dissolved before becoming a member of the church. “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing” (John 18:20).

Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Gifts

Baptism with the Holy Ghost is an instantaneous experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to entire sanctification. In this baptism, Christ is the agent; the Spirit is the element (Matthew 3:11). The baptism with the Spirit on the sanctified life is accompanied with speaking in tongues: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4; see also: 10:44-47; 19:1-6). The baptism with the Spirit is a baptism of spiritual empowerment for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 1:8); it also enables one to minister effectively within the church for the self-edification of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Ephesians 4:11-16).

Speaking in Tongues always accompanies the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The believer speaks in “unknown tongues” as “the Spirit gives utterance” (Acts 2:4). “Unknown tongues” is distinguished from speaking by the gift of the Spirit in “divers tongues,” that is, in languages that are known to man (Acts 2:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:2). In either case (“unknown tongues” or languages known to man), the manifestation of tongues (and interpretations) is always consistent with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 14:26). The gift of tongues is a sign to unbelievers (vv. 14:21-23), but serves also for the self-edification of the believer (v. 4).

Gifts Of The Spirit—There are various gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The gifts of the Spirit were in operation in the New Testament church, but thereafter the church began to “fall away” and the manifestations of the spiritual gifts began to wane. After the apostasy in the fourth century, and the ensuing “dark ages” of Christian history, the manifestations of spiritual gifts (particularly tongues-speaking) were almost non-existent (manifested on occasion mainly among so-called heretics and unorthodox Christians). In these last days (particularly since early in the twentieth century) God is again pouring out His Spirit “upon all flesh” according to prophecy in order to fulfill His eternal purpose through the church (Joel 2:28-32; 3:16-18; Acts 2:38, 39).

Signs Following Believers—Signs in the New Testament were mainly for the purpose of confirming the Word of God and Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. As believers went forth preaching the Word in Jesus’ name, the Lord worked with them and confirmed the Word with signs following (Mark 16:15-20). Miraculous signs follow believers in order to confirm the proclamation of the Word of God, to convict sinners, and to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Ordinances

Water Baptism is the act of being immersed in water by the minister of the Gospel in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is commanded by Christ and represents His death, burial and resurrection, which are experienced in the life of the believer (Romans 6:3-5). This ordinance has no power to wash away sin, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21). Water baptism is valid only when the candidate is actually born again (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8-10; 16:15, 16; John 3:22, 23; Acts 10:47, 48; 16:33). Water baptism is identified with spiritual regeneration; it is not the door into the church.

Lord's Supper is a memorial meal, which calls to remembrance the sacrifice of Christ, who shed His blood for our sins. Jesus commanded that this sacred meal be observed "in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). The broken, unleavened bread represents His body; the fruit of the vine (unfermented grape juice) represents His blood. This sacred ordinance should be observed with holy reverence, only after careful self-examination (1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17; 11:23-30). It is the outward sign of Christ's covenant with the church (Luke 22:20).

Feet Washing is an ordinance in the church. Following the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ girded himself with a towel, washed the disciples' feet, and said: "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). This ordinance is distinguished from the cultural practice of feet washing in the Middle East; it has spiritual significance and is commanded to be observed by believers (1 Timothy 5:10). The purpose of feet washing is not fulfilled through charity and good works. It is to remind us that we have one Master and Lord, who is the head of the church, and we are all His servants, and servants of one another.

Divine Sanctities

Sanctity of Life—Human life is sacred because it is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Taking of innocent life is thus strictly forbidden in Scripture, including abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, genocide, and suicide (self-murder). "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). Whosoever sheddeth innocent blood will not be held guiltless before God (Genesis 9:6; Numbers 35:30, 31; Romans 13:8-10; Revelation 21:8).

Sanctity of Marriage—Jesus said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). Accordingly, marriage is between a male and female until death (Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2); as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women (Hebrews 13:4). Adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage are sinful practices that violate the laws of God, and injure the home and family. Nevertheless, unfaithfulness (sexual relationships outside of marriage) is not grounds for divorce and remarriage, for "whosoever marrieth her which is put away

committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Therefore, those who remarry while their first companion is alive are not eligible for membership in the church (see Exodus 20:14, 17; Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:15-20; 7:2, 3).

Sanctity of the Body—Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are admonished to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6:20-21). “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy” (3:16-17). We are also admonished to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1), and “...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31b). Incest, same sex unions, and all homosexual and lesbian relationships are strictly forbidden by the Scriptures. These practices are an abomination to God, though they may be sanctioned by a state or religious institution (Romans 1:24-28; Leviticus 18:22, 23; 20:10-21). Practices such as “body piercing,” tattooing, mutilating and disfiguring the body are of pagan origin and contrary to the spirit of holiness and biblical principles. These practices should have no place in the lives of believers (Cf: Timothy 2:8-10; Romans 12:1, 2; Isaiah 3:16-22; 1 John 2:15-17).

Eschatology

The Rapture and Pre-Millennial Second Coming Of Jesus—Christ is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:27, 28). “The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; see also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). All who are caught up in the first resurrection will attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Christ will then return to earth and reign with the saints for a thousand years (vv. 4, 6; see also Zechariah 14:4, 5; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11-21).

Resurrection—There will be a resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will be raised at Christ’s first appearance in the clouds of glory. The resurrection of the wicked will occur after the thousand years reign of Christ on earth. “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15; see also Daniel 12: 2; Revelation 20: 4-6; John 5: 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 41-58).

Eternal Life for the Righteous—The reward of the righteous is everlasting life in the presence of God. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:29, 30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; 1 John 5:11-13).

Eternal Punishment for the Wicked—Those who reject or disregard the call to repentance and salvation are doomed to eternal damnation (John 3:15-21). In hell there is no escape, no liberation, no annihilation. Hell is the “the second death,” and is a place of eternal torment. “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” (Revelation 21:8; see also: 20:10-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14:15; Matthew 25:46; Mark 3:29).

Antichrist---Antichrist can signify either “against Christ” or “in the place of Christ,” or a combination of the two meanings. Antichrist is one who opposes Christ or who assumes the prerogatives of Christ as our Lord and Savior.

While only the apostle John uses the word, antichrist, the apostle Paul is apparently speaking of the same spirit and principle when he refers to the “mystery of lawlessness” and the “lawless one” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8. John identifies certain “false prophets” and “deceivers” as antichrists (1 John 1-3; 2:18; 2 John 7). The prophet Daniel is in reference to this same spirit in his prophecy of the “beast” in Daniel 7, which corresponds also with John’s vision of the “beast” in Revelation 11; 13; 17; 19.

We may conclude then that the spirit of antichrist signifies the deceptive and seductive spirit in the world that seeks to confuse the true identity of Christ and to corrupt His Gospel. Antichrist may take many religious, social, and political forms, but all have the same goal---namely, to compromise and corrupt the true doctrine of salvation in Jesus Christ with false doctrines and the pretense of false Christs (Matthew 24:4,5, 11, 23, 24).

Prophecy predicts that a particular person in the very last days will come on the scene that will embody and personify the spirit of antichrist in the world. This man is variously characterized as the “lawless one” (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8) and the “beast” (Daniel 7:10, 11, 25; Revelation 13:1). Jesus is in reference to this spirit of deception and lawless spirit in Matthew 24:5, 24 and John 5:43. Our concern in the church, however, is not so much with the coming of the particular Lawless One---“the beast”---but with the spirit of antichrist now prevailing in the world: for it seems that

the prophetic Lawless One will not be fully revealed until after the rapture of the church (2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8). Until then, the Spirit of God and the church will restrain and prevent his rise to power and his full revelation.

God's church rests upon the revelation---the "rock"---that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:13-18), and that He was incarnate in the virgin Mary, died for our sins, and was resurrected on the third day so that man can be redeemed and brought back into fellowship with God our Father (Romans 5:6-10). The Spirit of Christ indwells believers, enabling them to live their lives consistent with the law of God (Romans 8:1-7); whereas the spirit of antichrist opposes the truth of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures, providing substitutions for the saving grace of Christ. The diabolic influence of antichrist is found throughout the world, resisting the true Gospel and substituting in its place myriads of false gospels (Galatians 1:1-9; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4). These are "lying spirits" set to deceive and destroy precious souls (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13, 14). John exhorts believers to "try the spirits"---test them, prove them---against the truth of Christ and His teachings revealed in the Scriptures (1 John 4:1-3). The spirit of antichrist, personified in the Lawless One, will be completely destroyed with the brightness of Christ's second coming and the power of His Word (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Meanwhile the saints are empowered to resist and overcome the spirit of antichrist in the world through faith, the Word of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Principles for Practical Christian Living and Discipline

The following guidelines are explicitly revealed in the Scriptures or else shown to be consistent with biblical teachings. They are brought to our attention to enhance our relationship with Christ and one another, and to encourage us to live in a way that will bring glory and honor to the name of Christ and to support the witness of the church. We are admonished in the Scriptures: "...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12b). Jesus instructs us: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Prayer—Jesus' admonition to "watch and pray" (Matthew 26:41a) has never been more urgent than today. We live in "perilous times," and Christ and the apostles warned that the times will only worsen as we approach

our Lord's return. Therefore, daily prayers and family devotions should be a priority in every church home. Maintaining a prayerful attitude is a key to spirituality for every individual and local congregation. Again Jesus said, "...men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1a), and the apostle encouraged believers to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are also enjoined to "...pray one for another..." James 5:16a). Special prayers should be made for those in authority and for those who have given themselves in service to God and to the ministry of the Word (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Prayer is so essential to the life of the church that the church is called "the house of prayer" (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13).

Bible Study—Reading and studying the Scriptures are invaluable to the spiritual welfare of the child of God. Every member of the church is encouraged to be a faithful student of God's holy Word. Paul instructs us to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God..." (2 Tim 2:15a), for "the holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15). Further, he says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (v.16). The importance of the Word of God is eloquently expressed by Psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." And again, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:105, 11).

Church Attendance and Worship—Worship and fellowship with believers of "like precious faith" is a vital part of the Christian life. Worship should be heartfelt in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word of God (John 4:23b; Ephesians 5:19). Each member of the church is a part of the body of Christ, and thus the body will be hindered to the degree that one member fails to actively participate in its life and mission. Accordingly, members should actively support every function of the church, and participate as much as possible. The exhortation of the Hebrew writer is worthy of our careful attention: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much more as we see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Children should be instructed at home, and taught by precept and example to respect the house of God. Ministers and their families should be examples in their lifestyles and conversations. "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane" (Ezekiel 44:23a). A prayerful attitude creates an atmosphere conducive for worship and the ministry

of God's Word. Believers should therefore be prayerful as the minister delivers the message, lest Satan come and steal the Word of God from their hearts (Mark 4:4, 15). God's love "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" should fill the atmosphere of our worship services. Love should govern our every action and be shown to everyone without partiality (1 Corinthians 13). We should take special care to show love to visitors. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Walking Circumspectly—Children of God should "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time for the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15,16). Living a consecrated life at home and abroad will give no place for anyone to justly think or speak of you as a hypocrite. Our manner of life and conversation should be holy in word and deed, as becoming to a child of God. As representatives of Christ in this world, and members of the Church of God, we should fashion ourselves with modesty and sobriety (Psalm 1:1-3; Philippians 1:27; Thessalonians 5:15-23).

Entertainment and Worldly Attractions—Christians should never participate in worldly attractions and entertainment where the principles of holiness may be compromised. Believers should participate in activities with unbelievers only with a guarded disposition, lest one becomes entangled or entrapped in the snares of Satan. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8; see also 2 Peter 2:19-22).

Illicit Relationships—Paul admonishes us to "give no place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). Forming too close an intimacy with the opposite sex, even if they are brothers and sisters in the Lord, creates an environment for temptation and gives opportunity for the "wiles of the devil." Samson is a classic case of this unwise behavior, which led to his fall from grace (Judges 16); whereas Joseph wisely fled from a similar situation (Genesis 39). Paul perhaps had Joseph in mind when he exhorted, "Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). The words of James, the Lord's brother, also come to mind: "Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15). In view of these solemn admonitions, great care should be taken to avoid associations and situations, which could reflect upon one's character and bring reproach upon Christ and the church.

Outward Adornment—Christians are ambassadors (representatives) for Christ in this present world (2 Corinthians 5:20). As such they should be careful to adorn themselves as befitting their Lord’s plainness and purity. Adorning oneself after a worldly fashion with facial paint, gold, pearls, costly apparel, etc. is inconsistent with the testimony of one professing a life separated unto God. “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel...But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:1-6; see also 1 Timothy 2:8-10; Isaiah 3:16-24; 61:10).

Corporate and Self-Discipline—Self-examinations to evaluate one’s own faith and spirituality are healthy (1 Corinthians 11:28). Sincere concern for others is also good and to be encouraged. We are our brother’s keeper. Counsel should be given only in the spirit of love and with godly wisdom, and according to the rule of discipline outlined in the gospel (Matthew 18:15-20). (A harsh spirit of criticism is detrimental to the spiritual welfare of both the critic and the one receiving the criticism: Matthew 7:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 5:14, 15; Ephesians 4:30-32). Discipline should be administered only as a last resort, and always through prayerful counsel and with the ultimate good of the erring brother/sister in mind (1 Corinthians 5:1-7; Galatians 6:1-5).

NOTES