

# Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren,

From time to time special issues arise which must be addressed. Often they are, though general in nature, of sufficient gravity to warrant using the pages of the *Monthly Letter*.

## **Do We Really Know and Honor God?**

Though fundamental to all spiritual knowledge, yet it is imperative to ask, do we really know God? And more relative, do we honor God in all our actions? Millions lay claim to an acquaintance with God and tenaciously cling to a belief they acceptably honor Him. Even so, each and every one of us needs to pause and make an objective assessment of the premise of his belief and claim. Since a personal belief, though adamantly maintained—one for which some would fight—is not evidence the person is correct or even acceptable in his assertion, an evaluation is necessary. The world is full of gods and christs, all fake. Further, Satan comes as an appealing god, or christ. Some form of judgment needs to be made. On the basis of what standard can we always be sure the inspiration received is of God—the True God—and not of one of these false spirits which is palming itself off as God or Christ? The Apostle John addressed this matter (1 John 4:1–3, 6; 2:24). If the above question was problematic in the days of John surely no one would argue about the validity of such a question today. Satan and his demons are most aggressive. He knows his time is very short.

## **You Can Know**

God has not left His servants devoid of a means of making such critical judgments. However, every personalized presumption can and will confuse and bewilder. Using any erroneous informational criteria will lead to a wrong conclusion. One must always be certain information used is accurate and supportable. Let us synoptically start at the beginning.

## **God, Creator and Father**

By virtue of being created by God, Adam is called the son of God (Luke 3:38). In turn all human beings born of flesh are sons of God—in the flesh. Then, in due time, as a result of call, conversion, and baptism the called and chosen become the children of God, spiritually (2 Corinthians 6:18, Romans 8:14).

By command children must both obey and honor parents. As God's children we do not have the "right" of doing what pleases us. We must obey our heavenly Parent, in all things. Christ set the example. He said, "I do always those things that please him [the Father]."

## **For His Pleasure**

The Apostle John was inspired to write, ". . . thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). Doing what man thinks—that which seems right to him—is an abomination in the sight of God. We draw breath to glorify God. To faithfully and acceptably obey our Father—doing His will, not that which we conceive in heart and mind and then delude ourselves into believing it is right in God's sight. What we must do is exactly that which He reveals, not some perverse interpretation.

## **Man's Domain**

God, in His unique plan—conceived from the foundation of the world—created on earth, a favorable and friendly environment for physical existence (Psalm 115:16). This man, however, was made with a nature totally antithetical to God (Romans 8:7–8).

## **God Gives Laws and a Way**

By nature man is rebellious, opposed to God, hateful, and self-satisfied. Yet, at an appointed time, He gave His perfect and salutary truths to such men—the children of Israel. We shall see why just a little later.

To understand the mind of God in these matters we need to add one other factor. For whose benefit was the earth created and man placed upon it? It could be very easy to assume, since the earth was made for man, that he is pivotal in the scheme of all things. And truly there are many who behave according to such a concept. But, for whose benefit does this physical manifestation exist? According to John all things exist for Christ's purpose

here on earth (Revelation 4:11). Here one of the twenty-four elders says, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Note also the following texts: Colossians 1:19, Isaiah 55:11, Psalm 115:3, Psalm 135:6, Isaiah 42:21, Isaiah 53:10, 2 Peter 1:17, Isaiah 46:10, Ephesians 1:5–9, Philippians 2:13, 2 Thessalonians 1:11.

Though man is the object of the work of God and Christ, he is not central to this awesome purpose subjectively. The whole human experiment is for the honor and glory of God. We were created for His glory. The above factor is imperative in this sense. It affects the orientation of mind and heart. We have no "rights." We are for the fulfillment of His purpose—to do what He requires, and without complaint or reluctance. It is tantamount to a parent giving a child an order to do something. Does the parent need to give a reason? Of course not! Neither does God.

### **Why God Gave Laws to Physical Israel**

Israelites were born of flesh as well as all other classifications of human beings. As we have seen, it is impossible for flesh beings to honor and respect God (Romans 8:7–8). They were created to act in opposition to God (Romans 8:20). Despite the fact of the inability to obey God, He gave His way to them—given for purpose: What purpose? The Bible speaks of two distinct reasons. First, physical Israel wrote lessons for people living in the last days (1 Corinthians 10 and Romans 15:4). Second, some nation, people, or individual had to be responsible for accurately and acceptably transporting the gifts—laws, statutes, and judgments—to the people for whom they were written (Acts 7:38).

God's laws and ways are spiritual. They are forever. Obedience to them is a responsibility of those who received them just as much as it was required of the people of olden times. What was required of the ancients regarding the Sabbath and holydays? For this letter our focus will be limited principally to the Sabbath and holydays.

### **Requirements**

From the beginning God made holy the Sabbath. It was made for the benefit of man. At an appointed time, the holydays were instituted (Exodus 12). They are listed in their annual seasonal sequence in Leviticus, chapter twenty-three.

First, all Sabbaths are times of convocation. What is a convocation? To convoke means to assemble, to come together. Where? When? And for what purpose?

The people were to gather before God. They assembled for the purpose of being taught. Only once did God address them directly. That was at the time He gave them the Ten Commandments. The people were so terrified at the sight, they quickly sought the intervention of Moses. God agreed. From that time forward, God has used a human servant to address the people. Through Moses what specific instructions—regarding Sabbaths and holydays—did God give to Israel?

1. The assembly of Israel was before God (Exodus 29:42, Ezekiel 46:9).
2. The appointed place was called the tabernacle of the congregation (Exodus 29:44, Exodus 33:7, Leviticus 8:4, Leviticus 9:5, Leviticus 15:14, Leviticus 17:8–9).
3. At appointed place only (Nehemiah 1:9).
4. God's appointments are specific and precise (Isaiah 1:14, Hosea 2:11).
5. Only a limited change allowed if appointed place was remote (Deuteronomy 11:24). Note: Attendance still required.

Many people, for varying reasons, assemble at various places on Saturday. This, however, does not constitute obedience to God. Sabbaths and holydays are times of commanded assemblies—times the called of God must come before Him *at the appointed place*. Every appointed place will have a servant of God in charge. As clearly explained in a reprint article from Worldwide Church of God, published in a 1957 *Good News*, written by Herman Hoeh, entitled, "Should You Assemble Without a Minister?," no meetings should occur without the presence of an approved and appointed lead man capable of maintaining order and giving spiritual direction to conversation and fellowship. (For any of you who may desire a copy of this reprint article, please let us know. We will send it to you).

Every area of this country and around the world where acceptable meetings occur on Sabbaths and holydays there is an approved lead man. He is serving an area which is appointed and approved. All this based on the clear instruction of God—that which we were taught and received many years ago.

We need to remember, any assembly of the called children of God must have the approval of the one(s) whom God holds accountable (Hebrews 13:17, Mark 13:34). The only approved places are those where God promises to be present. We are actually assembling before our Father. The place is holy by the presence of God. Do we sometimes



forget this fact? Is it not possible we might guard our conversation and actions considerably more if the presence of God were a greater reality?

The keeping of all holydays demands just as great care as the observances of the Sabbath. They, too, can be kept *only* in the appointed places. Rationalization on the part of human minds notwithstanding. The keeping of the Passover is critical. It is an appointment. To be kept only at the appointed place and in the appointed time. Anything less is a violation of the command of God. By judgment of that man (servant) God called in the last days, the opportunity for a family or individual remote from an appointed place to observe the Passover was afforded by keeping it in individual homes. These were never considered appointed places—places where the congregation of God met. Or, as has happened a few times, the Passover was kept in the second month—approved by God. Yet, all who can *must* come to the appointed place—the approved place for the keeping of the Passover in a given geographic area. Obedience involves congregating before God and fulfilling whatever specifics are ordained of God for a specific day or time. For instance, keeping the Sabbath involves two distinct elements. The faithful must rest—from physical labor—and congregate before God. Doing no work does not fulfill all requirements inspired by God. Sabbaths and holydays are commanded convocations—at the appointed times and places. If we do not come before God, we do not keep that specific occasion.

Indeed, God does understand circumstances. Sometimes we are far removed from an area which has received that special appointment of God. In such cases we can fulfill only that part of the command which is possible. But, we must always remember, congregating before God and feasting on holydays is the real fulfillment of the command. Such a fulfillment is possible only at an appointed place, which may include individual homes where necessary.

### **But—Flesh Has Not Changed**

Requirement of obedience to God has not changed. But, at this point in time, flesh and the nature thereof have not changed either. How, then, can those called of God live the spiritual truth?

### **Our Hope in Christ**

According to the plan of God, Christ came in the flesh, living perfectly the truths of God. He accomplished that requirement perfectly, paying the ultimate price, laying down His physical life. He was then resurrected and ascended back to God in glory. As promised,

once back in heaven with the Father, He sent the power of the Holy Spirit to live in us. By the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, Christ is living in us. Only those desirous of faithful obedience, however, were to be the recipients of that Spirit. The manifestation of those who have received the Spirit is loyal obedience to those ways of life which men of the flesh could not live. Since Christ had only one mind, those who have Christ within them are all doing exactly the same thing. What are they doing? All will be living the exact same way the called, chosen, and commissioned servant of the last days did (Matthew 28:19–20).

Where do you think Christ is on the Sabbaths and holydays? He never pleased Himself. He always did that which pleased the Father. Since He does not change—is the same always—He will be doing within the chosen exactly the same as He did in His own flesh body. He did not go where He pleased. He attended in the appointed place. Until the transition occurred for which Christ came, that appointed place was determined by the Jews, those whom God held accountable for the letter observances of the commands given at the time of Moses. He went to the appointed places and kept them according to the custom of the Jews in all areas where they were technically right.

It must be remembered, God appears in the appointed places. The command of God is that the people must come before Him on those appointed occasions. God is not going to the people.

### **Sons and Daughters**

Due to the nature of flesh, Israelites failed to live up to the spiritual requirements innate in the laws and commands of God. Quickly they sought ways to do what they thought was right. Yet, invariably they deluded themselves into believing that what they were doing was the actual fulfillment of what God commanded. There must have been some rationale employed even though it is not recorded. Today, however, God made it clear that people refuse faithful obedience for specific reasons.

### **Why Perversions?**

The Bible is pretty much a chronicle of human rebellion against God. Even those called in the time of Christ, the apostles, and Paul, had to consistently fight the human tendency toward perversion. The reasons generally mentioned are these: First, the pull of the human mind is strong in its opposition to God. It tends to do things in the way which seems right to it. The concept of Sabbath, holyday, or any other command is accepted. Then begins a subtle rationalization by which the specifics of obedience are altered, changed, or

in some way adjusted to accommodate the carnal expectation of the individual or group. Then the perversion can be followed, believed, and practiced without a crisis of conscience. Second, the practice of the reason mentioned above usually, if not always, follows what the Bible calls a lack of "love for the truth." If individuals never gained a real love for the truth, or lost it due to a failure to recognize the necessity of trials and difficulties, and at the same time considering the powerful pulls of flesh and the influence of an arch enemy, Satan, it is not difficult to understand why such people begin to compromise their faith and conviction. Third, considering man's natural objection to the ways of God, the course of least resistance for many is self-deception. Millions practice the art of self-deception daily—in nearly every area of life. Truth is plain, precise, and demanding. To most people things can be made more acceptable by "rounding corners," fudging just a little here and there, or in some other way compromising. Few people want the hard and straight and narrow way. All history proves the overwhelming tendency to liberalize, compromise. At the same time, most conveniently overlook the record of tragedy encountered due to such liberalization.

It takes diligent and determined effort to remain true to purpose and responsibility. A genuine love of the truth is the result of prayer, fear of God, and a willful submission to God. Paul called it simply, yielding to God. And, indeed, it is a clash of motivations. The flesh will pull us away from God. A love of the truth will keep us headed the right way.

The greatest tragedy is this, once one has mentally accepted a perversion, it becomes very difficult to evaluate properly and make all necessary corrections. Such an endeavor necessitates much fasting and praying, and perhaps a little help to get pointed in the right direction. A correction which is impossible for those who are spiritually blinded and yet arrogantly satisfied with station and orientation.


## Today

God instructed Israel through Moses. Followed by Joshua. The chosen men of God determined the place approved of God. It was a matter of responsibility. In the days of our call, God's servant made those determinations. That area of responsibility has not changed (Matthew 10:40).

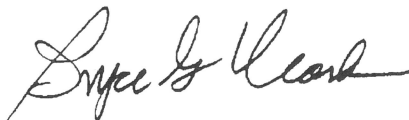
No meeting where there is not a converted, faithful leader is approved. Christ is in the midst of the people who congregate at the appointed places. Anything else is a violation of the spirit and purpose of the command of God. To honor and respect God you must come before Him, come into His presence. For those who live in the far flung areas of the world, you can fulfill the command by listening to the tapes in your own individual homes. To assemble you must have a capable leader present. As indicated above, the article mentioned

will explain. The truly converted will be obedient in all things. How greatly we wish organized bodies could be established everywhere. In patience we must wait for that. God alone rules in the true body of Christ. Until God appoints other areas, please remember that He is present, in the midst, only at appointed places on the Sabbaths and the holydays. It is the duty of the called to come before Him. It is understood that at times we are unable, for varying legitimate reasons, to appropriately congregate. However, do not use these deficiencies to justify rebellion against the ways of God.

Your Servant's in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'R'.

Raymond C. Cole

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bryce G. Clark". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'B'.

Bryce G. Clark

P.S. In the future we will attempt to put all the textual material together into a Bible study format. When ready it will be sent to you as a part of a future monthly mailing.