

Church of God, The Eternal

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The late Raymond C. Cole
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Offices in:
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Announcement Letter December 2002

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to all of you whom God has preserved in these last days, from your brethren and ministry of this small remnant body in Eugene, Oregon. As we continue to serve a widely dispersed membership of God's faithful around the globe, it brings to mind the history of God's work since the early twentieth century in this very same geographical area. Now—and for the last twenty-seven years—God has preserved and proclaimed His revealed truths from west central Oregon, even as He did originally when Mr. Herbert Armstrong was commissioned to begin that marvelous work in the 1930s. While it was never the intent of Mr. Raymond Cole to select Eugene for the purpose of claiming the geographical origin of God's church, it is interesting that God seems to have guided the preservation of Truth through these dark days from the very same location from which that mighty work first sprang.

But the location of our headquarters is not a sole proof that we are His legitimate remnant. Other counterfeits have certainly sprung up in close proximity (as they also have in every age past), wherever God has chosen a base of operations. Holding fast to the faith once delivered is the single sign God gave to allow His sheep to know with confidence where He is dwelling and working. Those who have come to value the significance of divine revelation of Truth as the key to distinguishing between a faithful remnant and the chaotic voices of illegitimate daughter churches, have absolute confidence in their choice of fellowship. It is a privilege to serve those of you who truly love and respect the original teachings we learned through Mr. Armstrong's ministry—those which were preserved from the time of apostasy of the 1970s by the devoted service of Mr. Raymond Cole—and that which we continue to honor and defend today. May God keep you wherever He has placed you around the world, and preserve our unity of mind and heart together as we all prepare to endure the treacherous events that lay ahead before the return of Jesus Christ.

Questions From Our Young People

Continuing the section we began last month to address specific questions submitted to the ministry by our young people, we want to answer the following very good question:

Why can't we marry outside the church?

Does God really want us to avoid marrying anyone who is not part of His Church, and if so, how serious is He about this command? And why would He make it that way? Notice first the very clear command which tells us what God wants us to do. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Corinthians 6:14–15). There is no stronger "yoke," or union, that any human being could make with another than marriage. Therefore, it is clear God does not want those He is working with now—and offering the blessings of His priceless way of life—to enter into any marriages with those in this world. There are a lot of very nice—appealing—potential mates in this world (as human beings view things), but God's command is very clear. Notice that He affirms this command concerning widows who become free to marry again after their husbands die. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; *only in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 7:39) [emphasis mine]. This applies to widowers as well as widows.

Why is this command very important to God? God made marriage to represent the Christ-Church relationship (Ephesians 5:22–33). Even as the Church is to be one with Christ as a wife—even as His very own Body—so wives and husbands are meant to be one together in the same way. If you are one whom God is calling to know His Truth—including the real importance of marriage—what would it say to God if you decided to marry someone who does not understand that Truth and cannot really become "one" in mind within that marriage? If we choose to ignore God's command and marry a "non-believer," it is really like slapping God in the face and saying we do not really care about the real meaning of marriage. You can never fully picture the Christ-Church relationship in your marriage if you marry someone with whom God is not yet working. God certainly binds the marriages of people in the world, but until called, they can never really understand the spiritual meaning of marriage, or hope to fulfill God's will.

If you are a young person who has been blessed with the chance to learn God's Truth, you have the most marvelous opportunity offered to any human being. God's way brings blessings, happiness, joy, and real satisfaction in life. God never commands anything to be mean to us or to hurt us. If He commanded us not to marry those who are not yet called, it is because doing so will bring problems. When you marry someone who truly loves God's

law and seeks to obey, you have the chance to have a truly rewarding marriage, and share every benefit God wants us to have. A marriage between two converted people provides a chance to really experience what the Christ-Church relationship is supposed to be like. When we intentionally marry outside the church—even after we know this is wrong—we not only become guilty of rebellion, we take away our chance of really picturing the God Family in our own marriage. It is impossible without two converted people. Oh yes, there have been a number of "good" marriages over the years with only one converted mate, but that can never compare to what God really wants us to have. Ask anyone who has chosen to marry outside the church when they knew better all along, and they will probably tell you years later that there is a serious price that goes with such a decision. There are always automatic penalties when we choose to disobey God. In most cases, making such a choice makes it harder for us to grow closer to God as we should, because we are always fighting the pull of an unconverted mate to draw us into worldly things. That should not be.

It is very difficult today when there are so few people holding faithful to God's commands. It means there are very few eligible people from which to choose for marriage potential. But that fact will never change the law God gave concerning marriage for His chosen. If it is God's will for you to marry, He will provide someone in the proper time, even if you cannot begin to see how that might work out. Remember, God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son, even when it was humanly impossible because of their ages. It took God twenty-five years to honor His promise to give them Isaac. Because Abraham and Sarah got impatient, they decided to "help" God fulfill His promise by arranging for a son—Ishmael—to be born to Abraham by Hagar, rather than Sarah. It seemed like the right thing at the time, but it was not what God wanted at all. There was only heartache and sorrow later because of their unwise choice. If we learn the lesson from this story, we should see there is never a time when we should compromise God's law because we are impatient. Marriage is one of the most important choices any of us will ever make. Those who keep God uppermost in mind can have all the blessings He desires to give. Those who insist on trying to have everything "now," and marrying outside the church to secure what they think is "true love" or security, will suffer. In the end, it is up to each of us to decide, but God wants you to choose to trust Him and obey Him in faith. If you do, you will never be sorry. If you choose to do it your own way instead, you will likely miss out on the true "love of your life" that God might have in mind for your happiness. Will you be willing to wait and trust Him?

Trip Schedule

February 22

Phoenix, Arizona

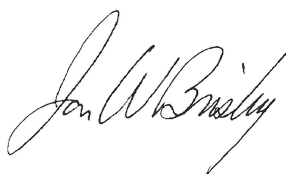
Office

The cutoff date for 2002 tithes will be January 7, 2003. All 2002 tithes must be received at the office by this date. Please keep this in mind for those contributions you wish to have included in your 2002 statement. Remember, they must be dated 2002.

Tape Schedule

Tape #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JB 47-1	11-07-02	12-07-02	Fear of God or Man, Which? #1
WSE-RC 57-1	11-21-02	12-14-02	The Body Is One #1
WSE-JB 47-2	11-21-02	12-21-02	Fear of God or Man, Which? #2
WSE-RC 57-2	12-05-02	12-28-02	The Body Is One #2
WSE-JB 47-3	12-05-02	01-04-03	Fear of God or Man, Which? #3
WSE-RC 57-3	12-19-02	01-11-03	The Body Is One #3

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby