

# Church of God, The Eternal

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## Announcement Letter June 2005

Dear Brethren:

It is always such an honor to greet you each month in this letter and express our love and devotion to the dear children God has preserved in His Truth. We pray that you continue to be blessed in those things that are most important, in spite of the daily trials God allows for His purposes and our character development.

There are so many reasons—physically speaking—that we should not have survived together as a unified group to this point. So many threats are out there in the world, not least of which is the wrath of a spiritual enemy who is very powerful indeed. Yet we have remained a strong and cohesive remnant body for more than three decades. Many individuals have come and gone from our midst over all those years, having sought to coerce us into change. Yet God has protected and preserved us. And in spite of the turmoil that has engulfed so many other groups who came out of our parent organization, we have continued to have a very stable base. That comes as no credit to any human being. It is the manifestation of the miraculous intervention of God to preserve us, even as He promised ancient Israel He would fight their battles for them if they held fast to His revealed laws. We, too, have been the beneficiaries of that divine preservation. May we never take it for granted, assume it is our right, or begin to forget why and how we have come under His benevolent grace.

Here we are again on the threshold of another observance of God's Holy Day of Pentecost. It is impossible to prepare for and keep this sacred High Day without thinking about the history of God's last-day church, and how Pentecost became such a dynamic catalyst in the fulfillment of prophecy. Who would have ever imagined that the powerful and blessed body raised up by God under the leadership of Mr. Herbert Armstrong seventy years ago would have come to its divided and confused state of today? Who would have guessed that it would be the corruption of Pentecost observance in 1974 that would set off that long series of destructive concussions? No human being figured it out in advance. It was God's

will for us to live through it and learn to make the right choices in the heat of battle. And so no matter how long or short your history in God's true church may be, if you have been blessed to see clearly through the smoke of that battle—and despite the engulfing chaos, to understand the reasons why—you are among those most blessed on earth today.

No, not a single man predicted what we would see unfold before our eyes in the last-day Church of God—but God certainly knew it. And one of those many prophecies God has opened to our understanding *after the fact*, is the role that one of those solemn feasts would play in that great apostasy.

And now, *O ye priests*, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of *your solemn feasts*; and *one shall take you away with it* (Malachi 2:1–3) [emphasis mine].

What do we find in this prophetic condemnation of the last-day church? First, it would be the priests—the ministry—who would be condemned as responsible for taking Israel away from God (see also Jeremiah 23). And how would that departure be initiated? By the corruption of *one* particular solemn Feast Day. It was not that they would stop keeping a feast in God's honor. But they would pollute God's commands concerning those Feasts, and substitute their own wisdom in offering sacrifices. Notice the preceding statements of God in Malachi, chapter one:

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? *Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar*; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, *The table of the LORD is contemptible* (Malachi 1:6–7) [emphasis mine].

So they were still making offerings with great enthusiasm in their religious worship. But how was it they began to offer that which God called polluted bread, and in what way did they change to say the table of the Eternal was contemptible? It is all contained in the 1974 change of Pentecost from Monday to Sunday. That very change marked the time when God's church turned and appealed to the wisdom of this world's scholars to change a major doctrine of the Church. As God's commissioned servant, Mr. Armstrong had thundered for almost forty years that God would *never* have begun His New Testament Church on Satan's

pagan day of worship—Sunday. And he used the full force of his might to assert that God had *revealed* these things to him, even as God revealed Truth to the Apostle Paul through divine inspiration. Therefore, what happened in 1974 was a *retraction* of the claim God revealed Monday Pentecost, and a new precedent in establishing church doctrine through the "authority" of human scholarship.

If it is true that *God* is the one who revealed Monday Pentecost to the Church and made it part of the very foundation of that House—Jesus Christ being its Cornerstone—how do we think God would view what the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God did to that solemn Feast in 1974? Would not God view their new offering on Sunday as polluted bread upon His altar? And remember, the effect of the Pentecost change was not singular by any means. It was the first time that body used human scholarship to trump and change a *major* teaching of the church previously held by the authority of divine revelation. That change set a *precedent* that was then used to change *many other doctrines* in succession, including the teaching on marriage and divorce.

When you come to realize that the Worldwide Church of God's ultimate 1994 rejection of the weekly Sabbath Day, the annual Feasts, and the embracing of the Trinity and "born again" doctrines could never have happened if the precedent for change had not been established twenty years earlier, how relevant does the 1974 change of Pentecost become in your mind? Is it any wonder God prophesied in Malachi 2:3 that *one particular* solemn feast would take the entire church into apostasy? What single Holy Day was it that God's ministers corrupted, setting the stage for the total abandonment of the Truth? Even thirty years later it is sobering to meditate on that history.

This year, many of you will have noted that the true day of Pentecost on June 20 is not just one day later than the day our former brethren will be keeping, but *eight days* later. Most of them will be observing June 12. Why is this so? Should not we only be one day different than most of the Sunday Pentecost keepers who still adhere to the Hebrew calendar? The answer to that question highlights one aspect of the 1974 change in doctrine about which many do not know.

When the Worldwide Church of God changed Pentecost in 1974, they did not just change from Monday to Sunday. They also changed the rule used for determining the right place to start that count. In most years this change of rule is not evident. But 2005 is one of those unusual years where this lesser-known change makes a big difference.

From the beginning, Mr. Armstrong taught us that the Pentecost count must begin from the morrow after the *weekly Sabbath* that falls *within* the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. The morrow after this Sabbath is called Wavesheaf Sunday. In any

seven-day period of time there will only be one weekly Sabbath, so that should be very easy to determine.

But in 1974, the *second* amendment to the Pentecost doctrine redefined from which "sabbath" to count. This change stated that the correct benchmark is not the weekly Sabbath, but Wavesheaf Sunday itself. They asserted that it is *Wavesheaf Sunday* that must fall within the seven-day feast, not necessarily the weekly Sabbath that precedes it.

In most years, it does not make a difference, since both the weekly Sabbath and Wavesheaf Sunday will fall within the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But once every five or six years it does make a difference. The year 2005 is one of those years when it makes a great deal of difference. As you will remember, this year Passover day fell on a weekly Sabbath, making the first High Day of Unleavened Bread fall on Sunday. That means the last High Day of the Feast fell on the following weekly Sabbath. Now which "sabbath" will we use to begin the Pentecost count?

According to Mr. Armstrong's original teaching, we count from the weekly Sabbath that falls within the Feast. The only weekly Sabbath that is one of the seven days of Unleavened Bread this year is the very last day. But then that means Wavesheaf Sunday—which follows—falls outside the Feast. That has never been a problem for us. But the new rule adopted by the Worldwide Church of God in 1974 requires Wavesheaf Sunday to fall *within* their feast. The only Sunday falling within the Feast this year is the first High Day. Therefore, because of this change, in years like this they actually treat Passover day as the Sabbath from which to count, even though it is not even part of the Feast. This is why most others are keeping their Pentecost not just one day too early, but a whole week too early.

Interestingly, 1974 was one of those special years when this rule came into play. How ironic that the very first year they changed such a major doctrine, they did not get it wrong by just one day, but by more than a week! It is almost as if God is showing that once His people begin to change divinely-revealed truth according to their own human wisdom, they will never be able to make only minor changes, but will always veer into serious error. Once the Holy Spirit is rejected, there is no anchor to provide any stability.

Over the last thirty years, there have been only five years in which Passover has fallen on a weekly Sabbath: 1974, 1977, 1981, 1994, and 2001. This year, 2005, is another one, and we will next see it again in 2008. More details about this issue can be found in the sermon series on *The Fundamentals of Belief*#21, tape WSE-JB 22-60-21F, on technicalities of the Pentecost change.



## Deaths

We are saddened to announce the death of Mrs. Billie Parker of Somerset, Kentucky. Mrs. Parker was a long-time member of the church and had been afflicted with Alzheimer's disease for several years. We send our sincere condolences to her husband, Paul, and her family and friends.

Mrs. Judy Berlin of St. Helen's, Oregon, expresses her thanks: "I want to thank everyone for all the love, prayers, cards, and gifts showered upon me and my family when my son, Dave, died unexpectedly May 11. Words cannot say how much we love and appreciate all of you. Thank you for crying with us, as well as sharing in the hope and joy of God's promise to us after our physical death. How Great is our God."

## Holy Day

Pentecost

Monday, June 20

## Feast of Tabernacles

In order that we may begin preparation of schedules for the Feast we need to know as soon as possible if any will be attending at a different Feast site than they have in the past. We must soon begin work on the scheduling of emcees and those who give opening and closing prayers.

Part of our preliminary work involves the music program for the two Feast sites. Any member who has attended one of our Holy Day convocations in the past is eligible to participate in the Fall Festival music program. Any who qualify and are interested this year should notify Mr. Richard Meyn at the church office concerning the Newport, Oregon, site and Mr. George King concerning the Townsend, Tennessee, site before the end of June. These men are already working on this year's performance material. They would like to hear from anyone who would like to participate at either Feast site.

## Trip Schedule

June 18

Lausanne, Switzerland

June 20

Grenoble, France

June 25

Penrith, England

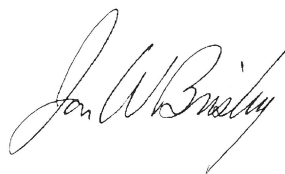
July 9

Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

## Tape Schedule

Tape #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC CL 2-21	05-19-05	06-11-05	Joy #1
WSE-JB 22-77-23E	05-19-05	06-18-05	Fund. of Belief #23E, Prophecy
WSE-RC CL 2-22	06-02-05	06-25-05	Joy #2
WSE-JB 22-78-23F	06-02-05	07-02-05	Fund. of Belief #23F, Prophecy
WSE-RC CL 2-23	06-16-05	07-09-05	Joy #3
WSE-JB 22-79-23G	06-16-05	07-16-05	Fund. of Belief #23G, Prophecy

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby