

Announcement Letter January 2011

Dear Brethren:

Greetings again in this first issue of the new calendar year, at least according to man's worldly calculation of time. To God, it is still the eleventh month of the previous year, and we look forward to His *true* new year, which will usher in the upcoming Passover season. But to this world, it is not only a new year, but technically it is the first year of the new—second—decade of the twenty-first century. None of those man-made demarcations are truly meaningful, except as to remind us of how time continues to march forward. To the beloved of God—holding firm to the faith once delivered in these difficult days—your humble and devoted servants greet you with love and prayers for your spiritual well-being in God's awesome master plan.

We never know what twists and turns may confront us from one year to the next. Often life will seem to go on in monotony for a very long time and we can wish for something to change just to break the repetitive cycle. But then, just as quickly, events can transpire which totally transform our lives. For most of us, deaths, births, marriages, and changing states of health are common family events which drive us to confront necessary adjustments. Economic changes, either for better or for worse, can also be very significant and thrust us into whole new living environments. Some of you have experienced dramatic changes in these areas of life in the past year. Others of you have still enjoyed a certain amount of status quo existence thus far. But nonetheless, changes do come to all of us eventually, and usually they are changes which are thrust upon us unexpectedly.

We all know that the most important changes are the ones God wants us to make spiritually, putting on more of the mind of Jesus Christ and walking in His footsteps. These positive changes of growth can be the most difficult and elusive to achieve. Our natural minds—aided by the influence of a powerful enemy—act as a compelling *inertial force*, seeking desperately to preserve the carnal status quo, and resisting any positive movement of growth. As human beings, we crave change all right, but rarely change of the self to become more like God. Rather, we naturally yearn for changes in our circumstances to feed more of our lusts and covetous appetites.

Sometimes, among the called and converted people of God, even though we know better down deep, we get caught up in temptations and emotional traps which pull us into serious danger. These forces of change are often the tests for salvation. Against our wishes we can be thrust into circumstances which totally upset our predictable worlds. A member of God's true church can go along for many years as a pillar among brethren, only to be derailed by an unexpected trial which spins him around and sends him reeling spiritually. He did not intend for it to happen. But somehow, a perfect storm of events coalesces to trigger a chain

reaction which results in a whole new personal paradigm. But this new reality is a very bad one. It is one which highly displeases God, and without a dramatic *change of course* to recover himself, may result in the very loss of eternal salvation.

Many—not few—of God's people have faced such challenges in times past. Because we are weak by nature, and because Satan, the Devil, knows just how to entice us according to those very personal weaknesses, such calamity can befall any of us. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Getting caught in one of these deceptive traps is not the worst thing in the world. Failing to acknowledge the mistake and to correct it is! All that is required to make it right again is to acknowledge that sin to God and then to return in full repentance to the right path. The true God is ever willing to forgive *any* sin, no matter how grievous. Unlike man, God is truly the epitome of love, mercy, and forgiveness. So why then do so few who take a wrong turn ever find their way back again? Usually because of pride, or else because whatever the temptation was which enticed him into error to begin with is still too strong of an idol for him to renounce. How many have wound up unexpectedly outside the church—in a spiritual wilderness—yet refuse to admit it? Down deep inside *he knows it is true*, but the actions necessary to right that wrong are just too painful to consider. It would require a total about-face, perhaps an apology to others, or perhaps other acts which are just too embarrassing to contemplate. Either that, or the original idol at hand is still exerting too much force to allow him to escape the gravitational pull of that temptation. There is just *too much sacrifice required* to get squared away again. In either case, such an individual is locked in a cycle of spiritual destruction, carrying him ever farther away from God, but all the while defending himself *to himself* and to others in a total state of denial.

Some few have summoned the tenacity to take themselves by the scruff of the neck, spiritually, and to break that cycle of spiritual destruction. Some few have been willing to pull out the stops and make any sacrifice needed to appease their God-inspired conscience which is *screaming at them*, because in the end, they come to value the truth of God more than that idol which originally derailed them. But these positive examples of recovery are all too few and far between. It is precisely why Mr. Herbert Armstrong warned us against allowing *bitterness* or *spiritual neglect* to pull us into committing the unpardonable sin—a sin for which we *refuse to repent* in the end, because we simply consider the price too high to admit that we were wrong.

It is always better to avoid making such serious mistakes to begin with by staying *ever vigilant* in drawing close to God. Spiritual lethargy can be deadly. Do not allow the repetitive nature of your daily lives to lull you into complacency. *This year may not be at all like last year*. This may be the year that you are put to the ultimate test. If you have been complacent, take action now—proactively—to waken from that spiritual slumber. A life-changing trial may be just around the corner for you, and you need to be prepared—with the Spirit of God as your strength—to make the correct choices in the heat of battle.

If you are one who has already been caught unawares and made a serious mistake, what is done is done. That, too, is part of the test God has allowed for your ultimate good. Such a mistake does not have to be the end. You do not have to hold doggedly to that faulty course just because you started down that path. Stop! Acknowledge the wrong turn, and then find your way back to the path God wants you to follow, no matter what you have to do to get there. The only thing you have to sacrifice, really, is pride. And that is the human pride which we are all supposed to be crucifying anyway! It will not be easy, but the result will be worth it. There is nothing so precious as the promise of eternal life in the Family of God which we have been offered. Your conscience under God's influence is telling you what is right. Will you have the courage to pay attention and act upon it?

Changes certainly will come. For some of you, or maybe even many of you, 2011 may be the year that defines your final spiritual judgment. Perhaps not, but it is certainly worth considering. Do not assume that all things will continue as they have (2 Peter 3:4). In the plan and purpose of God, unexpected tests are the tool He uses to prove our character. If you are respectfully aware of this fact, you are in a prime position to face successfully any challenge which may confront you in the months ahead. And if you are one who has been taken unawares in times past and spiritually derailed, it is not too late to correct that. The path back may be painful, but 2011 could be the year which marks the turning point to recover yourself in God's Book of Life. What price are you willing to pay for the honor and glory of His promised salvation? The violent [aggressively determined] take it by force (Matthew 11:12). You can too! He wants you to do it. Let nothing prevent you from achieving your very purpose for being created. Let 2011 be the beginning of *the right kind of changes* which will assure your inclusion in that glorious Kingdom which is coming.

Bible Study Recordings

Over the last several years, we have recorded some of the informal Bible studies conducted in Vancouver, Washington, and in Eugene, Oregon. Although we have never publicized it, a number of you have become aware by word-of-mouth about these ninety-minute recordings and asked to receive copies when available. Over time, it has slowly progressed so that this has become ostensibly a "new service" to our members. At this time, we want to formally announce that these recorded Bible studies are available. There are dozens of recordings available in an archive dating back to 2004, and new ones being recorded all of the time.

Some of you have expressed interest in having the benefits of Bible studies to answer more specific questions, even though you do not have a minister in your area to conduct such meetings. As Mr. Armstrong originally taught us—and Mr. Cole strongly confirmed—brethren should avoid having their own Bible studies with other brethren without an ordained minister to lead them. But making these recorded studies available

to you is a good way to allow you to benefit from that additional instruction, for those of you who may be interested. Also, instead of having only Bible questions from the local Oregon and Washington members included as topics, more and more, we are taking written questions from scattered brethren and including them in these local Bible studies. So, if you have any particular questions you would like addressed by the ministry in this kind of a setting, feel free to send them in, and we will try to include them in a future study. By availing yourself of the future recordings, it is a way to participate in those studies from afar, and to derive the benefit from those gatherings, including having your own specific questions covered.

One note of importance: To further our goal of weaning away from the outdated technology of cassette tapes, we are not going to offer this *new service* of Bible study recordings in any format except *MP3 CD*. While we are still allowing some of you to receive your weekly sermons on cassette tape for a time, the Bible studies are not as important or "required" in the same way as are your Sabbath service recordings. Therefore, if you would like to be added to the new mailing list for *optional Bible studies*, please understand if we insist upon offering this new service more economically in CD format only. Some few of you have already received past Bible study recordings *unofficially* from us on cassette tape. Given that we are now expanding this program as an official new service to all members, we hope it will not be too traumatic for you to accept the fact cassettes will no longer be offered in the future for these studies. (To give you time to adjust to this change, for those already receiving cassettes, we will continue this through the month of February only, and then CDs will be the only offering thereafter. We will not add anyone new to the Bible study cassette list who has not already been receiving them in the past. Please contact us for advice on ways to convert painlessly to MP3 CDs. It really is possible. We thank you for your flexibility.)

Office

From time to time the office receives money orders that do not have the sender's name. Please be sure your money order provides your name clearly so that the amount can be attributed to you. Without a name, the contribution will be entered as anonymous and will not show up on your contribution printout at the end of the year.

New Moon

The new moon, Shebat (eleventh month), will begin on the evening of January 5. The new moon day is January 6.

Trip Schedule

Mr. Brisby:

January 15 Suna-Migori, Kenya

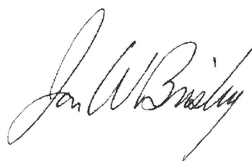
Mr. Richard Litz:

January 15 Port St. Lucie, Florida

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 12-8	12-02-10	12-25-10	Concepts By Which God's Word Is Denied #8
WSE-JB 22-119-25E-5	12-02-10	01-01-11	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: God's Marriage in a Song #5
WSE-RC 12-9	12-23-10	01-08-11	Concepts By Which God's Word Is Denied #9
WSE-RC 12-10	12-23-10	01-15-11	Concepts By Which God's Word Is Denied #10
WSE-RC 12-11	12-23-10	01-22-11	Concepts By Which God's Word Is Denied #11
WSE-JB 22-120-25E-6	01-13-11	01-29-11	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: God's Marriage in a Song #6
CL 1-14	01-13-11	02-05-11	What Does God Require of Us? Attitude, Belief, Denial, Offense
WSE-JB 22-121-25E-7	01-13-11	02-12-11	Fund. of Belief #25: Marriage and Divorce: God's Marriage in a Song #7

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby