

Announcement Letter February 2013

Dear Brethren:

Special greetings to the beloved children of God around the world who have found value in association with this little remnant body. As always, you are much loved and appreciated for your conviction in that way of life which was delivered to us all by Jesus Christ in this age through Mr. Herbert Armstrong, and then preserved by Mr. Raymond Cole. We think of you often and pray for your strength to prevail against all adversity.

Many of you are acutely aware of the spiritual battles being waged, and if you recognize how Satan is attempting to discourage you and to separate you from the faith, then you are most blessed. That is because recognition of your enemy is the first requirement to winning any battle. Those who are blind to the forces affecting them are those being battered about, destabilized, and potentially undone. Those instead who are honest to admit where and how those forces are working to tempt and to cause offense are those who are in the best position to counter them and to prevail. We pray that you will be able to defeat that spirit of division and discouragement and to hold fast in absolute continuity to the very end. Nothing can separate you if you have the will to hold firm.

Spiritual Principle: Flexibility vs. Compromise

This letter is being written to you from Migori, Kenya, where many of the scattered brethren of southwestern Kenya are gathering for a special Sabbath assembly during this annual ministerial visit. It has now been a tradition since 2004 for this ministry to visit and to serve those here who likewise have shown a love for the faith once delivered.

There is nothing like travel to make us aware of our own personal likes and dislikes. In many ways we are each creatures of habit. We like things to be done in a particular way, and we easily become dissatisfied if those familiar amenities are missing. Many of you may not travel very much, but just by virtue of obeying God's command to attend the Feast of Tabernacles each year, you have experienced being away from home for more than a week and dealing with a different living environment than you are used to. How easy is that for you to do? For many of you, you are struck by the "differentness" of things and you miss your creature comforts of home. Away from home, the sights around us are different—foreign. Foods are different than we are used to and we miss not having exactly what we prefer to eat. The smells are different too. The sounds are either too noisy or too quiet, depending upon what we are accustomed to. Some can sleep only with absolute quiet, while others need noise of some kind. The bed and the pillow are either too soft or too hard. Yes, we hardly realize

how truly particular we are about many things until we are away from home. And without all of those familiar little things, we easily become irritable and disgruntled.

Compared to traveling a short distance away from home in your own country, try traveling for an extended period to a foreign land. Now you are confronted with environmental differences on a grand scale. Language, custom, and level of industrial development can be like night vs. day. The western Europeans and the Americans can usually find more things abroad that are familiar to them, since we have exported much of our way of life around the globe. But it is still never exactly as we are used to or prefer it to be. And outside of those particular areas where western culture has been copied, the differences in lifestyle and environment can be startling. In that case, if you are so tied to your personal preferences from home that you cannot survive without them, you will be most miserable indeed.

And don't think that this is only true for westerners traveling to lesser developed countries. It works the same way in reverse. When one from a third-world nation is introduced to western culture, even though it can seem grand at first, it quickly can become dissatisfying because it is just "not home." A classic example from recent experience is a modern western hotel in a city within an underdeveloped southeast Asian nation. This is where cultures clash. The hotel rooms have mainly western amenities, including bathrooms with tubs, showers, hot water, and flushing toilets. Being in that bathroom might make a westerner think he was in any average American motel. Except that this bathroom has a sign on the mirror saying, "Do not take a bath outside the tub. This might flood the rooms below." How strange, we might think. Who would ever dream of doing that? Well, actually, a great majority of people in other nations live without tubs, showers, or flushing toilets. A bath is taken by filling a bucket, squatting in the bathing area, and ladling "cold" water over your head and body. If that is what you are used to, a western bathroom can seem very intimidating. How do all of these levers, handles, and intriguing gadgets work? Easier just to bathe the way I am used to doing it. You see, technology which is foreign is not always comforting, just because it is "advanced." As creatures of habit, familiarity is most comforting of all. That is true for all of us, regardless of background and culture.

Yet God says that our natural natures are like the shifting sands, ever changing and never able to be firmly planted. Instability and proclivity toward change is ingrained in all human beings. But that certainly is not how many of us see ourselves (or each other). We seem extremely protective of our personal habits and routines. As we see it, we do not like things to change at all. How then do we resolve this seeming contradiction with what God says about us?

When it comes to our personal likes and dislikes, we very much resist change. But when it comes to God's Truth, the opposite is true. Because our natural natures oppose the things of God inherently, when we first embrace His way of life, it is very hard to truly

practice it correctly. It takes effort, like rolling a huge boulder uphill. And even if we do so, it is harder yet to do it *consistently*, without eventually giving in to our natural whims. The force of gravity continues to exert great pressure against us at all times, spiritually, and so it is very easy to slack off and allow that pervasive force to drive us backward.

So, consistent obedience to God's laws is very difficult for man, and we are ever inclined toward *backsliding change*. God's way was not our idea, so it is foreign to us. Being willing to replace our own ideas and submitting to God is difficult indeed. When we refuse to be teachable, this produces compromise of the Truth. By comparison, when it comes to our personal preferences and habits, we somehow manifest great tenacity to "hold on" and to keep things a particular way. And when we cannot have things exactly as we like them and are used to having them, we become very unhappy and dissatisfied.

If only we could become attached to the things of God as much as we are attached to our own little daily habits! That is what it takes to hold firm to the faith; a rigid determination to be absolutely consistent, allowing no hint of change. It is a refusal to compromise.

But ironically, at the very same time we all need to learn to be much more *flexible*. Not flexible with God's doctrines, but flexible with our own created or acquired preferences. What's so wrong with being "set in your ways"? Very likely, this was a major trait of the Israelites who were thrust by God out of Egypt. Why were they so ready to grumble and complain? Why did they keep comparing their "plight" in the wilderness to the "wonderful luxuries" they had given up "back home" in Egypt? How good were their lives, really, as slaves? They were terrible. But it was all *familiar*! And even *oppressive familiarity* is better (for many) than some new foreign trial away from home.

How ironic that the whole church has been conditioned to crave being in the prophesied place of safety, where they are likely to face primitive conditions and a total change of culture. Yet we grumble and complain about the most stupid things today. If you cannot be flexible today—training yourself to adapt to physical circumstances which may be strange or less than ideal—what makes you think you are going to adjust to God's special requirements for some in the last days? If you are not making flexibility a habit now, you are very likely one day to become like one of those murmuring Israelites of old. As always, practicing the habit of being thankful for the things we do still have is a wonderful way to accept new experiences and hardships with good grace.

Yes, we are required on one hand to be absolutely rigid when it comes to doctrine, permitting no compromise in our lives no matter whom it offends. But on the other hand, if we do not learn to be very flexible when it comes to all of our own personal (carnal) preferences of life, we are just asking to become offended when things do not feel especially comfortable.

Flexibility without compromise is then a key attribute for all of God's people.

Holy Days

Lead men should be making appropriate preparations for these days:

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|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Passover (evening) | Sunday, March 24 |
| Night to Be Much Observed | Monday, March 25 |
| 1st Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread | Tuesday, March 26 |
| 2nd Holy Day—Days of Unleavened Bread | Monday, April 1 |

New Moon

The new moon, Adar (twelfth month), will begin on the evening of Sunday, February 10. The new moon day is Monday, February 11.

Trip Schedule

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|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| March 2..... | JWB | Stephenville, Texas |
| March 23, 24, 25, 26..... | JWB | Cape Town, South Africa |
| March 30, April 1..... | JWB | Carlisle/Appleyby, England |

Recorded Sermon Schedule

| Sermon # | Mailed | Played | Title |
|---------------|----------|----------|--|
| CL-2 93 | 01-24-13 | 02-09-13 | Faith #2 |
| WSE-JB 141 | 01-24-13 | 02-16-13 | Pre-Passover Exam: The Seed and Good Ground |
| CL-2 94 | 01-24-13 | 02-23-13 | Faith #3 |
| WSE-JB 138-10 | 02-14-13 | 03-02-13 | The Family Handbook #10 |
| CL-2 95 | 02-14-13 | 03-09-13 | Faith #4 |
| CL-2 96 | 02-14-13 | 03-16-13 | Faith #5 |
| HD Sermons | 02-14-13 | — | Passover/NTBO/UB |
| WSE-JB 138-11 | 03-07-13 | 03-23-13 | The Family Handbook #11 |

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby