

Announcement Letter April 2020

Dear Brethren:

What a difference one month makes. Whereas a month ago there were dark clouds on the geopolitical horizon, this month they have exploded into draconian government actions which are now impacting God's people around the world in very serious ways. There is much more to say about that within this letter, but first, let us not forget to greet you as the beloved children of God, and to express once again our heartfelt love and personal regard for you all. We are here to serve you, and no matter what challenges we may face, God helping us, we will continue to do this work to feed the flock of God and do all within our power to encourage and to guide you in God's revealed Way of Life. The time is coming when we will be required to manifest fearlessness in order to accomplish this mandate. May God grant us the faith and confidence to meet that challenge.

What is the one thing that can cause human beings to surrender "wholesale" their personal freedoms to autocratic government controls? Fear. We have seen it before, but this current threat of the coronavirus pandemic is the latest proof that people who are *driven by fear* will easily forfeit their personal liberties in order to feel "safe." For all of the calls for democracy in the world, most of our nations' populations have been indoctrinated with the belief that in times of crisis, it is "the government" that must save us. We demand it, and government leaders are ever willing to take the reins and mandate their "solutions." When that expectation is widespread among the people, it is only a matter of time before either real or contrived "threats" will manifest to permit the autocrats to "take control." And so they have. Never forget that this is the very same thinking at the root of Nimrod's grasp for power soon after the Flood. Nimrod was the founder of Babylon (Babel), which became the prototype of man's goal—under Satan's influence—to gather all peoples into cities so that they could be "controlled" behind great walls for the sake of "safety" (Genesis 10:8–10; 11:1–9). He was a mighty hunter, and therefore likely the one to whom people looked to "save them" from the threat of wild beasts. Gathering peoples into cities was the "best way" to protect everyone from outside threats. It is likewise the very best way to control any population. It is this very same *communistic philosophy* that is being touted today as the salvation for human societies. In God's coming Kingdom upon this earth, people will not join house to house and field to field (Isaiah 5:8). Every family will have its own autonomous estate, providing them the ability to live independently and free from the "control" of government handlers. Yes, God Laws will be the law of the land, and that divine Law provides for family autonomy and protection of personal liberties under God. Each individual is accountable before God. The people will never be permitted to cede their

personal and family authority to human governments. Jesus Christ's rulership will enforce peace—with a rod of iron—but the role of government will be to ensure protection against conspiracies to undermine those personal freedoms. But until that glorious time to come, be prepared for ever more invasive restrictions upon our persons and properties, in the name of safeguarding the "public good."

Spiritual Principle: God's Law vs. Man's Law

With that in mind, how should we think about and respond to laws and edicts currently being ordered by national, state, and provincial authorities? Must we comply? The simple answer is, as long as man's laws do not require us to violate one of God's Laws, we are obligated by God to respect those edicts and to comply. It has nothing to do with what is "fair" or "equitable." God told Israel that the governments of men would always be abusive (1 Samuel 8:9). However, God's faithful will always show respect to those governments as having been allowed by God and backed up by God:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation (Romans 13:1–2).

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men (Titus 3:1–2).

By submitting to the governments of men, we are not condoning every edict as being just or fair, but merely acknowledging that God is the One who sets up and takes down every ruler, no matter how abominable any of them might be.

Does this mean then that we must obey every edict of man, no matter what? Hardly! There is *no man* who has the authority to tell men to disobey God's Laws. When Peter and the other apostles were arrested and commanded not to preach Jesus Christ, God miraculously released them from prison, and they *immediately went right back* to the temple grounds and started preaching Christ again (Acts 5:12–25). They defied a very specific edict of the bona fide government of men that was over them. And when they were admonished and threatened again, how did Peter reply?

Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked

them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:26–29).

Likewise, whenever a conflict arises between manmade law and God's Law, the faithful people of God will *step out* and put God first, even as did the apostles. In that case, we too should *obey God rather than men*.

How does this principle apply in light of the many government restrictions upon our movements, in reaction to the spread of this new strain of coronavirus around the world? Those of you who receive our sermons by mail, or retrieve them online from our church website, will soon have access to a special message recorded in Eugene, Oregon, on the Sabbath of March 28, 2020. That message addresses the specific principles involved, especially as they relate to the keeping of weekly Sabbaths and Holy Days. In short, there is no edict of man that supercedes God's command to appear before Him in a place where He chooses to place His name. While other Sabbath-keeping groups (many which came out of our same parent organization) have suspended their church services, and have even told their members to stay home for the Passover service, Church of God, The Eternal will do no such thing! There is no such thing as fulfilling God's command to convoke by using a virtual Sabbath service over the internet. How absurd! And any group who is doing this is proving that they care more about what men think than what God commands.

In many of our home jurisdictions, we are being told to stay at home and are forbidden from any gathering, public or private. In essence, they are telling us that we may not appear before God to honor Him. To that we say, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

But what about those ministers out there who are claiming justification for their faithless actions by citing God's support for the principle of quarantine? God does indeed advocate cleanliness, hygiene, and in the face of a contagious disease, the use of quarantine or isolation. But God defines the *cause for quarantine* very differently than does our human governments. Nowhere in the Bible will you find the order to isolate "healthy people" just because they *might have* come into contact with someone who *might have* had a contagious virus. The example of God's quarantine in action is evident in the case of leprosy. Read the instruction to Israel in Leviticus 13, and you will find that the only ones isolated were those who had *clear signs in the flesh* of a contagious disease. Only when the priests were able to see outward signs that one might have leprosy were they quarantined, and then if proven to be leprous, isolated. This whole notion of quarantining a *healthy population* for the sake of mitigating the spread of a virus is not biblical at all. And any minister out there claiming that they are following God's directive for quarantine by suspending all Sabbath and Holy Day services is either lying, or else genuinely deceived.

God says that the *one sign* that earmarks His people apart from all others is their observance of His Sabbaths (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Is it possible that this refers to the limited number of Church of God members who will be willing to disobey man's orders in order to appear before God to worship Him? Those who are too fearful of a fine or bodily incarceration will make excuses to stay home and to "save themselves." Only those who are willing to put God first no matter what may be the ones who are open to meeting in an "illegal gathering" in order to please God.

Yes, if you are sick, you should stay home. But if you have no symptoms of illness, God demands that you appear before Him—that is, if you want to be counted as one who is truly keeping His Sabbaths and Holy Days.

What about *medical testing* for the presence of the coronavirus? Most of the other splinter groups that have embraced the false teaching about divine healing—which became prominent in the Worldwide Church of God in the 1970s—teach their members that it is OK to have vaccinations and to take pharmaceuticals to treat this virus (and any others that may come along). But the faith once delivered by Jesus Christ to His true Church is that we *do not* take any of these medications or vaccines. Once these new treatments are made available, what is the likelihood that entire populations will be mandated to accept them, or else be isolated or even prosecuted for criminal acts? Very likely! And what will these other ministers tell their members to do? Of course they will go along with the treatments, even as they are going along with all of these "therapies" that are part of man's medical system.

By contrast, we will continue to teach God's people that all such therapies are part of Satan's *counterfeit medical system*, established *expressly* by the enemy to offer man an alternative to God's promise of healing. Will you be one who feels the need to be "tested," to see if you *might* have the virus? Why would you do that unless you are also planning to *take their pharmaceutical treatments* if you test positive? If you resist taking any of their treatments—counting them as abominations in the eyes of God—then there is also no reason to be tested in the first place. Oh, but what if you are one of the *symptomless carriers*? Once again, there is nothing in the Bible that talks about symptomless carriers.

Wash your hands, avoid coughing on other people, and if you feel symptoms of illness, by all means stay home! But let us not fall into the trap of this ridiculous *herd mentality* that is tempting God's people to suspend obeying His command to appear to worship Him in holy convocation.

New Moon

The new moon, Iyar (second month), begins Friday evening, April 24. The new moon day is Sabbath, April 25.

Second Passover

Anyone needing to partake of the second month Passover *after ministerial approval*, please be advised that it will be Thursday, May 8, to be observed the previous Wednesday evening, May 7, after sunset. If instructions are needed, please contact the church office as soon as possible.

Birth

Paul and Laura Ventura, of Rensselaerville, New York, welcomed their third child, Owen James Ventura, on March 19, 2020. He was born at 3:42 A.M. and weighed 7 lb 10 oz. He is happy, healthy and adored by his older brother and sister, Eddie and Lillian. All thanks and praise be to God.

Wedding

John Louis Nel and Samara Lilane Richardson are happy to share the news of their marriage in a small ceremony in southern Tasmania, Australia, on March 25, 2020. Despite the chaos and uncertainty happening worldwide, they were blessed to be able to exchange marriage vows just before restrictions on such assemblies were implemented by the Australian government. We congratulate the new married couple, as well as their proud parents, Mrs. Alice Richardson of Kellevie, Tasmania, and Louis and Janet Nel of George, South Africa.

Blessings of the Brethren

Concerning Christine Sherwood's shoulder injury, the family wanted to provide an update and to thank all of the many brethren who have expressed an outpouring of kindness and support to us in various ways. We have been very moved by it all. Thank you, brethren!

At the time of her injury on Feb. 6, Christine was told by multiple doctors that unless she submitted to shoulder-replacement surgery she would suffer from a frozen shoulder for the rest of her life and would only be able to move her arm from the elbow down. However, Christine refused, and decided to put her trust in God, our Healer.

On March 27, after seven weeks, she went to have the shoulder reevaluated. New x-rays were taken and compared to the previous ones. In amazement, the doctor said that somehow everything moved back into the proper place during the mending process, that she

is very "lucky" no surgery is required, and that she can expect a full recovery. We consider that a miracle from a faithful God who is full of mercy and lovingkindness.

Trip Schedule

Mr. Jon Brisby

April 15, 18 Stephenville, Texas
 May 2 Lancashire, United Kingdom
 May 30, June 1 Lausanne, Switzerland

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 90-32	03-12-20	04-04-20	An Analysis of Jude #32
WSE-JWB 225-21	03-12-20	04-11-20	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #21
WSE-JWB 225-22	04-02-20	04-18-20	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #22
WSE-RC 92-1	04-02-20	04-25-20	What Is Essential for Eternal Life? #1
WSE-RC 92-2	04-02-20	05-02-20	What Is Essential for Eternal Life? #2
WSE-JWB 238	04-02-20	05-09-20	We Ought to Obey God Rather Than Men
WSE-RC 92-3	04-23-20	05-16-20	What Is Essential for Eternal Life? #3

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby