

Announcement Letter June 2020

Dear Brethren:

By the time this letter is released, Pentecost will be behind us, and we hope and pray that you all will have had a very meaningful Holy Day experience by honoring God in Spirit and in Truth, wherever you reside around the world. In spite of special challenges that have blunted the ability of some of you to convoke as you normally have in times past, the spiritual meaning of God's Holy Days still provides enormous comfort and inspiration. We stand together to defend that revealed Way of Life, confirming the means that God is using to bring salvation to the whole world. How blessed are we to understand who is that God and what it is that He has ordained for a glorious future. It is an ongoing privilege to share in that *firstfruits aspect* of His Plan with each one of you. We are blessed indeed because of that special calling.

Spiritual Principle: Tithing on Government Benefits

We have received many questions from church members in the USA regarding the special government stimulus payments that most American citizens have received in the wake of economic turmoil resulting from the virus pandemic. Is this special payment considered by God to be "increase" which is subject to tithe, or not?

This ministry strongly recommends treating those payments as *increase*, and paying tithes (including first, second, and also third tithe for any who are in their third-tithe year). Why? Is it because the leadership of this remnant group never wastes an opportunity to vacuum up more of your money? Some may say so, but that would not be true. We, as ministers (who are also members of the Body of Christ, as are you), will be paying full tithes on those amounts that we ourselves receive from the government, so we are leading by example. You must each make your own choice, based upon your conscience before God. No one in the church office will be auditing your tithing history to pass judgment upon you for what you do, or do not do. But we will nonetheless explain the tithing principle to you so that you will have *all knowledge* needed to make an informed decision. Those who tithe correctly are promised special favor from God, and those who rob from Him are promised a curse (Malachi 3:8–12). Those cursings and blessings are real (that is, if you truly believe in the reality of that invisible God and His Law), so it should be more than just a philosophical debate for you. You might be able to "win" a debate with other human beings,

but nevertheless, if you chose incorrectly according to God's viewpoint, you would still receive the curse pronounced by your Sovereign Lord. So please weigh it carefully.

The Worldwide Church of God made changes in their teaching about tithing in the early 1970s, even as they corrupted many doctrines during that same era. Changes in the definition of "increase" even preceded the 1970s, as evidenced by a few rulings that began to crop up in certain 1960s literature. Just be aware that a change did indeed take place.

Originally, Mr. Herbert Armstrong taught that benefit payments from governments that were intended to replace *lost wages*, should be treated like the wages that normally would have been earned, had they not subsequently been "lost." This would include Worker's Compensation, unemployment benefits, and any other benefits that *act just like wage income* to you and your family. If you would normally tithe upon income from working, but then you get hurt (or become unemployed) and receive compensation to keep part of that income rolling in while you are laid up, why would the wage replacement benefit be different in God's eyes than the wage? Are not both of them "new money" coming to you that you use to pay for your living expenses?

The same would be true for old-age pensions (Social Security), since the very purpose of those benefits is to replace the *newly lost income* which occurs after someone becomes too old to work. Income keeps coming in, just as if you were working for it. In many cases, you (or someone in your family) *did work for it*, because you had to qualify for those benefits by years of work! In that case, pensions are simply *delayed compensation*, but compensation for past work nevertheless.

Our parent church later began to make a distinction between true income from one's *personal effort*, as opposed to "gifts" from the government. Mr. Armstrong had always taught that gifts were not titheable (although freewill offerings from gifts received were encouraged as a way to show thanks to God). They began to say that since gifts are not expected to be tithed, government payments are gifts, and therefore likewise not subject to tithe. Anyone who truly understands the financial basis and structure of these social programs knows that this rationale is flawed. It simply does not hold water.

Regardless of all of the technicalities that can be argued, is not the simple approach the wise one? And is not an attempt to *parse words* to treat such wage replacement benefits as "different," really just a strained legalistic exercise to "get out of" an obligation to God? Again, if you choose to do that, fine, but be honest in your mind about who you consider you are trying to convince. Please be sure that God is the One that you are pleasing in the end.

With that brief background in mind, what about the new stimulus payments recently issued by the US government? Some will argue that since the payments came from the IRS (Internal Revenue Service), this was just a reimbursement of *income taxes previously paid*. If I have been tithing all along upon my gross income (which I should have been doing), then any taxes I paid to the government were paid with "after-tithe" dollars. And if the government then refunds part of that tax which I previously paid to them, they are simply *giving me back* money that was already tithed! That is a sound argument.

But that is not really what appears to be happening with these stimulus payments. How do we know? Because these payments are not just going to citizens who paid income tax previously. There is no correlation of the payment to the amount of tax paid by anyone before. Instead, every documented citizen is getting *the very same amount*, regardless of who paid what, if anything. Many people who *never paid a dime* in taxes are getting *the very same amount* as those who did pay. So counting this as a refund of taxes paid does not pass muster. The fact that the US taxing agency (the IRS) is the body issuing these benefits seems to be merely administrative, as a way to verify which legal citizens qualify for the payments.

But then, since these payments are going to *everyone*, regardless of work history, would they not truly qualify as a "gift" from the government, unlike old-age pensions? One could treat them that way. But again, the reason the government authorized these payments in the first place is for *economic stimulus*, to try to *replace the lost income* of many who have been unable to work because of this economic-shutdown crisis. No, they did not try to verify who actually lost their jobs and give the stimulus only to those who were negatively impacted. That would have been an administrative nightmare. To make it easy and *very quick to deploy*, they simply considered that *everyone* would be impacted, and they sent checks to all citizens. But make no mistake about it, it is still *an income replacement scheme*, not a true "gift."

With this information, please make your own decision judiciously. As for us—your loyal servants—we will gladly pay God His tithe on these income amounts that we receive, and without grudging, because as Mr. Raymond Cole always used to say, "You can never out-give God."

Feast of Tabernacles Planning

In spite of turmoil affecting travel both now and in the foreseeable future—because of government restrictions due to the coronavirus response—it is still too early to anticipate any changes needed to our plans for the Feast of Tabernacles. Hopefully, restrictions will be lifted before October, and we can follow our regular plans for keeping the Feast. In the

USA, we have no information at this time to indicate that our meetings in Yachats, Oregon, or in Townsend, Tennessee, will be negatively impacted. It is simply too early to know that, one way or another. By the first part of August, we should know if any adjustments will need to be made to our plans. Until then, we suggest that you carry forward as much as you can, assuming that all will be resolved by then. If God leads us in a different direction through circumstances in the next couple of months, we will of course advise you right away of that revised plan. It is a time for all of us to beseech God for His special intervention and for His wisdom. We are confident that He will provide.

Death

It saddens us to announce the death of Dr. Martin Rosen, of Crumpsall, Manchester, United Kingdom, who died Sunday, May 17, after a long struggle with several serious health issues. He was 57 years of age. Martin was relatively new to the church, but he will be remembered and missed by those who were able to meet him.

New Moon

The new moon, Tammuz (fourth month), begins Monday evening, June 22. The new moon day is Tuesday, June 23.

Camp Tejas

It is with heavy hearts that we must announce the cancellation of camp this year. While not directly related to COVID-19, that certainly played a large role indirectly. We were moving full-steam ahead on changing venue to a state with more relaxed regulations. We knew it would look different this year due to limitations, but were committed to making it happen. We were determined to work around the COVID-19 challenges. The roadblock that stopped us in our tracks was the impact upon camp families. For a variety of reasons it became difficult for families to send their campers this year. They had to make hard choices about this or that. While camp is a great resource for our youth and we want them to get every advantage from it, the family unit must come first. In the end, we only had four or five campers who could commit for this year. Unfortunately, that is not enough to make camp happen. It is a lot of expense and sacrifice for the church and the many helpers. With so few campers, it also would not have been the camp experience we set out to deliver.

At this time we are looking forward and working on Camp Tejas 2021. Assuming things stabilize and go back to some sort of normalcy, we are planning for an exciting new

adventure next year—one that will be unlike past camps. It will fit the definition of a true adventure. We think our campers will really like it.

We do want to take a moment to thank all of those who have helped with Camp Tejas. The sacrifices they have made are invaluable. Many different people have been involved over the years, some directly, others indirectly. Some are still with us and some not. Without them, camp could not have been the success it has been. Thank you!

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-RC 92-4	05-14-20	05-30-20	What Is Essential for Eternal Life? #4
WSE-JWB 225-24	05-14-20	06-06-20	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #24
WSE-RC 92-5	05-14-20	06-13-20	What Is Essential for Eternal Life? #5
WSE-JWB 225-25	06-04-20	06-20-20	Just What Do You Mean—Faith Once Delivered? #25
WSE-JWB 240	06-04-20	06-27-20	Zeal Without Wisdom
WSE-RC 92-6	06-04-20	07-04-20	What Is Essential for Eternal Life? #6
WSE-RC 92-7	06-25-20	07-11-20	What Is Essential for Eternal Life? #7

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby