

Announcement Letter April 2021

Dear Brethren:

We greet you during this Passover season, hoping and praying that each one of you did indeed enjoy a rewarding Passover service and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Even though we are required to repeat those observances every year—and a number of you have been doing so for many decades—when God ordains annual convocations, those holy appointments should always be a source of real comfort and inspiration. They should never get old. And as we see things deteriorating in this world and heading more and more toward the climax of events prophesied before the return of Jesus Christ, God's Holy Days should provide all the more an anchor to remind us of what is truly important, and who we are in that great Master Plan. No matter how perilous the times are, those who are making God and His revealed Truth a priority in their lives have every reason to go forward with confidence and peace of mind.

Spiritual Principal: Beware the Straw Man

We know that Jesus Christ foretold of a time when those who will obey God will be persecuted and subjected to all manner of evil at the hands of those who have no love for the Truth.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18–21).

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:11–12).

Sadly, Jesus also prophesied that some of the strongest persecutions will come at the hands of those who have known us, loved us, and were once part of us.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household (Matthew 10:34–36).

How could this ever occur? It has always seemed unimaginable that our closest family members and confidants might turn hatefully against us. What could cause such a change in personal convictions and behaviors?

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:9–12).

In part, we see that because of outside pressures in the world—as God's revealed Truth becomes more and more hated, being treated as racist, homophobic, misogynistic, and against "basic human rights"—those who insist upon practicing that Way of Life will surely come under attack. And what Christ is saying is that the pressure of those attacks will make some of God's people become "offended," so that they turn from their own faithfulness and join the attackers. Because they will give in to these worldly pressures, one way to try to assuage their personal feelings of guilt concerning their faithlessness is to claim that they were duped into being part of a "dangerous cult." Now, having "seen the light," they will attack those who are still trying to live that revealed Faith, seeking to convince themselves that they were not truly faithless, but are now finally "enlightened." Do you see how those dynamics might actually come to pass? Christ said it will surely happen!

What is one of the classic schemes used to try to denigrate an opponent? It is called the *straw man argument*. Politicians love to use this device to besmirch an adversary and to "win" an argument. The straw man argument is considered a logical fallacy—or, *fallacy of relevance*—meaning that it is a *deceptive device* which involves a "bait and switch." Simply put, it begins by attributing a *false notion*—the straw man—to your adversary and then attacking that straw man as being wrong, or even evil. When you show your ability to *defeat the straw man*, since you successfully accused your opponent of supporting that straw man, winning that trumped-up argument becomes equal to beating your opponent. The problem is, the position that you have successfully defeated was never truly something that your opponent believed! You claim that he believes it, and rather than proving that is actually

true, you simply focus on ranting against the false notion. It is called a straw man because the whole ruse is like setting up a training dummy, a scarecrow, or an effigy, and then beating up on it. The straw man is a weak opponent that puts up no real fight, and when you "beat it," you then claim that you have beaten your true opponent. It is very clever, and it is often effective when people are deceived by the initial ruse.

What does that have to do with God's Church and prophesied attacks in the last days? One of the accusations made against God's revealed Truth is that our doctrines are hateful toward women, children, and people whose lifestyles do not agree with us. Just last week, a well-known cable news anchorman said on air that the traditional "Christian" definition of marriage is "not what God is about." In summary, what he was implying is that anyone who believes that marriage was ordained by God to be between one man and one woman, is guilty of *espousing hate* toward other people, especially to homosexuals and to women who have been "abused" by a narrow-sighted and antiquated patriarchal system.

And how do such individuals try to "win" the argument? They highlight examples of men who claim to be Christian, but who then become guilty of spousal abuse, gay bashing, or some other heinous crime, and then attribute that crime to their religion. Even though the church that the man attends *does not teach at all* the tolerance for abuse or disrespect *in any way* for other people, this criminal becomes *the straw man* used to prove that the church he attends is evil. Proving that this particular man is despicable is used to attack a whole church as holding evil doctrines.

Have there been members of God's true Church in past decades who have set a bad example in the world and thereby brought ridicule upon us all? Yes, indeed! Have there been men who have mistreated their wives and children, all the while claiming to be following church teaching about family government? Absolutely! Were they truly following what the Church taught about the role of a godly husband and father? Not at all! But it sure did not prevent outsiders from attributing that man's personal sins to the church doctrine.

How many today, even perhaps among some of you, look down upon our teaching concerning child rearing, which derived from the Radio Church of God in the 1950s? Why is that often so? In large part it is because the teachings were given a bad name by heads-of-household who brutalized their children while claiming that they were following church teaching. But it was not so! Those men were not following God's revealed Law, and in fact did exactly what the church doctrine said not to do. Again, bad behavior by some was attributed to the church doctrine, which was a lie, but nevertheless accepted by many as being true.

The same is true of claims of spousal abuse, or any number of other immoral acts. Just let someone be accused of abuse—with or without evidence—and not only will that individual be attacked, but the attack will then be transferred to the church, and the church will be accused of teaching doctrines that are against basic human rights—teachings that endanger women and children. It is diabolical to the core, but the straw man argument often works to deceive those who are susceptible.

God's Church has often been accused of infringing upon the rights of free choice by its members, forcing them into cult-like submission, lest they be castigated and ostracized. Many testimonials can be found by former members of the Worldwide Church of God (or other groups), who claim to have been abused in one way or another while members, and then attributing their trauma to the basic church doctrines. Have fun trying to distinguish between the real doctrines and the bad behavior of certain ministers and laymembers. It is an uphill battle to assert that the entire basis of our beliefs is that individuals work out their own salvation and not just follow a man. A successful *straw man* can be any individual ever associated with the church who ever misbehaved. That personal error in judgment is then used to tar the very foundation of the Church, and to foment hatred toward anyone who chooses to adopt those beliefs.

Do you begin to see just some of the means by which the very last-day prophecies of Jesus Christ can actually come to pass? The mechanisms of that persecution have been going on for many years, howbeit in relatively limited ways so far. But the more that our core beliefs about marriage, family, and godly authority become hated in the world, it is sure that God's people will be spotlighted as enemies of the state, and accused of every evil and vile thing.

If you know about these deceptive schemes and are thoughtful about your own spiritual work before God, you are in a strong position to avoid getting caught up in offense yourself. And the more of us who truly practice our faith wisely—avoiding carnal and misguided actions—the better chance we have of fulfilling the important role that God wants to see in us as true lights and spiritual examples:

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good [conduct] in Christ (1 Peter 3:13–16).

New Moons

The new moon, Iyar (second month), begins Monday evening, April 12. The new moon day is Tuesday, April 13.

The new moon, Sivan (third month), begins Tuesday evening, May 11. The new moon day is Wednesday, May 12.

Second Passover

Anyone needing to partake of the second month Passover *after ministerial approval*, please be advised that it will be Monday, April 26, to be observed the previous Sunday evening, April 25, after sunset. If instructions are needed, please contact the church office as soon as possible.

Holy Day

Pentecost Monday, May 24

Feast of Tabernacles–OR

We now have a contract with the owners of the Otter Crest convention center in Otter Rock, OR, for the Feast this coming fall. The Inn at Otter Crest is owned by different business people, but they are willing to work with us and give us a 30 percent discount on rooms if we stay with them during the Feast. The Inn sits on an oceanfront bluff with 35 forested acres. There is access to a private beach, and they have a weight room, an outdoor pool, beautiful views, tennis courts and hiking trails. If you think you would like to attend the Feast in Oregon this year, and may want to stay at the Inn, we suggest you book with them right away while rooms are available, remembering to mention that you are with the church. You can find information and pictures about the Inn on their website: www.innatottercrest.com.

For those of you making your reservations for the Feast this year, please take note that the Sabbath before the Feast (September 18) will be held in the Otter Crest convention center. There will be no services in Eugene that Sabbath.

Recorded Sermon Schedule

Sermon #	Mailed	Played	Title
WSE-JWB 252	02-25-21	03-27-21	Where Are All the Mentors?
Holy Day Sermons	02-11-21	04-03-21	2 nd High Day of Unleavened Bread
WSE-RC 26-4	02-25-21	04-10-21	The Technicalities of Divorce and Remarriage #4
WSE-RC 26-5	03-18-21	04-17-21	The Technicalities of Divorce and Remarriage #5
WSE-JWB 253	03-18-21	04-24-21	When Division Is Godly
WSE-RC 46-1	03-18-21	05-01-21	Marriage and Separation #1
WSE-JWB 254	04-15-21	05-08-21	Remorse vs. Repentance
WSE-RC 46-2	04-15-21	05-15-21	Marriage and Separation #2

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby