

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Jeremiah 23:5

the OLIVE BRANCH

SPRING
2011

Building His Sanctuary

*From the
Overseer's Desk*

Part 2 in the series “His Glorious Church”

***“And let them make me
a sanctuary; that I may
dwell among them.”
Exodus 25:8***

This scripture well could be viewed as the place where the tabernacle/house of God/Church of God program began its realization. Abraham and the patriarchs had “seen it afar off” (Hebrews 11), but in this verse we see God’s first visible step in bringing His people to work together to provide a place where He might dwell among them.

This is, after all, the greatest glory we shall ever experience – to dwell with Him, and He among us!

This verse so tersely presents the same two great themes that Paul introduced and we have already considered in Ephesians 4:11-16: 1) the edification (building) of a dwelling place for the Lord by His people; and 2) the Lord gloriously dwelling among His people. This series of sermons shall consider how these two themes intertwine to achieve God’s perfect plan.

Twice in this text from Ephesians, Paul used the term “edifying:” “...for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12) and “...maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:16) To “edify” means to “build, construct; to establish, build-up, or strengthen a person, institution, etc.; to uplift.” (c.f. Dictionary.com)

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

To help us understand our role in edifying the Church, we now turn to consider the edification (building) and glorification demonstrated by a familiar “type and shadow” of the Church program, the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Stephen associated “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38) with “the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness” (Acts 7:44) in his sermon delivered just before his martyrdom. Hebrews employs this type and shadow of the tabernacle to describe Christ’s role and the “true tabernacle” in Hebrews 8:1-2:

“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

In Exodus 20-23 is the account of God giving His law to His people Israel. Beginning with the Ten

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2011 Calendar

- April 29-30 – **Youth Convention**,
Uniontown, PA
theme: “*Thy Word Is Truth*”
- May 13-15 – **Ladies Retreat**,
Camp Sonrise, Markleysburg, PA
theme: “*A Healed Land*”
- May 29-June 11 – **Bible Training Institute**,
Cleveland, TN
- June 17-20 – **Youth/Family Camp**,
Mt. Chestnut Center, Butler, PA
theme: “*The Great Escape*”
- July 15-17 – **Regional Convention**,
Uniontown, PA
theme: “*Through His Eyes*”
- Aug. 19-22 – **International Youth Camp**,
Lutheridge Conference Center,
Asheville, NC
- Aug. 23-28 – **General Assembly**,
Ridgecrest Conference Center,
Asheville, NC

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Reaching out on the net

The Northeast Region’s website, which includes both English and Spanish versions of *The Olive Branch*, was visited more than 13,000 times in the last year. Between April 2010 and March 2011, computer users opened the site 13,184 times. Additionally, the site popped up during computer searches more than 300,000 times.

The region’s Internet presence has grown increasingly important in recent years, according to Regional Overseer James Smith, who manages the website and compiled the statistics. It has been instrumental in adding members and churches to the region. It has also connected pastors and individual Christians in Africa and Asia with The Church of God. Three international pastors have contacted Bro. Smith for more information in 2011 alone.

The website is viewable at www.tcog-ne.org.

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Contact us:

The Olive Branch is a publication of The Church of God–Northeast Region, which serves churches in Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania and new works throughout the greater area. It can be viewed online in English and Spanish at www.tcog-ne.org.

Reports and other **submissions for the SUMMER 2011 issue must be received on or before June 1.**

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WMB...Coordinator Diana Seese

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

As we read this wonderful verse and the unusual salvation story that precedes it in Luke 19, we can see why many people were puzzled by Jesus's actions that day. Why, after all, would Jesus want to stay at the home of Zacchaeus or have a meal with this chief tax collector?

Zacchaeus was rich, and like all tax collectors, he was hated by most people. It was common knowledge that these men took advantage of their position for their own personal gain. They were seen as agents of Rome – the enemy and oppressor.

But whatever he was in the past, Zacchaeus had that day demonstrated eagerness to see Jesus as He passed through Jericho. Small in stature, he had climbed up into a sycamore tree just to see Him. When Jesus saw this intense interest, he called out in Luke 19:5: *"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house."*

Others complained that Jesus had *"...gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."* (v. 7b) But Jesus had another motivation. He did not come to start a political revolution or to fight a social war. He came to bring salvation and to open the doors to the Kingdom of Heaven.

After spending time with Jesus, Zacchaeus's life changed forever. Instead of stealing, he gave to the poor – even returning four times as much to anyone he had defrauded.

At the end of His visit, Jesus could say, *"This day is salvation come to this house."* (v. 9) Reaching out to people like Zacchaeus was central to His ministry, for He had *"come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

The Lord gave us one of the greatest examples of a way to go out and to reach the lost. Church, remember that we all are called to continue in this Great Commission. The Lord didn't call the Church home yet. There are still souls out there that we must seek and lead to salvation.



We must reach souls for Christ. Time is short! Reaching out to our families, friends, neighbors is a beginning. We must also use every major language and form of technology to reach those on every continent. Can we make this our goal and passion – to reach people from every race and religion, those who are likable and those who are not, those who are friends and those who are foes?

Ask the Lord to give you a fresh vision for the world and a greater passion for souls. Dedicate your whole life to serving the Lord. Church, it's not long before the Lord's return. Let's do all we know to do to take others to heaven with us. We can all be a part of this. If you can't give to the mission work or go to the mission field, surely you can PRAY for souls to come to the Lord.

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CPMA... Coordinator Roger Fuester

Among my many faults, I have to watch out about looking in the rearview mirror. When driving down the road, it's a good thing to do – but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about yearning for the “good old days” when life seemed better. My mother died the last week of February, and my brother, my sister and I spent a fair amount of time reminiscing about our childhood growing up in the 1940s and '50s. We reached a ready consensus – no doubt about it – families were more solid and resilient then; Christians were more upright and self-sacrificing; people were happier. At least that was our recollection, but were they really?

The ancient Hebrews were highly skilled at putting a pretty face on an ugly past. While in slavery in Egypt, they were definitely a sorry lot, but no sooner had Moses led them out of bondage, than they were longing for the “good old days.” Many of them wanted to return to Egypt, even though it would mean again going under the yoke of bondage and smarting under Pharaoh's lash. They failed to appreciate what the Lord had done, and came to a sad end indeed:

“Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it ... Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land...”
Numbers 14:23, 29, 30a

I have heard some say they would like to get back to the “good old days” of The Church. But which Church? The Church has had major problems since the time of Paul. The first-century Church was troubled by sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1), heresy (Galatians 1:6-7), and dissension (Acts 15:1-2). The Church was essentially asleep for nearly 16 centuries only to

awaken in the early 20th century. In the 1900s, there were a number of painful schisms. Except, perhaps, for brief periods like the Day of Pentecost, there were no “good old days” for The Church – not in the first century, not in the Dark Ages, and not in the 20th century.



We need to keep away from the practice of looking back – unless it's to recall a lesson learned or to glory in what God has done. If our lives are centered in Jesus Christ and we believe in what the Bible says, the Church's best days are yet to come:

“She'll be shining, shining through the ages, after earth, and time have been forgot; She'll be wearing garments pure and spotless. Have you on the wedding robe or have you not?”
(chorus, “When The Church of God Arises”)

I don't know about you, but that hymn always brings tears to my eyes when we sing it at the General Assembly. And I believe it!

If we live in the past, we run the risk of missing today's opportunities and tomorrow's blessings. One opportunity we don't want to miss is that of supporting CPMA. The dues are only \$10 per year, and that's something we all can afford. That's not all – we can also support CPMA in special offerings and with our prayers.

May you grab hold of every spiritual opportunity and receive every blessing.

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Commandments, God described how the people were to live day to day; how they were to respect Him and to treat one another. Then, in Exodus 24, the people confirmed their understanding and acceptance of His law and His will in their lives with a covenant:

“And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.... And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.” (Exodus 24:3,7)

With this foundation of governance for His people, the Lord proceeded to instruct His people how they were to worship Him. His divine presence already overshadowed them visibly as: *“the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.”* (Exodus 13:21) When Moses later returned to the mountain to further commune with God, His manifestation was even greater: *“And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.”* (Exodus 24:17)

“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them”

But God desired His relationship with His covenanted people to be richer and more intimate than simply for His presence be seen from a distance – He desired to dwell among them!

With the above declaration from God recorded in Exodus 25:8, the people were confronted with an awesome task – they were to prepare a place worthy of their Lord’s presence, a place acceptable as His home among them.

This could not be just any place, but a place built perfectly to His exacting specifications: *“According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”* (Exodus 25:9)

Then in Exodus 25-29 the Lord provides the details of how His people were to build and to furnish His tabernacle, as well as how His people were to worship

Him, assisted by the ministering of Aaron and his sons.

The people of Israel now entered upon a building program of greater importance than the construction of any Egyptian pyramid, the Tower of Babel, or any other edifice mankind had previously imagined. They were to provide a place for their God – to dwell among them!

Exodus 29 concludes with God reaffirming the ultimate importance of this effort:

“And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest’s office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.” (Exodus 29:44-46)



**Regional
Overseer
James Smith**

The Church to provide Him a perfect dwelling place

The ultimate conclusion of that building program is yet to be realized. Consider the Revelation the Apostle John witnessed of God’s completed plan as he thus recorded it in Revelation 21:3. John quoted the description that he heard from heaven:

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

The Lord’s Tabernacle program helps us understand God’s purpose and desire toward this ultimate tabernacle, the Body of Christ, His Church. Just as Paul describes the Lord’s plan regarding His Church – how she is to be edified and glorified, so also did God give Moses a plan for His people Israel to edify (build, construct) a dwelling place, His tabernacle.

In later sermons we will consider the fuller meaning of God’s expressed desire *“...that I may dwell among*

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them.” But for now, we focus on the other element of His plan “...let them make me a sanctuary.”

The Tabernacle – a Type and Shadow

We see in the tabernacle as type and shadow a perfect template of how God would see His will accomplished. The elements found here are also present in His plan for the perfection and glorification of His Church.

First, the work was to proceed according to the divine plan that He provided: “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” (Exodus 25:9) In Exodus 25-27 God thus provided the plan for construction of His tabernacle and for its furnishings (instruments).

Second, He instructed how His people were to conduct themselves with respect to His tabernacle – so that they could worship Him, and that He could dwell among them. “And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. ... that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.” (Exodus 28:2-4)

Third, reverence for God’s tabernacle demanded not only that the ministry wear holy garments, but that the ministry must themselves be holy: “And for Aaron’s sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt ... for glory and for beauty. ...and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office.” (Exodus 28:40-41)

We will examine in future sermons how each of these themes apply to the Church. But, there is yet another important aspect of this tabernacle program to emphasize here.

All the people of Israel were to participate.

Fourth, all the people of Israel shared an important role in the fulfillment of God’s plan. Their willing participation and their laboring together were necessary for the vision of the tabernacle (both its building and its functioning) to become a reality. They all were to participate in this building program. (Remember: “We all...” from 2 Corinthians 3:18 and from Ephesians 4:14 “Till we all ...”)

All the people were to be actively engaged in the preparation for and in the construction of the tabernacle, as well as in the provisioning of all its furnishings. Each person may have had a different role in the work, but their individual labors must come together in perfect harmony if God’s plan were to be realized. The people worked together in multiple ways.

First, each one gave to the work from what each possessed. Indeed, the Lord began His instructions regarding His tabernacle by calling upon their willing giving in Exodus 25:1-2:

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.”

The people were not demanded to give; rather, each was invited to give his offering “...willingly with his heart” That which was given to build and to provision His tabernacle would be acceptable only when His people willingly gave to Him from their hearts! The extent of their giving from the heart is recorded in Exodus 36:5-7:

“... The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. ... So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.”

He uses that which is given from the heart.

What each one of us has to offer the Lord in the Church era may be different. That which we see as inadequate, may be exactly what the Lord wishes to use – He uses best that which is given from the heart.

Recall how Christ fed the five thousand. Consider His disciples’ words: “There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?” (John 6:9) How could that lad possibly think what he had to offer could make any difference? How often we, too, doubt what our Lord wishes to do through us? What might we see Him do through our giving (of our means, and of ourselves) if we responded from our hearts?

Interestingly, God’s asking the people’s participation in giving preceded His revealing to them His purpose for their giving. How many times does the Lord touch our hearts to take an action (giving of our means, of our time, of ourselves) the full purpose of which we do not understand? From the beginning, our service to

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the Lord must be built upon faith that where He leads is where we should willingly follow.

Our obedience should be with great expectation. We must have the faith to obey and to follow – as the faith of Paul and Silas: “And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” (Acts 16:10)

“All that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom”

Second, the Lord favored His people’s giving of their resources and of themselves with His anointing. Their labor could have been a failure – what if they were not able to perform as He expected? Laboring under His divine anointing, they were more than able to perform to His satisfaction and His pleasure all they were called to perform.

Several scriptures describe His divine anointing, such as Exodus 31:1-6:

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, ... And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee...”

All of the people had their roles to fulfill, tasks to accomplish. Exodus 35:25-34 further describes this anointing. In particular, they were anointed to train others to follow in their work (verse 34):

And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair. ... And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; ... And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

Can we imagine the feeling of satisfaction the people experienced as they labored under the Lord’s anointing? Imagine their satisfaction in knowing their labors were accepted, in knowing that each one had a

As it was with the children of Israel and the tabernacle in the wilderness, so it is with each member and minister of The Church of God. You are called to give of your resources and, more importantly, of yourself to building, to edifying His glorious dwelling place.

valuable role to fulfill in the realization of their Lord’s tabernacle where He would dwell among them!

Here’s the great news: You now have just as important a role in the Lord’s program today! You too can be just as satisfied. As it was with the children of Israel and the tabernacle in the wilderness, so it is with each member and minister of The Church of God.

You are called to give of your resources and, more importantly, of yourself to the work of the Lord – to the edifying of His house, of His body, to building His dwelling place. He has provided the plan and He is still today stirring and anointing those who will yield their hearts to Him – for His work must be completed!

As we all now labor together for our Lord that we might realize the completion of today’s tabernacle program, the Church, completed perfectly to our Lord’s complete satisfaction, we would do well to remember the words of Peter regarding our Lord’s gifts of anointing, and His expectation of their use as Peter has expressed in 1 Peter 4:10-11

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

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ABM...Coordinator Nancy Horchar

Jesus asked in Mark 8:36-37: *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

Souls – are they not our responsibility? What a humble job and awesome responsibility the Lord has given the ABM department. Band leaders are co-workers with pastors in watching over the well being of every soul in each church. It is a responsibility in which we must not fail.

Here is poem by an unknown author from this year’s ABM materials that might encourage us in the ABM work this year:

A Straying Lamb

The Shepherd loved His little lamb, and gave it His tender care. And followed it with His loving eyes as it wandered here and there.

And as He sat by His grazing flock, who so meekly His voice obeyed, He pondered sadly His little lamb as again and again it strayed.

The little lamb had a loving heart, and adored His shepherd true, but would turn aside and seek his own way as lambs so often do.

With His gentle voice, the Shepherd called to His loved and straying lamb: “Come back, little one, for you are not safe unless you are where I am.”

But still the lamb would soon forget and unthinkingly wander away. And, not really noticing what he did, from the Shepherd’s side would stray.

Until one day, the Shepherd kind took His rod in His gentle hand. And what He then did seemed so cruel that the lamb could not understand.

For with one sharp and well-aimed blow down the rod so swiftly came, that it broke the leg of the little lamb and left it crippled and lame.

Then the little lamb, with a cry of pain, fell down upon his knees and looked up at his Shepherd as though to say, “Won’t you explain this, please.”

Then he saw the love in the Shepherd’s eyes, how the tears ran down His face as he tenderly set the broken bone and bound it back in its place.

And he was utterly helpless. He could not even stand! He must trust himself completely to his Shepherd’s loving hand.

Then, day by day, ‘til the lamb was healed, from the flock he was kept apart and carried about in the Shepherd’s arms and cradled near to His heart.

And the Shepherd would whisper gentle words into his now-listening ear. Thus he heard sweet words of love that the other sheep could not hear.

He felt the warmth of the Shepherd’s arms and the beat of His faithful heart until it came a blessing to seem by his weakness to be set apart.

Every need of the little lamb by his Shepherd so fully was met, that through his brokenness he learned what he never again would forget.

And, as the broken bone was healed and, once more, became whole and strong, wherever the Shepherd’s path would lead, the lamb would follow along.

Thus, at the Shepherd’s side he walked so closely day by day. For once a lamb has a broken leg it will never again go astray.

For the cords of love had bound it so in its hour of weakness and need, that it had no desire to wander away, when once again it was freed.

Could it be you are broken today and cannot understand the painful blow of the Shepherd’s rod nor believe it came from His hand?

He only seeks, by this painful thing, for a time to call you apart, to cradle you close in His loving arms and draw you close to His heart.

So, look into your Shepherd’s eyes and earnestly seek His face. And, prove in the hour of your weakness and need the sufficiency of His grace.

For as you are borne in His loving arms and carried there day by day, He will bind you so close with the cords of His love that never again will you stray.

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VLB...Coordinator Brenda Buenavista

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

John 15:13-14

Have you ever had an extraordinary friend hold a very special place in your heart? Growing up, I recall the fascination of spending time with my dear childhood friend at sleepovers, church functions and outdoor activities. I couldn't imagine not having my friend around. We were inseparable.

God desires to be a best friend to each of us. Our best friends are those who more than likely think like us. Clashing minds, conflicting opinions and preferences do not really make room for close relationships. Jesus said: *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”* This means we are required to be in agreement with Him and follow His truth if we desire a relationship with Him. The more we become acquainted with His Word, the more we get to know the Lord and the closer we walk with Him, we are to show our love to Him by keeping His commandments.

David said in Psalm 119:15-16: *“I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.”* David would not only think of God's statutes (rules), but do them with delight!

Unlike some of our relationships here on earth, God's love toward us extends far beyond the bounds of human comprehension. We see this when He gave His Son for us. The song writer said: *“What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!”* His desire is to see each of us make heaven our home. As a true and loving friend, He will keep His promises to us as long as we follow Him from the heart. As Abraham was, let us be friends of God and *“lovers of the truth.”*



I am really looking forward to seeing everyone at Youth Convention this month. I pray that everyone is able to attend. Please remember to wear VLB colors for the youth march and to prepare posters with the VLB theme *“Lovers of the Truth.”* Also, I would like to ask everyone to please dedicate a day of fasting for this convention. We want to see the Lord move in mighty way in our midst as we seek His divine will for our lives.

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BTI...Coordinator Wendell Flick

“But be ye doers of the word...” James 1:22a

The Church's mission is to preach the gospel in all the world and to teach all nations to observe (or “do”) all things that Jesus has commanded. If we are to preach and teach, we must ourselves know our subject matter. Indeed, if any generation of The Church of God has needed to know the Word of God (the Gospel, the doctrine, the practices of Church government and discipline), it is the present generation.

Bible Training Institute has everything we need to know the Word. Praise God for the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ! BTI is May 29-June 11 at Cleveland, TN. Plan to attend if at all possible.



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Sunday School...

Coordinator Elaine Smail

Through our personal study and participation in Sunday School, the Holy Ghost inspires and scripture comes alive. This is true whether our study is done by looking at a theme or certain Bible book or by looking at scriptures by chapter, verse or even word.

One word in the Bible can be powerful, having various meanings and applications. The word "stone" is one such example, and we will briefly examine three applications in this writing. Imagine for a moment that you have a small stone in your hand. Hold onto the stone as you journey through this reading and its relevance will unfold before your eyes.

One application can be found in John 8, when Jesus went to the Mount of Olives early in the morning to teach and the scribes and Pharisees brought an adulteress before Jesus to see if He would uphold the law or defend the sinner. It appeared as if Jesus ignored them, so they persisted for a response. The response Jesus gave in verse 7 was quite different than what they expected. Jesus said, *"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."* The accusers were convicted by their own consciences and exited the scene. Alone with the woman, Jesus said to her in verse 11: *"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."*

Now look at that stone in your hand. How will you use it the next time you are face to face with sin or a tough trial? It's easy to cast the stone of judgment upon others. Will you look within or without? Look at the stone again, let it remind you to look at yourself before looking at others.

In a second application, Psalm 118:22 tells us: *"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."* That refused or rejected stone is Jesus. He is the Cornerstone of God, and the true Cornerstone of the foundation

of the Church. For the child of God whose body is *"the temple of God"* (1 Corinthians 3:16), the Cornerstone, Jesus, is an absolutely necessary element. You might be thinking that I am making an obviously simple, believable statement. Think again.



You believe that Jesus is that stone, don't you? Do you accept Him – ALL of Him – and the Bible – ALL of the Bible? If you do, can you say, without reservation, that you also accept ALL of the Church? It is easy to accept the parts of Jesus, the Bible and the Church that conveniently fit one's life. Look at the stone: Do you accept or reject the Rock (great stone) upon which the Church is built mentioned in Matthew 16:18?

A third application is seen in 1 Peter 2:4-5. Here, the words *"living stone"* and *"lively stones"* are used to characterize Christ and His believers. The word *"lively"* means "living." Have you ever thought of yourself as a living stone? We are living examples or a *"(letter) known and read of all men"* 2 Corinthians 3:2. Our lives are constantly on display before others. We must be a lively, vibrant witness for Christ, the living stone of all times.

Look at that stone in your hand one more time. How could one small piece of matter have such significant spiritual meaning? What will you think the next time you look at or hold a stone? Such is the power of the Holy Spirit and the Living Word!

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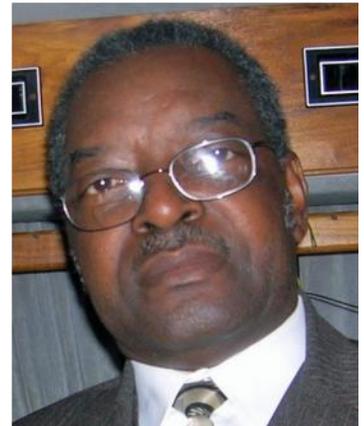
Regional photos...

It's been a busy spring in the Northeast Region. Pictured on this page are scenes from the Western District Convention at Karns City, PA; an engagement photo of VLB Coordinator Brenda Buenavista of the New Rochelle, NY church and her fiance Jason Prince of the Birmingham, England church; new pews at our New Rochelle, NY church and a new minister who recently joined our New Rochelle church, pastored by Sis. Edna Taylor.

The Lynchburg, VA church donated the pews to our New Rochelle, NY church; which recently has moved into a larger meeting space at the same street address.

Our new minister, Bro. Othniel Lunan, joined The Church of God in March. He is now licensed as an evangelist. He had been a member of The Church of God of Prophecy since 1967. He served there as a state auxiliary secretary, evangelism coordinator, pastor, and district overseer in New Jersey and Delaware. He organized and pastored six New Jersey churches.

Bro. Lunan, a native of Jamaica, is bilingual (English and Spanish) and has master's degrees in social work and public administration.



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Final thoughts...

Assistant Editor Nora Edinger

“Leave no stone unturned.” I couldn’t help but think of this maxim when a warm day in late winter sent me out into the garden.

We have pieces of uncut stone that snake along the edge of our flower beds, dividing them from the lawn. These stones do two things. First, they are pretty. Their presence draws the eye to the flowers and sets them off – like a frame around a painting. They also serve as a border – alerting our children and the dog that they should not be playing on the flower side. (At least that’s the idea.)

Anyway, every spring I go out and flip all the stones over. During the fall and winter, they become embedded in grasses and begin to sink down into the soil. A simple turning over of every stone brings them back into full view so they can do their jobs.

I think God’s rules and His requirement that Christians live holy lives are a lot like this. If we do not pay attention to how we live, the difference between the garden of our soul and the rest of world can disappear from sight. Passersby may

not even be able to see the beauty that a life that is well tended by God should have.

Neglecting these forever precepts is also a problem because the warning line dividing our garden from the sin outside it is also not as visible to us. That puts us in danger of stumbling into something that we should not.

Perhaps it is time to check of our souls’ borders. Are we doing all that we know God wants us to do? Are we doing anything that we know God does not want us to do? If our answers to these questions are not good ones, it is surely time for a springtime spruce up. Let us leave no spiritual stone unturned.

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