

“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

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2007

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Preparing God's People: Part 5

We continue our consideration of the admonition in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

- (17) *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*
- (18) *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*

In past parts of this series of sermons we have studied the reign of King Hezekiah to learn that *judgment* can mean a *remedy* being applied to correct what is deficient or lacking, God's *wrath* poured out upon those who have continually spurned His call, or our being *counted worthy* of His blessings and mercy.

There are other dimensions to God's *judgment* yet to be considered. We now turn our attention to Manasseh, son of

Hezekiah, who reigned over Judah for 55 years! The account of his life and reign is found in 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33:1-25.

The reign of Manasseh is a type and shadow of the Great

Tribulation period -- when the Church will be present with the Lord at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and when Satan will have free reign on this earth to do as he will.

As a type and shadow of what is to come, 2 Kings 21:1-9 describes Manasseh as one who deceived the people of God in Jerusalem (v. 9) to do wickedly beyond what the northern



*Regional Overseer
James Smith*

Regional Convention: “Why We Can’t Wait”

Nearly 100 people attended the Northeast Regional Convention held July 13-15 at the Uniontown, PA local church.

The convention theme “*Why We Can’t Wait*,” focused on the need for spiritual action in the last days.

Regional Overseer James Smith during his address emphasized the need for more prayer to get the work done.

Later, guest speaker Clive Jared, overseer of Virginia and West Virginia, preached on having “*Inspiration and Vision to Get the Work Done.*”

Convention offerings received included \$303 for Bro. Jared, \$346 for Bro. James Smith and \$337 for missions.

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Left, top: Children’s church program directed by Sis. Leighty, Uniontown, PA.

Left, middle: Rob Satanek, Uniontown, PA; plays the guitar during worship time.

Left, bottom: Lisa Smith and Melody Metzger, Uniontown, PA, singing a special.

Right, top: Karns City, PA leads the song service.

Right, second: Attendees participate in a Womens Missionary Band program.

Right, middle: (left to right) Guest speaker Bro. Clive Jared, overseer of Virginia and West Virginia, speaks with Bro. Thomas Kelley, pastor of the Karns City, PA, and Bro. Wendell Flick, pastor of the Ford City, PA, during a break between sessions.

Right, adjacent: Bro. Edward Burdett, Monongahela, PA preaching.

Right, bottom: WMB program lead by Sis. Peggy Fordyce, Uniontown, PA.

Are you ready for His return?
Let us heed God's warning in 1
Thessalonians 5:1-6:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

It seems there is a spirit of sleep upon the world. Not many are looking for the soon return of our Lord. It is pleasing

WMB



2006-07 Theme:
Work while it is day
... Behold the
Bridegroom cometh.



*WMB Coordinator
Peggy Fordyce*

to the devil when people slumber and sleep with no regard for Jesus's soon return. Our enemy is a master of wrongful slumber and sleep. Awake us, O God, to start preparing ourselves for the rapture.

Remember, in Matthew 24:44, Jesus said, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour

as ye think not the son of man cometh."

Wake up, Church of God. Let us not sleep as others.

Also remember, items can still be turned in for the Mission table at the General Assembly.

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2007 Calendar

Aug. 27-Sept. 1 General Assembly in Cleveland, TN

CONTACT US

The Olive Branch is a publication of The Church of God Northeast Region, which serves churches in Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania and new works throughout the greater area. It can be viewed online at <http://www.tcog-ne.org>.

Reports and other submissions for the October-November issue must be received by Sept. 1.

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-----Meeting Monongahela, PA----- To keep on going

Getting up in the wee hours of the morning to load three kinds of meat, two kinds of cheese and plenty of toppings onto as many as 900 hoagie rolls may not be in the average job description. But, then again, pastoring a church isn't the average job, as Bro. Edward Burdett of Monongahela, PA certainly knows. Bro. Burdett has been among the faithful crew that staffs the nearly monthly hoagie sale for the 22 years he has pastored that church, which was formerly in New Eagle, PA.

"The hoagies really sell themselves," he said of a church-expense fundraiser that was in place at least a decade before he came along. "We don't have any problem getting rid of our hoagies."

That time-tested commitment level of both pastor and the congregation of about 25 members and another 15 or so faithful attenders turned out to be a good thing a few years ago when they faced a test of faith. The group lost its church building in a legal dispute with former fellow members. Bro. Burdett said the church rallied to the extent that, after meeting temporarily in a secular location, it was soon able to move into a new building for which it had paid cash.



"It's about a strong faith in the Lord," Bro. Burdett said. "We've went through a lot of ups and downs, but the Lord has always brought us through everything."

Bro. Burdett said it was also God who sustained his family and congregation when he was so ill in recent years that he was considered for a heart transplant. His doctors have said his recovery to normal heart function following surgery is truly miraculous.

Before coming to Monongahela/ New Eagle, Bro. Burdett also pastored nearly another 20 years in other churches around Pennsylvania and Delaware. Raised in The Church of God, Bro. Burdett also served overseas in the Korean War and worked in industry before entering the ministry. He has been married to Carrol (Kay) for 48 years. They have three adult children, Edward Jr., John and Lisa Smith, and two grandchildren.

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A word from Monongahela's pastor

More than two centuries have passed since the birth of our great nation and, while the government still stands on a Constitution drafted by God-fearing men, Satan has been busy in his efforts to turn people's hearts and minds away from God. Daily, our society draws further from His presence and grace. Although our legal system strives to ensure liberty and justice for all, it is not without flaws. No legal system can be perfect if it is subject to the interpretation and application of an imperfect people.

This brings us to the question, what is the Perfect Law of Liberty? Webster's Dictionary defines the following: 1. Perfect: complete; finished; without fault, flawless, precise (cannot be improved.) 2. Law: rule binding upon a community; system of such rules; branch of this system; knowledge of it, administration of it; invariable sequence of events



*Pastor
Edward Burdett*

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Memories of
Youth Camp 2007
Following Jesus

Top: Campers and staff outside the Camp Bucoco dining hall.



Second: Campers and staff in the Camp Bucoco chapel .



Middle, left: Staffer Sharon Guthrie enjoys a light moment in the cafeteria.

Middle, middle: Staffer Elaine Smail, prepares a meal.

Middle, right: Staffer Nancy Smith displays camp hats made for the campers.



Bottom, left: Evangelist Tim Cox baptizes campers the last day of camp.

Bottom, middle: Staffers Michelle Guthrie and Nancy Smith help the campers during their craft time

Bottom, right: Evangelist Tim Cox uses a camper as part of a sermon demonstration.



Food and fellowship

Members and attenders of the Karns City and Ford City, PA churches met earlier this summer for a picnic. Here are photos of the festivities.



PASTOR

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in nature (rule of conduct, a body of rules having divine origin).

The prophet Isaiah wrote, in Isaiah 61:1:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did just that and, as recorded in John 8:36, can make us "free indeed."

Sadly, there are many today, even within the ministry, that are misusing this scripture as an excuse to do as they please. Some are preaching of a "Christian liberty" that frees them from the Law. This is nothing more than a newly disguised heresy. The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 5:13:

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Many, it would seem, are being seduced by carnal desires and

simply don't have or have lost a sincere love for God's word.

James writes in James 1:25:

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

The Holy Bible, God's living Word is the Perfect Law of Liberty. In John 1 we find that:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God, (v. 14) ... and the Word (Jesus Christ) became flesh and dwelt among us.

God is perfect. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is perfect. Therefore, God's word, the Holy Bible, the Law of Liberty, is perfect. It cannot be improved. As David said in Psalm 19:7:

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

God's Word is not only perfect, but it is eternal. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 40:7:

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of God shall stand forever.

So, God's Law or living Word is perfect, eternal, unchangeable and powerful. It is a lamp and light and it is a law that gives perfect liberty.

2 Corinthians 3:17b says:

...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

This liberty is a freedom of worship, a freedom from the bondage to sin, as pointed out in Romans 6:22

But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

This freedom has its limits. Unrestricted freedom brings chaos, confusion and rebellion. God's law teaches us to tithe that we might open the windows of heaven; to faithfully attend church (not hit and miss as our schedules permit), to worship in spirit and in truth; to love God with all our heart, mind and soul.

Now that we have received God's Perfect Law of Liberty, we must take care to preserve, protect and abide in that freedom. God's Word is our pattern for liberty -- perfect and lasting liberty in Christ our Savior. We are not free to do our own thing or seek our own interpretation of God's Word. But rather, we are free from sin's bondage, free to serve God according to His Holy Word.

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OVERSEER

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kingdom of Israel or even their heathen neighbors had done (v. 2). He went beyond the restoration of their previous ungodly ways (v. 5, 6), to the introduction of his own altars (v. 4), and ultimately a graven image (v. 7) into the house of God in Jerusalem. Key verses are given below:

- (2) *And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.*
- (4) *And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.*
- (5) *And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.*
- (6) *And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.*
- (7) *And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:*
- (9) *But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.*

In spite of God's miraculous deliverance of Judah under the reign of his father Hezekiah, Manasseh had become quite enchanted with (deceived by) the religions and gods of the other

people around him -- so much so that he had an image made in their likeness and placed in the temple of God. How could such divine deliverance as was witnessed by Judah under Hezekiah be followed by the exceeding wickedness and perversion of worship practiced by Manasseh?

How can such strong delusion of so many people be possible? Attention has been called previously in the third sermon in this series to Romans 1:18-32, which describes the wretched condition or state of those who repeatedly deny the working of the Lord and go about to establish their own ways.

This situation is sad enough when considering the behavior of those that are "without" -- of those who have not walked in His way. How much worse is the condition of those who have once known Him. Their condition is described as "irreversible," with no place of turning around or repenting, as Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-27 make clear:

- (4) *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,*
- (5) *And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,*
- (6) *If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*
- (26) *For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,*
- (27) *But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

The above scriptures indeed seem quite harsh. Everyone always is given "another chance," or so we'd like to believe. But the word of God says differently. We quickly are coming to a day when God will say "enough." NO MORE CHANCES!

Consider this type and shadow: Though Manasseh later repented of his wickedness and of his leading Judah away from true worship (2 Chronicles 33:12-13), the unforgivable deed had been done. And, even though Josiah (who followed Manasseh) later destroyed all elements of Manasseh's idolatry (2 Kings 23:12), the wrath of God could not be extinguished -- for Jerusalem's overthrow had been settled in heaven, 2 Kings 23:26:

- (26) *Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.*

What was the "unpardonable sin" that Manasseh had committed? Manasseh willfully rejected the clearly revealed truth of God (as had been demonstrated to his father Hezekiah, and spoken by such prophets as Isaiah) and instead went after an imposter religion. Christ has described the "unpardonable sin" in Mark 3:22-30 to be to "blaspheme against the Holy Ghost," but what does that mean? Could Manasseh have somehow committed this sin?

In Mark 3:22, the scribes had accused that Christ, "hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils." Then in Mark 3:30, "... they said,

OVERSEER

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He hath an unclean spirit.” The scribes had willfully confused the works of God with the works of Satan. They were willing to mix the two -- attributing the works of one (the Son of God) to the other (Satan). Likewise did Manasseh when he took the altars and even the image (of Satan) and installed them in the house of God and treated them with equal (superior?) reverence and authority.

Moving this theme to today: How is it possible for us to commit such an unpardonable sin? Many (both individually, and as organizations) are so doing when they willingly and purposely (as part of a supposed plan based on new insight) embrace yet one more false doctrine and let down one more established doctrine after another!

Christ has clearly told us (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13) that we *“cannot serve two masters.”* Manasseh couldn’t and neither can we. Yet today many would claim that they are “filled with the Spirit” and also can freely (without condemnation) practice all manner of ungodliness. Many of these people have made their claims in ignorance, since they never truly have been “filled with the Spirit.” But what of those who have so known Christ and His power (the Holy Ghost) and have once walked in His truth, but now claim all manner of “freedoms” to commit iniquity, even with the supposed “blessing (unction)” of the Holy Ghost?

Paul invokes the Jewish remembrance of the Temple and

of the Lord’s response to the manner in which its sacredness had been abused during the time of Manasseh. Paul stresses that the Lord feels the same way regarding our role as His “temple” in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:19-20:

- (16) *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*
- (17) *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*
- (19) *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*
- (20) *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*

Having given ourselves to be the habitation of God’s Spirit, we would do well to understand the gravity of this relationship. We are no longer our own, but have been “bought with a price” -- the precious blood of Christ. Any time we are tempted to “take in a new master;” we better take heed.

How do we “take in a new master?” As did Manasseh, we take in his “image” -- we begin to walk, to talk, to think like our new master. Perhaps only a little at first, but the result and God’s JUDGMENT are certain!

Contemporary Christian writers like Tim LeHaye of the *Left Behind* series of books suggest that many people will suddenly “pop out of it” and repent when Satan comes to his full power during the Great Tribulation. However, Paul clearly describes a different vision of the Last Days in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 as a period of time much like that of Manasseh’s day. In particular,

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 closes with the pronouncement of the judgment of God upon the people who have refused to hear and to heed:

- (11) *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:*
- (12) *That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Thus, another dimension of the judgment of God is for one to be turned over to a reprobate mind -- to a mind controlled by strong delusion. Such people are quite comfortable to wallow in their sin and iniquity (2 Peter 2:22) for they no longer have the capacity to discern right from wrong (Isaiah 5:20-21).

Let this not be the case among members of The Church of God. Let’s ask ourselves: What of the world’s doctrines, practices, or life-styles are any of us finding attractive and tempting? What are you willing (indeed comfortable) to do today that you once “knew” was wrong? Unless we take heed to not be deceived (Matthew 24:4,11,24), we too could one day find ourselves standing before God in the worst position possible -- having been *judged unpardonable!*

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Most of us have heard the old saying, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We all subscribe to it in theory, but sometimes we fall short of applying it in our lives.

How about the fluids in your car? Do you top them off on a regular basis, or do you wait for the warning light to flash before taking action? Preventative maintenance pays well in mechanical matters, but yields much better in our walk with the Lord. If you have a hard time believing that, think about the five foolish girls in Matthew 25 who failed to top off their oil on their fateful trip to meet the bridegroom.

I know we are all good at crying out during an emergency.

Prayers flow quite easily from inside the belly of the whale, as we learn from Jonah. It is great to remember the

Lord when you are fainting, but how much better to remember Him every day of your life.

Paul tells us that we don't have to faint if our inner man is being renewed day by day. Jesus tells us in Luke 18:1 that we should always pray and not faint. Church -- we can be on ALERT. Daily doses of prevention are God's prescription for victory. Let us Remain and Maintain by daily

ABM

2006-07 Theme:
Remain and Maintain



ABM Coordinator
Nancy Horchar

entering the throne room of the one that truly loves and cares for us. It is a place where we are nourished and we gain strength to continue.

Let us PRAY, PRAY, PRAY for ourselves and one another. Also, if you haven't hosted a prayer meeting in your home -- why not? And, thanks to all our prayer band leaders for their outstanding work this year.

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The word "well" is quite remarkable. Check it out in the dictionary: It can be anything from a noun to an interjection. For the purposes of this boost, I would like to use it in one of its meanings as an adjective -- "in a satisfactory state or circumstances; right or proper."

It has been said that churches are "well" when they carry out these activities: W-orship, E-vangelize, L-earn, L-ove. Our best "how to" model for doing this is the early Church as recorded in Acts 2: 41-47, and the formula is still relevant today:

Worship. We must meet together for fellowship, communion, prayer and praise.

Evangelize. As we share the Word, the Lord will add new believers to the Church. We can all take part in spreading God's Word by developing a friendship, by giving someone an article about the gospel or by sharing some Scripture verses with a stranger.

Learn. We must continue learning sound doctrine taught by qualified teachers. The Bible is filled with instruction for living.

Love. We are to share with whoever has need, and enjoy the fellowship of other believers regularly.

CPMA



2006-07 Theme:
"This is the LORD's
doing; it is marvelous in
our eyes."
Psalm 118:23



CPMA Coordinator
Roger Fuester

A church whose members worship, evangelize, learn and love will be a "well" church, effective in the community, and appreciated by those who live there.

Also, the General Assembly will be here before we know it. We need to make every effort to be 100 percent in payment of CPMA dues. I appreciate the continued effort that has been put forth by the CPMA leaders in the local churches. God bless you all and keep up the good work!

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Some final thoughts...

It's amazing what you can learn from a 3 year old. Our oldest daughter, for example, has taught me you can see what you want if you really look.

Case in point, she is currently enthralled with water towers and the moon. And, because she spends so much time and effort scanning the horizon and sky for both, she is rewarded. Who knew that there are eight, count them, water towers on our route to church? Or, that the moon is visible in the daytime sky nearly every day.

The unspoken lesson she's been giving finally came home to me the other evening while I was working in the flower garden. Because we live on a corner, the perennial garden in the backyard of our new home

is in full view of the many walkers and bicyclists who come by every day. In an effort to keep up the beauty this property's former owner shared with the neighborhood, I was busy weeding. It wasn't until I was done that I realized I'd spent my whole outdoor time without "seeing" flowers.

I was looking for weeds and weeds were what I saw. When I started looking for flowers, I saw flowers.

That's a good lesson to learn in the natural, one that will give me great excuse to cut back on weeding at the least. But, the more I thought about it, I realized it's an even better lesson for the spirit.



*Assistant Editor
Nora Edinger*

Too many times, we Christians spend all our time looking for the negative. We see what we deem as hypocritical behavior among fellow church members. We don't like the way the Sunday school teacher is dressed or the way the preacher speaks. We might even be so on the lookout for badness that we find fault with the sanctuary carpet or the pew pads. We're looking for all things bad and Satan will make sure we'll see so many of them that we might start behaving or speaking badly ourselves.

If we're, instead, as Paul urged in Philippians 4:8, looking for whatsoever things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of a good report and virtuous, imagine what we might see. It just may be that that is what we have to do to see God at work all around us -- and that would be more beautiful than the loveliest garden here on earth.

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