



Minutes

5th Annual General Assembly

THEME:

“The Prophetic Vision”

September 9-14, 2008

Cleveland, TN

NOTES

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Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Welcome Delegates!

We are excited about this year's theme---"The Prophetic Vision"---and its implications for the church in these last days. Certainly we can rejoice in what the Lord has done through us in the past four years or so. The church has been restored and has spread into twenty states and thirteen countries. This is indeed marvelous!

But our vision is forward-looking. This has always been the disposition of the church when it moves in the spirit of prophecy. Our illustrious fathers and mothers in Zion were optimistic for this very reason: they saw their victorious end revealed in prophecy; so, regardless of how difficult things became for the moment, they knew they were going to get better---for prophecy had already declared it! They therefore lived the present in light of the future! They rejoiced not so much that they saw themselves in history, but that they were in fact making history---a future history ordained by the all-seeing mind of God and revealed in the prophetic Scriptures. This more than any other aspect of their faith captured their imagination, and drove them furiously (and sometimes fanatically!) to fulfill their prophetic purpose. This alone can explain their unconquerable optimism. Every challenge, every struggle, was seen in this light. This prophetic vision--foreseeing the future through the eyes of God in prophecy---grounded their faith and hope in the imperfect present, and gave them a profound and convicting purpose that propelled them forward to do amazing exploits!

We are hoping this will Assembly will excel any in recent memory. While you are here, put all you can into this holy vocation. It is a time to meet with God for sacred and eternal purposes. Consecrate yourselves! We want this Assembly to be a "dreadful place!" (Genesis 28:17). Get all you can out of it; put all you can into it. We want to go back to our fields of labor on fire for God, refreshed, and equipped for the great task that He has assigned to this prophetic Zion.

I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth . . . Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live saith the Lord, thou shalt clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth . . . And they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. . . Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon thy shoulders (Isaiah 49:6-22).

The Fifth Annual General Assembly

Zion Assembly Church of God
September 9-14

ADMINISTRATION

Presiding Bishop/Moderator.....Wade H. Phillips
Superintendent of Operations.....E. A. McDonald

Chief Clerk.....Julia Massey
(Brenda Reitler, Rita Goodrum, Billie Smith, Shirley Kimble,
Helen Little, Molly Hayward)

Chief Usher.....Buddy Quillen
(Milford Kimble, Jack Little, J. J. Davis, Sam Monday, Tim Pounders, Trevor
Graves, C. R. Gregory, Jerry Tingler, Lee Brown, Dave Ashley,
Jim Hayward, Ed Reitler, Bruce Wilcox, Tod Deakle, Pete Sarry,
Trenton Nichols)

Chief Registrar.....Wanda Busbee
(Shanda Gross, Heather Melton, Angela Reid, Savanna Jones, Katie Busbee)

ASSEMBLY BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Chairman.....William Crook
Secretary.....Zachary Snyder
Members: A.B. White, Ricky Graves, Joshua Amara, Ron Massey, C.R. Gregory
(**Alternates:** Ray Dickson, Reginaldo Duarte)
Video.....Scott Neill
Sound Equipment.....Alan Miller
Photography.....Julie Steele

Other Committees

International Properties: Wade H. Phillips, Sidney Whitlock, A.B. White,
Gene Tingler, E.A. McDonald, Todd McDonald, Ray Dickson

Construction Committee: Wade H. Phillips, E.A. McDonald, Sam Monday,
Jack Little, Clifton Kelton, Ricky Graves, C.R. Gregory

General Trustees: Wade H. Phillips, E.A. McDonald, William Crook,
Charles Fields, Todd McDonald

Greetings!



E.A. McDonald
Superintendent of Operations

“O Give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works” (Psalm 105:1.2).

The administration once again extends a hearty welcome to you, as we gather to give praise unto God for His favor and blessings upon the church this past year. May you be renewed in body, mind, and spirit during this Assembly, and encouraged to return to the fields of labor zealous to gather the grain ready for harvest.

The following instructions are given to help make your stay a more pleasant and enjoyable experience:

United Christian Fellowship has graciously provided their facilities for the 5th Annual General Assembly of Zion Assembly Church of God; let us show our appreciation by respecting and properly caring for the property and equipment they have provided.

Responsible persons have been appointed to address any problem that may arise during this Assembly. Please consult with these authorized persons to make any adjustment or change in the facility or equipment. Ushers will be stationed in each session at entrances inside the auditorium. If you have a need or encounter a problem please report it to one of the ushers.

A nursery has been provided for your convenience. It is located down the east hallway. Children should not be left alone in the nursery or anywhere in the facility. Parents are encouraged to have their children sit with them in the auditorium during worship services. Maintaining order and discipline in the house of God is always becoming to the saints. Let us show diligence to be prompt and ready to worship, so that each session will be on schedule and edifying. Those on the program are encouraged to be prepared and ready to fulfill their appointed part in the service.

May you be enriched by the love of God and love one to another, as we fellowship together. We trust that your stay will be pleasant and enjoyable, and that you may be able to say upon your departure, “It was good for us to be here.”

Pre-Assembly Programs

Assembly Business Committee Monday, September 8, 2008

The Assembly Business Committee will meet beginning at 6:00 p.m. to finalize its report to present to the 5th Annual General Assembly. Anyone who has relevant questions or presentations to be made to the Committee may do so at this time. Personal interviews with the Committee should be arranged through the chairman.

Ministers' Meeting Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Beginning at 9:00 a.m. the annual ministers' council will convene in the sanctuary of the International Ministries Center. All ministers are encouraged to attend and participate, including mission directors. The purpose of the meeting is to promote unity and understanding through prayer and discussion. The Assembly Business Committee report will be read and discussed. Also the floor will be open to discuss all relevant issues that might need clarification.

Ministers' and Companions' Luncheon Wednesday 12:30 p.m.

All ministers and their companions are honored guests at the ministers' luncheon. This is sponsored by the international offices. The luncheon will be held at the Holiday Inn (on the hill north off 25th Street). Dress code: most of the men prefer to wear suit and tie for the occasion. Special singing: Reginaldo Duarte, McDonald Family. Guest speaker: Henry O'Neal. Brother O'Neal (supported by his faithful companion, Elizabeth) served the church in important leadership positions between 1975-1993, including Business Manager and Assistant Publisher, and also as a member of several executive committees. He is well qualified to impart to us some words of wisdom and encouragement at this crucial stage of our institutional development in the church.

Assembly Program

Tuesday

6:30 p.m. Worship Service---Sam and Sherrita Monday, TN

Special Songs-----Delilah Daniels, TN

Official Opening of the Assembly

Welcome----Todd and Cheryl McDonald, TN

Appointment of Assembly Business Committee

Special Singing---Gene and Ruth Tingler, VA;

Billy Ray and Margaret Terrell, MS

Assembly Expense Offering

Message—E. A. McDonald, Assistant Presiding Bishop
“Restoration of the Prophetic Vision”

Altar Service

Wednesday

9:00 a.m.

Worship Service---Buddy and Jeannie Quillen, MD

Special Songs----Molly Hayward, MD; Jim Melton, TN

Message---“*The Prophetic Vision---Seeing Eye to Eye*”
Daren Childers, KY

General Treasurer’s Report

Other Reports:

Presiding Bishop

Assistant Presiding Bishop

World Mission Secretary

Field Secretary

Shepherding Ministries Director

Evangelism Director/*Voice of Zion* Booster

Youth Director

Sunday School Director

Children’s Ministries Director

Ladies Ministries Director

[**Note:** *Kidz’ Konvention* schedule is: Friday: 10:15—11:45 a.m.
2:00--3:30 p.m. Saturday: 8:30--9:30 a.m. 2:30--4:00 and 6:30--7:30
p.m].

---Lunch Break---

1:00 p.m. **Musical Prelude**

Reports from Around the World

(Overseers, have your region organized and ready to march on time. Turn in your written reports to the Presiding Bishop as you leave the stage.)

United States

1:15 Midwest Region

Ron Massey, Overseer

Kentucky
Maryland
Indiana
Ohio
West Virginia
Virginia

2:15 Southeast Region

E. A. McDonald, Overseer

North Carolina
South Carolina
Tennessee
Georgia
Florida {*Contacts*}

3:15 Southcentral Region

Ricky Graves, Overseer

Alabama
Mississippi
Arkansas {*Contacts*}

Louisiana
Kansas
Missouri {*Mission*}

4:00 Western Region

A.B. White, Overseer

California
Oregon
Washington

Nevada {*Contacts*
Utah

4:45 **Northwest Region**

Gary Larsen, Overseer

Montana
Wyoming
North Dakota {*Contacts*
South Dakota
Idaho

Southwest Region

Joseph A. Steele, Overseer

Texas
Arizona
New Mexico {*Contacts*
Oklahoma

5:00 **East Africa**

Joshua Amara, Overseer

Kenya
Tanzania
Uganda

5:20 **West Africa**

Joshua Amara, Overseer

Nigeria

United Kingdom

Joshua Amara, Overseer

England

5:30 **Central America**

Ricardo Valenzuela, Overseer

Guatemala
Nicaragua
Honduras
El Salvador {*Contacts*

5:45 **Mexico**

Alejandro Garcia, Mission Representative

6:00 **Philippines**

Domingo Resurreccion, Overseer

6:15 **Southeast Asia**

Boonyong Bureenok, Overseer

Thailand

Cambodia

Myanmar (Burma)

Laos

Vietnam

6:30 **Middle East**

George Assi, Mission Representative

Pakistan

---**Supper Break**---

Wednesday Evening

8:00 p.m. Worship Service—Ft. Oglethorpe, GA

Praise Reports—Charles Fields, AL; Jim Webster, IN;

Faye Davis, SC; Daniel Urcadiz, CA

Assembly Expense Offering

Brenda Whitlock in Concert

Message—“*The Prophetic Vision---A Church Glorious In Holiness*”

---Tom Brown, WV

Thursday

9:00 a.m. Worship Service—Wanda Busbee

Special Singing—Ed and Faye Davis, SC

Camp Reports—J. J. & Ashley Davis (Mideast); William & Marie Crook (Southeast); Cliff & Becky Kelton (Southcentral);

Pete & Francis Sarry (Western)

School of Ministry Program—Ricky Graves

Special Singing---Juan Lopez, CA

Message—“*The Prophetic Vision---A Church for All Nations*”

Boonyong Bureenok, Thailand

—Lunch Break---

2:00 p.m. Special Singing—Jim and Heather Melton, TN

Voice of Zion Boost—Zachary Snyder

Message---“*The Prophetic Vision*---*United Together in Faith and Work*”
---A. B. White, CA

Ordination Service

[**Note:** Ministers and their companions should be seated near the rostrum in preparation for the ordination service].

The following were ordained: Tim Pounders (Evangelist); Bobby Pounders (Bishop); Trent Nichols (Evangelist); Boonyong Bureenok (Bishop); Domingo Resurreccion (Bishop).

---Supper Break---

Thursday Evening

6:30 p.m. Worship—Bayou La Batre, AL

Special Singing—John & Wanda Stamper

Praise Reports—Trenton Nichols, MS; Dorothy Clardy, SC

“Gather the Elders . . . Into the House of the Lord”

Senior Ambassadors’ Program—William Jones

(Kenneth Merritt was unable to do this program due to illness)

Assembly Expense Offering

Special Songs—Brenda Whitlock

Evangelism Program---Zachary Snyder, director

Friday

9:00 a.m. Worship—Southeast

Special Singing---Misty Wilcox; TN

Sunday School Program—Todd McDonald, director

“Vision of Sunday School: To teach, unite and equip.” by Norie Garavito, CA

Assembly Choir

Ladies Ministries Program—Jeannie Quillen, director

[**Note: Kidz’ Konvention** will be conducted today:

10:15–11:45 a.m. and 2:00–3:30 p.m.]

—Lunch Break---

2:00 p.m. Worship---Southcentral Region
Praise Reports---Kerry Bryant, OR; Jerry Nichols, KS
Special Singing---Mark Spangler, GA; Darlene Miller, SC
Shepherding Ministries Program---Rocky Dalton, director

—Supper Break—

Friday Evening

6:30 p.m. Worship—Mideast Region
Praise Reports---Virginia Wilson and Marie Llanaeza, NC
Special Songs—Zion’s Melodies; Nichols Family
Message—“*The Prophetic Vision---The Church Triumphant*”
---Rocky Dalton
Healing Service---Danny Ramirez

Saturday

7:45 a.m. Morning Prayer Service---Tim Pounders in charge

Note: Kidz’ Konvention will be held today at 8:30–9:30 a.m.
2:30–4:00 and 6:30--7:30 p.m.

9:00 Worship Service---J. J. and Ashley Davis
Assembly Choir
Message—“*The Prophetic Vision---The Church Militant*”
---Todd McDonald
Recognition of Special Guests
Special Singing---Barry McDonald; Brenda Whitlock
Presiding Bishop’s Annual Address

---Lunch Break---

2:00 p.m. Worship Service---Ware Shoals, SC
Praise Reports---Pete Sarry, CA; William Jones, VA;
Billy Ray Terrell, MS; Carl Jackson, GA

Assembly Business Committee Report

---Supper Break---

7:00 Praise Service---Trevor and Shanda Graves
Assembly Expense Offering
Special Singing---Sharon Compton, VA; Mark Spangler, GA
Youth Program—Scott Neill, director

[Note: The front three rows of seating have
been reserved for the youth program].

Sunday

9:00 a.m. Worship Service---Bill and Debbie Reid
Children's Ministries Program---Cheryl McDonald, director
Special Singing---Sharon Compton; Ashley Davis
World Mission Program---Joshua Amara, director

Parade of Nations

Announcements

Appointments

Consecration Service

Assembly Attendance: 458 Registered

International Ministries Center



Behold on Zion's wall I see
A number very great,
Arrayed like princes on their chair,
In garments long and fine.

I wonder as upon this band,
I cast my wandering eyes.
Each in their different churches stand,
And ask not others nigh.

I wonder as along their lines,
Their fences I behold,
Which seems to stop their love,
From reaching all the fold.

I wonder as upon their walls,
Their mother's name I see;
It almost makes my soul to shrink,
Her name is mystery.

Behold in God's own Word,
The law of love is found,
Which if applied instead of creeds
These fences would go down.

---R. G. Spurling

General Treasurer's Report
5th Annual General Assembly
Zion Assembly Church of God
September 10, 2008

Note: The following page is a breakdown of the yearly receipts, expenditures and balances ending June 30, 2008.

We, the Assembly Business Committee for Zion Assembly Church of God, after prayerful and careful consideration, make the following recommendations to the General Assembly for your consideration and approval:

Section 1: Compliance With All Assembly Rulings

We want to encourage all ministers and local churches to become informed about all Assembly resolutions and recommendations, and to make every effort possible to comply with the resolutions and recommendations. We would like to bring to the Assembly's attention Section I, Subsection D, in the 2004 General Assembly minutes subtitled "*Assembly Recommendations.*" It reads as follows: "*Since the underlying purpose of the General Assembly is to promote unity and understanding among the saints and throughout the whole church, we recommend that special care be taken by each overseer, pastor, and local church to operate within the guidelines and recommendations of the General Assembly. We further recommend that each local church affirm the business acts of the General Assembly immediately following the annual event. (Local churches having questions or concerns regarding the actions of the General Assembly should be directed to the Assembly Business Committee for review and clarification).*"

We recommend that the term in the above section "*affirm*" be changed to "*be informed.*" Thus this section would be read as follows: "*Since the underlying purpose of the General Assembly is to promote unity and understanding among the saints and throughout the whole church, we recommend that special care be taken by each overseer, pastor, and local church to operate within the guidelines and recommendations of the General Assembly. We further recommend that each local church be informed of the business acts of the General Assembly immediately following the annual event. (Local churches having questions or concerns regarding the actions of the General Assembly should be directed to the Assembly Business Committee for review and clarification).*"

Section 2: Emergency Fund

We want to once again bring to the attention of this Assembly an important recommendation that was accepted by the 2007 Assembly concerning the Emergency Fund. That resolution was expressed in this way: *“We recommend that each member of the church contribute at least \$5.00 per year to an Emergency Fund that would be used to assist ministers and local churches in the event of an unforeseen emergency. Non-members may also contribute. Requests for emergency help would be directed to the General Treasurer who would then consult with the Presiding Bishop and the General Finance Committee to disperse the funds for emergencies. All Emergency Funds will be received and sent to the General Treasurer with the local Treasurers monthly report within the period of January 1-December 31. Until new report books are printed and distributed these funds should be listed in the section called “other” and marked as ‘Emergency Fund.’”* Please be sure and implement this as much as possible in this upcoming year in your local churches.

We further recommend that the Emergency Fund be boosted through the local cell group (Shepherding Ministries) leader.

Section 3: *Voice of Zion* Subscription Rate

We recommend that the subscription rate of the *Voice of Zion* be raised from its current rate of \$18.00 per year to \$25.00 per year. This increase is due to the fact that the *Voice of Zion* is not self-supporting and is largely supported out of the General Fund, as well as the rising cost of both postage and printing.

We want to also mention the importance of each member being involved in subscription boosting.

Section 4: Ministerial Allotments

Section IV of the 2006 Assembly Business Committee report to the General Assembly states: *“We recommend that the General leadership set the ministerial allotments in the United States, and that they be adjusted in accordance with the national governmental standard for each state and territory. The allotments will be adjusted August 1st of each year, and based on the increase of the latest annual cost of living index. The General Treasurer will notify the ministers of the allotment adjustment. We recommend that the allotment for this assembly year be set at \$825.00 per week where funds are available. Allotments outside the United States will be set by the Mission Committee in consultation with the national overseer.”*

We recommend that this section be adjusted as follows: *“We recommend that the General leadership set the ministerial allotments in the United States, and that they be adjusted in accordance with the national governmental standard. The allotments will be adjusted August 1st of each year, and based on the increase of the latest annual cost of living index. The General Treasurer will notify the ministers of the allotment adjustment. We recommend that the allotment for this assembly year be set at \$895.00 per week where funds are available. Allotments outside the United States will be set by the Mission Committee in consultation with the national overseer.”*

We further recommend that those working at the International offices, have their salary set in accordance to the above recommendation when these funds become available.

We further recommend that all tithes received into the local church be distributed as follows: 10%- General Offices; remaining tithes be paid to the pastor up to \$895.00 per week. When dealing with surplus tithes we refer to Section IV, Subsection C, in the 2004 General Assembly minutes, subtitled *“Tithes.”* It reads as follows: *“Surplus tithes should be disbursed by the local church Finance and Stewardship Committee and approved by the local church in business conference. This disbursement should be made at the end of the fiscal year (June 30th). Churches are encouraged to give consideration to the pastor’s*

ministerial expense. We encourage those with surplus tithes to also give some consideration to the operational expenses of our General Offices.”

We further recommend that each local church take into consideration their pastors ministerial expenses (Assembly expense).

Section 5: Regional Overseers Allotment

We recommend that the General Finance Committee be given discretion to designate allotments for the regional overseers when funds become available. This will be in addition to the monthly regional overseer’s 4th Sunday offering being sent to the regional treasurer for distribution. We further recommend that each local church, as much as possible, continue to boost each month the regional overseer’s love offering.

Section 6: International Ministries Center

The International Ministries Center and property in Cleveland is the church’s most prominent material marker. It is impressive, and many people gauge our stability and success by our International Offices and the property that surrounds it. The International Ministries Center is also a much-used facility for the church, and it doubtlessly will be used more frequently in the future. For these reasons, we recommend that funds be appropriated to pave the parking lot and to landscape the outside of the International Ministries Center. We recommend that the Presiding Bishop and General Finance Committee oversee this development, and that the funds appropriated for the project not exceed \$75,000.00.

We further recommend that the Presiding Bishop look into the cost factors of adding a wing onto the existing building that would answer the need for more library and archive space, and for a kitchen and fellowship hall.

We further recommend that the Presiding Bishop report his findings to the next Assembly.

Section 7: General Financial System

We recommend that we continue to operate the same General Fund financial system for this upcoming Assembly year.

Section 8: Assessment of the Presiding Bishop

According to the 2004 General Assembly Minutes, Section 2, Subsection A, # 2, page 15 it was agreed upon that the Presiding Bishop should be “*affirmed by the Spirit of God and by the General Assembly every four years.*” We, your committee, have assessed our Presiding Bishop and have agreed after much prayer that he is operating in the Spirit of the Lord and is being used mightily of the Spirit to “*build up the church of God.*” We have looked very closely at the growth of the church since its restoration in April 2004 in membership, ministers, local churches, finances, International Ministries Center, and the depth and spirituality of the General Assembly. In consideration of his outstanding leadership and the continued growth within the church we feel deeply that Bishop Phillips is the leader whom God has chosen for this important office.

We recommend that this General Assembly give approval for Bishop Phillips to continue in this position as the Presiding Bishop of Zion Assembly Church of God until the next assessment in the 2012 General Assembly.

We further recommend that his nomination of Bishop E.A. McDonald as Assistant Presiding Bishop be approved.

Section 9: Sunday School Ministries

We would like to take this opportunity to give special recognition and appreciation to our International Sunday School Ministries director, Bishop Todd McDonald, for his superb work and relentless effort in the

development of our Sunday school literature. We further recommend that all local churches implement the use of this literature.

In the past year we have seen a tremendous growth in the church and this growth has also brought about a number of new orphanages that are now under Zion Assembly's care. At this time only 10% of the total Sunday school monthly offering is being sent to the International offices to help support these orphanages. We recommend that the total percentage be increased from 10% to 50% to aid in our mission with these orphanages.

Section 10: Shepherding Ministries

We recommend that each local church develop outreach programs through Shepherding Ministries that minister to those in prisons, nursing homes, hospitals, shut-ins, etc.

Note: All of the above recommendations were accepted by the General Assembly unanimously, and Brother Phillips was given a standing ovation for his leadership in the church's highest office.

**Presiding Bishop's Annual Address
to the
5th Annual General Assembly
September 12, 2008**

Introduction

What a joy it is to meet like this again on this side of Glory! For me it is “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” I can relate to King David’s sentiments when he said, “I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation” (Psalm 11:1), and again, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go the house of the Lord” (122:1).

Thirteen months have passed since we last met for this holy and important convocation. Many victories have been won during these months and some substantial gains have been made. We reported last year 115 ministers and 2542 members in 18 states and 7 countries. This year I am pleased to report 161 ministers and 6024 members in 19 states and 14 countries. This represents more than a 220% increase in membership this year. The reports show also that about 8,000 are now attending our services.

What is more exciting is that there are indications that we will see some major breakthroughs this coming year that promise to yield even more substantial growth, not only in Southeast Asia, Africa, Pakistan, Philippines, and Central America, but here in the United States. We would not be surprised if our membership tripled again this coming year, or perhaps even quadrupled.

Again this year we had an increase in funds received at the International Offices, and registrations in the School of Ministry and Youth Camps increased. The report of the General Treasurer earlier this week showed about a 15% increase in finances, and registration in the Youth Camps almost doubled. Also departmental literature was developed for Youth Ministries, Sunday School Services, Children’s Ministries, and Shepherding Ministries, and an attractive new website has been developed. This will be demonstrated during the Youth program tonight.

For all that has been accomplished we give praise unto the Lord. Yet the Lord did not do it alone: the work was accomplished instrumentally through the church, for “we are laborers together with Him” in this great harvest. So I want to take this opportunity to give honor where honor is due. We have been favored by the Lord with many wonderful leaders and workers in the church. It is such a great privilege for me to be in covenant

and fellowship with you, to serve with such great people to fulfill Christ's mission in this exciting last days work. You have toiled without complaint, sacrificed much for the prophetic cause in which you are now engaged, and that you so much love, and you have endured ridicule and contemptuous mockery from many sources; yet you have accepted it all with grace and the meekness of our Lord. Your endurance has been a demonstration of your faith and spiritual power, and for it you have won my applause and the admiration of many who are looking on. I salute you all.

Section I

The Prophetic Vision: What Is It? How Do We Fulfill It?

The theme of this Assembly---“The Prophetic Vision”---is of paramount importance to believers everywhere, but especially to us in Zion Assembly. I say it is of “paramount importance” because the restoration launched by our forefathers and foremothers in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century was based primarily on the teachings and spirit of what has been called “the vision of the church.” Now if we deny the fundamental teachings and principles that gave birth (or rebirth) to this vision, then we deny ourselves the right to exist, and we deny our forefathers and foremothers the honor due to them for their testimonies and great sacrifices made for this prophetic vision. In other words, if the fundamental teachings and vision that impassioned and drove our pioneers to come out of their respective religious organizations to form a new fellowship were corrupt and false at their core, then they were actually heretics and schismatics and should have stayed in their old denominations. Moreover, the present generation should now go back and apologize for the confusion and disruptions caused by their forefathers.

But this is precisely why Zion Assembly exists: for we believe the light of God's prophetic revelation broke through the darkness of the Dark Ages and shined again upon our fathers and mothers, and they discovered again the foundation of the church, and the original blueprints for the house of God, and began to build again accordingly.

Now according to these blueprints, there is no such thing as an “invisible church,” that is, some vague, floating, incorporeal, mystical body of Christ. That's why our fathers and mothers began to build a visible city, an holy nation, according to the Word of God---a nation with laws and government and discipline. The importance of this cannot be overstated: for the “invisible church” idea was born in the darkness of the Dark Ages

and this corrupt doctrine prevented the church from coming forth in the last days, and today this doctrine continues to prevent millions from seeing and becoming part of the real church of the Bible: for if the church is invisible or spiritual, you can't see it or know it, so there is no use to even look for it. These half-blind believers therefore are not looking for the church; they exist in a kind of religious semi-stupor.

Look, if the body of Christ is entered solely through the new birth, and is made up spiritually of all born again believers, without any visible government and corporate Rule of Faith and Discipline between them, then our whole tradition of the faith is rendered false: for our fathers and mothers did not leave the churches they belonged to because the people in them were not saved; in fact, the Spurlings, Plemons, Porters, Lemons, Elrods, Bryants and the rest of our early pioneers considered their Baptist and Methodist friends saved, and Tomlinson considered his Quaker and holiness brethren sanctified and holy. Rather, they came out of those man-made organizations because the Lord gave them a vision of the church as it is revealed in the Bible---a divine and peculiar institution with government and discipline! And they covenanted themselves together to restore this prophetic church, and to fulfill its peculiar mission in the world. Indeed, they felt compelled to take the action they did: for the light that shined on them by the Holy Ghost left them no alternative, if they were going to fully please the Lord and fulfill His purpose in the earth: for friends in their old fellowships denied and rejected the prophetic vision they now confessed and proclaimed. So the only way they could give clear and faithful witness to the prophetic faith and vision was to distinguish themselves.

For these same reasons, we came out of our former fellowship in 2004 and reorganized the church under another administration to restore the sacred things that had been lost or discarded. We had to: for the new leaders and the people who fell under their influence began again to deny and "fall away" from the fundamental teachings and principles of the biblical vision---the same vision that drew most of us here today into the fold.

It behooves us therefore to endeavor to understand the great heritage "handed down" to us; for if we do not hold this "treasure" precious, we will likely lose it again, or worse, like Esau, sink so low to sell it or give it away for a "mess of pottage."

Now let me hasten to add here that in praising our beloved fathers in the church, I do not mean to leave the impression that they were perfect in all of their perceptions and programs; in fact, they made some mistakes, even a few serious ones. This is why we must always finally look behind the fathers to the "grandfathers"---that is, to the original pattern designed

by God and recorded by the inspired prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament.

But some have asked why we did not unite with one of the other groups that separated from our former fellowship. Our answer is because Zion Assembly stands between two extremes among all the groups that claim identity with the restoration work of our forefathers---R. G. Spurling, A. J. Tomlinson and the rest of our great pioneers. Some of these groups are unscriptural because they are too liberal, and have “taken away” from the Word of God; others are unscriptural because they are legalistic and dogmatic about things that do not matter to God and thus have “added to” the Word of God.

Let me be a clearer. Most of the leaders in our former fellowship began several years ago to deny the very nature of the church and its government. The “god of this world” little by little dimmed their vision of the church and finally they denied its fundamental nature and principles. Then they began to deny in practice, if not in theory, the doctrine of the “priesthood of believers.” This was exposed when they forced changes in the decision-making processes of the church, and began to stifle and circumvent the people’s participation in decision-making. But more importantly the Holy Ghost himself was pushed out on the perimeter of the process! Then when this serious breach of faith was completed, all the other changes followed in its train, including acceptance of the evil of divorce and remarriage. Now, since the basic pillars of theocracy have been removed in this organization, there is nothing to prevent its further decline in spirituality and distinction.

On the other hand, some separated themselves in the early 1990s from our former fellowship and formed a new organization. But in our view this group did not represent a move of God and a true prophetic restoration of the church: for many of the leaders and people in this group separated in anger, and reacted with contempt and contention to correct the real or imagined abuses. Plus this group was full of slander and evil speaking, and the new government of the group refused to discipline and correct those guilty of the slander and evil speaking.

But his group also dug in its heels and tightened its grip on some unbiblical teachings and traditions that had for a long time needed to be abandoned or modified. For example, the traditional view of the office of general overseer, the traditional interpretation of June 13, 1903, a strictly exclusive view of themselves as being the church, a dogmatic view of the King James Version of the Bible as exclusively representing the Word of God, and many other things that are unscriptural. Moreover, since this group organized, it has since disrupted and divided at least three times, and

all of the splinter groups hold more or less to these same views.

Now I make these comments here not to de-Christianize believers in any of these groups, but simply to explain the reasons for our actions in Zion Assembly. We in fact remained for a number of years in our former fellowship, grieving in our spirits, and protesting and pleading (often in tears) for the church to return to the fundamentals of the faith and to the prophetic vision of the church. But our words fell on deaf ears and our tears were held in contempt! Finally, we felt compelled to separate and distinguish ourselves in April 2004 so that we could practice our faith in good conscience, and again pursue the prophetic vision with inspired zeal.

But look, all of this is now water over the dam. God is calling us to go in this last days Zion where our forefathers could not go in their day, simply because it was not time. This is why we are so excited and enthused about this present restoration! There are still many gold nuggets and precious jewels in the prophetic Word that have not been discovered; these must be dug out through the anointing of the Holy Ghost and used to adorn and perfect the bride in these very last days. So you see we must be forward-looking, ever pursuing a more perfect day.

This is why the apostles and prophets and Jesus himself kept this prophetic vision ever before the church. This vision pulls us forward with thrilling expectations. It enables us to live the present in light of the future. It empowers us with an unconquerable optimism! But more importantly it ennobles and gives a sense of divinity to everything that we undertake to do presently in the church. This is why Jesus and the apostles speak so often of the glory of the church in the present tense: “ye are the light of the world,” “ye are a chosen generation, an holy nation,” “ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” See here, we should expect exciting moments of prophetic fulfillment to happen in our midst---both at home in our local churches and at gatherings in conventions and General Assemblies. We need these prophetic breakthroughs for ourselves, for our own edification, and to convince others that we are truly the church of Jesus Christ. It is exciting to be able to say, like Jesus, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” This is in fact the very nature and power of God’s church. What was said of Jesus, “Never man spake like this man,” and “Where can we go, thou hast the words of eternal life,” must be said of His church in these very last days, if we are going to fulfill the church’s mission.

Still, the ideal church is always before us---the perfect, the triumphant, the glorious church! Almost all of the prophets record their inspired impressions of the triumphant, glorious church to capture our imagination and to excite our hopes and expectations! Hear the call of

the angel to the persecuted apostle: “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem . . . Having the glory of God: and her light was . . . clear as crystal.”

God’s Eternal Plan Our Ancient and Glorious Heritage

The fact that our Infinite God has adopted us into His divine family, and allowed us by faith to become part of His eternal plan, and more especially because He has entered with us into a most holy and intimate covenant relationship and made us His betrothed bride, is too wonderful to fully comprehend. By His grace and the miracle of sanctification He has transformed us into His glorious image, and united us together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To think that He foresaw us from eternity and, in the fullness of time, called us out and chose us to be His “peculiar people,” His special “witnesses” in this world, to embody and bear His testimony before the world, is an indescribable privilege. Our new birth instantly united us with the whole family of God in heaven and earth, and our also solemn covenant to keep and obey “every word of God” has incorporated us together in a peculiar way with Christ to be His church. Think of it: at the very moment we were saved, we inherited a 4000 year old spiritual heritage rooted in Abraham---we became “the children of Abraham”---and the very moment we entered into the sacred church covenant, we inherited a special identity among all the peoples and nations of the earth; we became the “church of God” of the Bible---that “holy nation” in prophecy---which began with Moses and the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, and was renewed with David, and restored with Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, after the Captivity, and restored again and reconstituted under the new covenant in Christ, the One whom David prefigured, the Chief Cornerstone of the house of God, the One whom carnal Israel rejected but believing Jews and Gentiles received as their Lord and Savior. These true children of Abraham (Jews and Gentiles), united together under the new covenant, became one new man” in Christ, and at that point became the new temple of God, made not with earthly stones, but with “lively stones” regenerated and illuminated by the Holy Ghost!

This same Jesus is the One ordained from eternity to be the Head of God’s house. He reestablished the house of God upon better promises. This same Jesus appeared to the apostle John in the latter’s old age in a vision to warn the church of an impending apostasy. And when the church

failed to heed His solemn warnings and fell way from her “first love” and apostatized, it was this same Jesus who restored her again in the nineteenth century, and again in 1923, and again in 2004. Why? Because of His promise: that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!” and because the unbreakable promise must be fulfilled, that “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former” (Haggai 2:6-9).

The “Latter House”

Observe, most biblical scholars and denominational leaders think the promise of this “latter house” was fulfilled in the New Testament church; and these scholars finally began to influence the leaders in our former fellowship until they fell under the influence of this interpretation. One of the leaders in our former fellowship, who still holds a high position, told me a few years ago that we had interpreted the prophecy about the “latter house” all wrong through the years; that in fact it really has nothing to do with the Church of God in the twentieth century. But, if this is true, why do the apostles in the New Testament speak of the perfection of this “latter house” as being something still future; for even the Hebrew writer begins at this very passage in Haggai and sees the perfection and triumphant glory of the church as still something to attain (see Hebrews 12:25-29). This inspired writer is simply seeing the prophecy of Haggai through to its end---when God will “shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come” into the church. And to this agree the words of Isaiah, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it . . .” (Isaiah 2:2).

But someone will say that this passage in Isaiah refers to Israel during the millennium, after the Lord returns. To this we answer, that it has its ultimate fulfillment in the millennium, yet it is clear that it began to be fulfilled in the New Testament church, was further fulfilled in the early church, then, after the Dark Ages, continued to be fulfilled in the restoration of the church in the nineteenth- and twentieth century, and now continues to be fulfilled in this very last days Zion that the Lord has raised up. It is an indisputable fact that at no point in the church’s history could it be said that “all nations” had flowed into the church. Then this prophecy must yet realize its complete fulfillment.

It is to the glory of Christ that this latter house will be greater than the former; and for this reason we look forward with thrilling anticipation to perfection, the “rapture,” the second coming, the millennial reign with

Christ, and a new heavens and new earth. Hear the angels exhort the disillusioned apostles, as they watched the power of God sweep Jesus up out of their sight: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing . . . ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10, 11).

What a great heritage---what a glorious future! No wonder the apostle cries out in the prophetic spirit of Hosea, saying, “I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved” (Hosea 2:23; Romans 9:25). And again, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:23; Matthew 21:42).

So many leaders in our former fellowship have allowed Satan to blind them and corrupt their faith, and they in turn now confuse and prevent other believers from receiving the prophetic vision of the church. “Blind lead the blind!” Through unbelief they have excluded themselves from prophetic identity; or else spiritualized the church into a meaningless abstraction. They also have failed to discern and grasp the dynamic of prophecy. To illustrate this latter point, let me pose this rhetorical question: When James, the brother of the Lord and presiding bishop of the general assembly at Jerusalem, quoted Amos 9:11, 12 as a proof text to confirm that the church in the New Testament was in fact the old “tabernacle of David” now restored and built up again with believing Jews and Gentiles, was he speaking exclusively of the church then present, that is, of the church in the days of the apostles? The answer is obviously, no: for the prophet includes the “residue of men” and “all the Gentiles, upon whom [the Lord’s] name is called” as being part of this restored house, this last days church. But this has never happened; that is, “all the Gentiles” have never come in. This prophecy therefore was not completely fulfilled in the New Testament church, or the early church, or the church in the days of our pioneer fathers and mothers in the nineteenth century, or the church after the restoration in 1923, or the church since then, and even at this present time in Zion Assembly. So the complete fulfillment of this passage and many others form part of our prophetic vision in Zion Assembly---and excite our expectations!

Historic & Prophetic Restorations

Now if the church had “fallen down” and become a heap of “ruins,” as the prophet Amos said, and the apostle confirms in Acts 15:13-18, and the Lord says, “I will build it again” and “I will set it up,” then where is it today? For after the passing of the apostles, both history and prophecy reveal that it fell down again before “all the Gentiles” had come in. Then

we may conclude that Amos' prophecy requires more than one application to fulfill it. This seems to be the only reasonable interpretation. And to this agree the words of the apostle Peter in his sermon in Acts 3:21, in which he says, that Christ must remain in heaven "until the times of the restitution [restoration] of all things . . ." The word "times" here is significant, for it denotes more than one restoration. If then the church has required more than one restoration in history, then the words and actions of our Lord---"I will build it again" and "I will set it up"---must also have more than one application. In fact, we believe His words are applicable to each restoration of the church; for if the Lord has the power to remove the candlestick (Revelation 2:5), He has the power also to restore it in its place! If Israel, the natural branches of the original root were "cut off," and other branches "grafted in," still the Lord retains the right and power to graft the original branches in again, if they return in faith (Romans 11:23).

Even in the celebrated declaration of Jesus, "Upon this rock I will build my church," He seems to be speaking not in the sense of a one-time historical event, but in the sense of how and upon what He will continue to build His church. The fact that the church had already been set in order on Mount Hattin earlier in Jesus' ministry before He had made this declaration (cf: Mark 3:13-16; 13:34; Luke 6:12-17), seems to require this understanding: for Jesus here is speaking in the future tense, "I will build." In other words, Jesus is saying, "This is the rock upon which I will always build my church."

This is the reason that our hopes and expectations in Zion Assembly are forward looking. History is vitally important, to be sure; but it serves as the ground for the future, not as an end in itself. Yes our faith stands on history, but it is excited and pulled forward by prophetic expectations! We are looking for His second coming, not His first, and in fact we are looking to be "caught up to meet Him in the air" before He returns again to the earth. And we know that some of the qualifications for the "rapture" are: that the children of God scattered abroad will be gathered together into one fold (John 10:16; 11:49-52; 17:20-23; Ephesians 1:10; 2:14-22; 4:11-16); they will come into the unity of the faith "unto a perfect man" (Ephesians 4:13); they will be washed with the washing of water by the Word of God (5:26); and they will together become a "glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (5:27). All of these prophetic expectations are a vital part of the "Good News." The prophetic vision of the church then is an important part of the Gospel message.

I know that many Christian believers struggle with the idea that the church completely fell away and apostatized in the early centuries of Christianity and ceased to exist as the church; some even struggle with the concept that the church was buried under false teachings and traditions

of men during the Dark Ages, and that its candlestick was removed. Then in order to reason with these brethren, perhaps we can appeal to them on the basis that the church at various times in history went into “captivity” because of sin and disobedience; and in these times of captivity God’s people were corrupted and scattered, and it was necessary for the government and teachings of the church to be restored. This was in fact the way Martin Luther finally interpreted the church in history, though he otherwise completely misunderstood and distorted the nature and purpose of the church. He wrote a famous tract in 1520, titled, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, in which he depicts the Roman Catholic Church serving the same function as Babylon in the Old Testament, which held the church captive six centuries before Christ. Under this image, the church did not cease to exist but rather ceased to function as God’s government in the earth, and thus she could not fulfill her divine purpose. She was in fact during her captivity in Babylon anything but what God had called the church to be and to do. So even under this metaphor the church had to be restored. It had to be “called out” of bondage and corruption and reconstituted on the basis of the Word of God.

This was precisely what Ezra did when the exiles returned to Zion. He reestablished the doctrine and government of the church. And this is precisely what our forefathers did in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, and it is precisely what must be done every time a betrothed body of believers “fall away” from the truth. The fellowship must be restored on the basis of the prophets’ and apostles’ doctrine and government: for this is the only foundation upon which the church can be properly built and perfected (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Peter 3:2).

Called to be the Model Nation

Now you see why all of this is so important: for only a church designed by God and engineered by the Holy Ghost can fulfill His purpose in the world. The church was called into existence and established in the wilderness of Sinai to be God’s visible witness in the earth. It was ordained to be His government in the world---“a city on a hill”---designed by God’s infinite wisdom and re-set in motion by Christ under the terms of the new covenant to be God’s model for the nations of the earth---a model of truth and righteousness, divine order, justice, and discipline. Hear the words of the Lord to the church in the wilderness, “And that ye may put a difference between the holy and unholy, and between the clean and unclean. And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken . . .” (Leviticus 10:10, 11). Now compare Jesus’ instructions

to the church in the New Testament: “Go . . . and teach all nations . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” and “Whosoever shall do and teach [the least of my commandments], the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven,” and again, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Perfect Church---Perfect Christ

For these same reasons, whenever the church has fallen in history, the Holy Ghost has always inspired its restoration. Hear the prophet, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19). Neither Satan and his angels nor man and his engines of tyranny can stop the church from fulfilling her eternal destiny. For if the Lord can make the stones cry out to worship Him, surely He can call His people together to fulfill His purpose. But why is this so important? Because Christ’s mission in the world and His own perfection through the church are at stake. Behold, Christ himself will be made perfect in His bride! Listen to the profound revelation of the apostle: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ . . .” (Ephesians 4:13). The doctrine here conveyed is, first of all, that the church will be perfected in and through Christ (in holiness and in the completion of her mission in the world), but a profounder truth is conveyed in regard to Christ himself, namely, that He will be perfected in union with His perfected bride, that is, the perfection of the church signals the Bridegroom’s return and the celebration of His eternal union with His wife. So the perfection of the church is not only imparted by Christ but is accomplished for Christ; for we are not only “complete in him” but He is made complete in us (not morally, but in the sense of the consummation of His purpose appointed by the Father before the world); for just as Adam was made complete with Eve (Genesis 2:23, 24), so Christ is made complete by the church (cf: Matthew 19:5,6; 2 Corinthians 11:2,3; Ephesians 5:25-32).

See here! The union between Christ and the church is made so profoundly one, that the church becomes a betrothed partner in His sufferings, and even of His cross. The apostle thus rejoices, because he is called to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in [his] flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24). This great mystery---that we are made one flesh with Christ and become an

equal heir with Him in all things, even to the extent of His eternal throne!--is the more magnified by this incomprehensible truth: that we “Always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake . . .” (2 Corinthians 4:10, 11). And again, “If we suffer [with him], we shall also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:12). For “we are laborers together with God” and are made “joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

But there is even deeper truth here, much of which is hidden in a mystery to be revealed only after we are “caught up” and glorified. I refer particularly to the unspeakable union of the church with the eternal Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Ghost, even in this present age! No one perhaps had more spiritual insight into this mystery than the apostle Paul---that is, of the church’s identity and profound intimacy with the eternal Trinity---except our Lord himself, and He touched on its depth only while immersed in prayer. Listen in to Jesus’ prayer as He intercedes to the Father in behalf of the church and the “other sheep”:

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent . . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be one: and that the world may know that thou sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:11, 17, 20-23).

Now as we penetrate ever more deeply through the Holy Ghost into this mystery, it should be borne in mind that our hopes and expectations of the fulfillment of this prophetic vision---that is, of the evangelization of the world with the “all things” message, the gathering together of God’s sheep into one fold, and the perfection of the church in the Father’s infinite love and holiness through Christ---will not be finally realized until the very last days, and perhaps only in the moment before the “Rapture.” In fact, it seems that the perfection of these things will be the signal for Christ’s return in the clouds and our going up to meet Him in the air. Observe the inspired

words of the apostle: “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10), and notice again Peter’s inspired prophecy showing that Christ must remain in heaven “until the times of restitution [restoration] of all things” (Acts 3:21).

God’s Appointed Times

This is the way God’s eternal plan has always unfolded in history. There are “set times” to favor Zion! (Psalm 102:13). All things were decreed from eternity (contrary to the absurd fictions of modern Process Theology), yet God has ordained certain moments in history for their particular fulfillments! So the apostle says that God’s people in the Old Testament were kept in bondage under the law “until the time appointed But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:1-4). So at the appointed time the star appeared in the east and wise men followed it; the angels appeared to the shepherds at the appointed time, and, again, at appointed times angels appeared to Mary and Joseph to providentially guide them to Egypt and then back to Nazareth. Then right at the appointed time Jesus was betrayed and crucified. This is why He declared, “My hour is come,” for His hour had been appointed by the Father! And Jesus was able to rest in the fact that He was in the hands of the all-wise and all-powerful God, fulfilling His will at the appointed time.

See how much proof we have of God’s appointed times in Scripture! At the appointed time the Lord destroyed all the cattle and livestock in Egypt according to His promise. “And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land. And the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died” (Exodus 9:5, 6). In fact the history of every nation of the world--which exists now or ever did exist--is under His watchful eye and serves His eternal purpose! He calls the nations into existence and removes them at His will. The enlightened apostle declared that God has “determined the times before appointed” of all nations and also “the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26). Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, Nero, Constantine, Charlemagne, and Hitler were instruments to serve the Almighty’s eternal decree! For “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord . . . he turneth it whithersoever he will.” Russia and her “bands” (which include Iran, Turkey, Syria, Libya, Ethiopia, and a host of other nations) will rise together according to prophecy as a great power and aim their armies and arsenals against Israel, intending to make Israel a prey and to seize her riches. But Russia and her allies will do this only because God will “put

hooks in [their] jaws” to make them serve His purpose, and the Lord will finally destroy these nations and magnify His own name (Ezekiel 38:4-19). Observe, the Lord has already read the minds of Russia and her allies (vv. 10-12) and has already determined their catastrophic end (vv. 14-19)!

When will all of this happen: “in the latter days,” at the time appointed (v. 16)! Many today wonder when the beast and false prophet will make their appearance in the world? Hear the prophet: “at the time of the end,” “at the time appointed” (Daniel 11:27, 29, 35). When will God’s plan for the church be perfected? Hear the prophet: “A little one shall become thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time” (Isaiah 60:22). When will Jesus return? When will He judge the world? Hear the apostle: God “hath appointed a day in which to judge the world . . .” (Acts 17:31).

You see then, brethren, why the fulfillment of the church’s mission, and all of our hopes and expectations, are called “the faith”: for all of these things hinge on God’s prophetic promise, and thus “we walk by faith, not by sight.” We do not determine dates and times for prophetic events “which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7) but rather we live and walk in confidence of His infallible and reliable promises! When did the rains start pouring down upon the earth in Noah’s day? Not before 120 years had passed after God had first warned Noah; yet it was “at the time appointed!” When was natural Israel restored as a nation? Almost 1900 years after the promise; but it was “at the time appointed.” And it happened in one day according to the promise! And thus faithful Jews through the centuries would say every year during Passover, “Next year in Jerusalem!” So also our faithful pioneers in the church, even when there was not a sign on earth of its possibility, they proclaimed for 50 years that natural Israel would be restored in her land. Why? Because the Word of God had predicted it! And just as assuredly God will fulfill every prophecy and promise made in regard to His church!

Remain Steadfast in the Faith Keep the Prophetic Vision Focused

We are grieved that so many in recent years have lost their faith in God’s promises in regard to the church! A bishop at headquarters in our former fellowship said to me on one occasion in regard to the gathering together of God’s sheep into one fold, “Do you still believe that?” I said, “Is it still in the Bible?” “Did not Jesus himself say it, and did not the prophets and apostles predict it?” Another headquarters’ worker said, “Do

you still believe in that ol' church covenant?" I said, "Did not the inspired prophet say that it is "perpetual" and that it "shall not be forgotten?" I was asked many times such questions in the years before the restoration of the church in 2004, because so many leaders began to doubt the Word of God and to lose their vision of the church and its mission in the world. One pastor in Tennessee expressed his doubt to me in this way. He said, "But Brother Phillips what we have preached about the church has not come to pass; we have not grown that much, and other churches have surpassed us in many ways." I was shocked at his instability and faulty reasoning! This precious brother was now walking in the flesh, trusting only in what he could see and humanly comprehend. Many now doubt and deny what they once believed and what had been revealed to them by the Holy Ghost in the Word of God! But we are not surprised. Did not Peter predict that there would come "scoffers" in the last days, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" And what's worse, these scoffers (mockers, ridiculers, doubters) replace God's prophetic declarations with their own faithless and twisted explanations. In this manner they become not only scoffers but deceivers!

Before the church was restored in 2004, and we were free again to pursue the prophetic vision, many in our former fellowship had already begun to hold us in contempt and up to ridicule and mockery for remaining steadfast in the faith. They began to say we were too churchy---that we made too much of the church---and that we should exalt Christ alone. One prominent bishop made a statement in a general staff meeting that reflected the sentiments of most of the others there. He said, "I don't feel right when our people talk about preaching Christ and the church: we should leave the church out." Another said, "Yes, it is Christ plus nothing!" Now, brethren, that was a sign of the beginning of the church's fall. I say this because our fellowship and tradition of the faith was built on a vision of the church, and this statement revealed an element at work among us that was bent toward effectively removing this vision. Thereafter these men set themselves to undermine our understanding of what and who the church is, and to confuse her function and mission. It exposed the fact that these ministers and members had come under the influence of others outside the church who had no vision of the church, and this in turn caused them to lose their vision. They had become subverted!

God's Exalted and Glorious Church

Their error was not in exalting Christ, but in exalting Him at the expense and exclusion of the church. They failed to see the wisdom of God's plan: that it was the design of the Father for the Son to become

a man, and for the Son to “empty himself” of His divine prerogatives and equality with God (Philippians 2:5-8), in order to redeem a wife and make her “flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone,” to perfect her, and to receive her for eternity into the throne room and mansion of His Father. These ministers are now like millions of others who have no vision of the church: they do not see the exalted identity that God himself has given to the church in Christ! They don’t see that she is special to Him---the “apple of his eye”---and that He calls her Hephzibah (“the Lord delighted in thee”) and Beulah (“the married one”).

It makes one wonder what Bible these scoffers are reading: for the exaltation of the church is everywhere predicted in Scripture and shown to be pleasing to the Lord. The prophet said, she “shall be exalted above the hills” (Isaiah 2:2). Another prophet shows that she will be highly blessed of the Lord and praised by believers everywhere, saying, “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Another says, “The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all dwellings of Jacob,” and, speaking of the church, the same inspired writer says, “she is all glorious within,” “the King desires her beauty,” and then he places her as a “queen” upon the King’s throne. No wonder then the same writer in another place, says, “Walk about Zion . . . Go around about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.” Another prophet says, “And he will make her “the head and not the tail.”

These are the reasons why the Lord commanded still another prophet, saying, “show the house to the house” (Ezekiel 43:10), and why the apostle says, “I speak concerning Christ and the church.” But the highest praises of all come from the Lord himself: for the church is chosen by Him, and is special to Him: for she is called to be His peculiar bride! This is why there is power in the message of the church! Whoever does not preach the church does a great disservice to the whole family of God and the world!

It is through the exalted church that Christ himself is especially exalted. Even the Father is glorified in the church! The church never becomes God, and should never be worshipped, but still she shares through Christ all that God is, and is taken up into God through the Holy Ghost into heavenly places in Christ---and into the most Holy of Holies in God! She becomes most intimately one with God in covenant union with Him. Thus, whatever identity is given to Christ in prophecy is given also to the church as His partner, His complement, and His counterpart. See here, Christ is called the Husband, and therefore the church is called His wife. He is the Bridegroom, she is the bride; He is the Shepherd, she the fold; He the King, she the queen; He the Head, she the body; He is the High Priest,

she a royal priesthood; He is the Bishop, she is His church; He is the Vine, she the branches; He the Branch, she the fruit; He is a Palace, she a wall; He a Door, she a gate; He is the Temple; she is the temple; He is El, she is Beth-el; He is God, she is the house of God; He the Holy Ruler, she the holy nation; He the Governor, she the city; He the Captain, she the army.

And the correspondence continues: He says “I am the Light” and “Ye are the Light” “I am the Truth, and she “the Pillar and Ground of the Truth.” Jesus says, “ I am the Way, and the Hebrew writer calls the church “the new and living way.” He is a “Living Stone,” the church is “lively stones”; He is the Rose of Sharon, the church is a “sweet smelling sacrifice”; He is the Sun of Righteousness, the church is described as “clear as the sun;” He has Dove’s eyes because she is His undefiled dove. He is God, she is the “church of God.” He is the Christ, she is the body of Christ. He is Adam, she Eve; He Isaac, she Rebecca; He Boaz, she Ruth; He Solomon, she the Shulamite Woman; He Hosea, she Gomer.

This is why Christ and the apostles, and the prophets before them, spoke of the church in highly exalted and praiseworthy terms. They preached and wrote to the church about the glory of the church, to elevate and bolster the ministers and members prophetic hopes and expectations, and to give them a healthy self-image, even a profound sense of heritage and peculiar identity: the distinct honor of being the bride of Jesus Christ. The only thing required of them was to keep in mind that their image and exaltation as the church was completely dependent on Christ’s grace and moral image and their relationship with Him. Our exaltation is therefore cause for humility, meekness, lowliness, and thanksgiving, because we are what we are by the grace of God! “Our sufficiency is not of ourselves but of God.”

Observe, Christ is fully glorified only in and through the church: for the church is the fruit of His labor and the manifest glory of His grace and power. Thus, “to God be glory in the church by Christ Jesus!” Even the angels---the principalities and powers in heavenly places---stand in awe of God’s grace and wisdom in saving, keeping, and perfecting the church. Now look, if the angels themselves are illuminated and educated by the witness of the church, by her miraculous transformation “from glory to glory” and her struggles and victories over demonic powers and sin, through the grace of God, then how much more powerful is the church’s sanctified and Pentecostal witness to the nations of this world. No wonder they will say, “Who is she!”

Section II

The Church: God's Government in the Earth

One of our most peculiar and important doctrines in Zion Assembly is that of the church itself. The primary tenets of our doctrine were handed-down to us from our illustrious fathers and mothers in the faith the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century, after they had been illuminated by the Holy Spirit and received afresh the prophetic vision of the church revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Since then, we have sought to build upon the divine foundation that was “once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

No doubt the most peculiar aspect in our doctrine of the church is our understanding of the word “church” itself, namely, that it signifies “government.” Thus we can confidently say that the “church of God” is “God’s government on earth.” This is seen in the Divine Word and supported by the fact that the Greek word *ekklesia*, translated “church” in our English Bible (for example in Jesus’ famous declaration in Matthew 16:18) carries this meaning. The two times that Jesus employed the word “church” in His teaching, He invoked the themes and principles of ecclesiastical authority and government (cf: Matthew 16:18-20; 18:15-20). This is not to say that the word “church” may not signify more than government, but the idea of government underlies the whole nature, function, and purpose of the word.

This understanding of the word “church” is further proven in Acts 19, where the term is used to identify the city government of Ephesus. In vv. 32, 39, 41, the word translated “assembly” is derived from the same Greek word, *ekklesia*, that Jesus used in His declaration in Matthew 16:18. In these verses the “church” or city government of Ephesus is called into action to settle the uproar caused by some of its citizens and businessmen against the apostle Paul and his fellow-workers. The city government included the “town-clerk” (v. 35), “deputies” (v. 38), and the “lawful assembly” (v.39). Their object was to settle the dispute in an orderly manner and justly, and by a lawful and duly-recognized assembly. This then defines the significance of the word “church.”

Thus when Jesus made His famous declaration---“I will build my *ekklesia* (“church”)---everyone in His day more or less knew what He meant, for the significance of the word *ekklesia* was commonly understood in the Greek-speaking world and in Palestine. Moreover, the equivalent Hebrew word for the Old Testament church, *qahal*, signified order and government. The implication of the word *ekklesia* was therefore consistent with the nature and practice of the congregation of God in the Old Testament, and thus that congregation is called in Acts 7:38 in the

King James Version “the church in the wilderness.” In fact, the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) often uses *ekklesia* to identify the Old Testament congregation of God. It seems then that we are on sound biblical ground by understanding and defining the church as “God’s government on earth.”

The peculiar thing about Jesus’ declaration in Matthew 16:18, therefore, was only in the fact that He would build His church---“my church”---in contrast with the governments and religious assemblies of men. He thus acknowledges that the city and states of the world have their lawful assemblies or governments, and by contrast illustrates that He will have His lawful and duly-recognized assembly and government. His church is therefore distinguished from the governments or “churches” of men, both religious and secular. In fact the purpose of His church is to be the model for the governments of the world---to reveal a more perfect way of social order through the grace of God and the divine pattern of government designed by the Lord. It is therefore distinguished from secular governments and men-made religious sects and denominations.

The Lord’s assembly or “church” is governed and makes decisions based upon the revealed will of God. Its rule of faith does not come up from the people (like in Baptist churches, Independents, and secular democracies), or down from a pope or Episcopal bodies (like in Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodox Churches, Anglican Churches, and Methodism), or across from a presbytery or body of elders (like in Presbyterianism), but is laid down by Christ, the Master-Teacher, and His holy prophets and apostles in the Bible. God’s church therefore “binds” and “looses” only what has been bound and loosed in heaven, and its decisions are “established in the mouth of two or three witnesses,” with the witness of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:42; 15:2, 22-28; 16:4,5; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Peter 3:2). In this sense, God’s church is “judicial” rather than executive and legislative. Its teachings and moral authority are derived strictly from, or else are consistent with, the Holy Scriptures.

Moreover, the principles and operations of God’s church are sanctified and conditioned by His love and grace. Even the church’s motive for discipline and sense of justice are conditioned by love. Her mission is to seek for the regeneration and reconciliation of sinners to God, and the spiritual growth and final salvation of believers, and their corporate union with one another, in one visible body. Church members should be disciplined therefore only with a view for their restoration and perfection, and to maintain the purity of the church (cf: Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5: 1-12; Galatians 6:1,2). All of this requires the peculiar form of divine government that Jesus instituted when He was here on

earth, and it can function properly only when its ministers and members are “crucified with him.” This government operates in divine order only in the power of His grace, and on the constitutional basis of His written Word. This is why the church’s governors and indeed the whole assembly must be sanctified and filled with the sweet Holy Ghost. Otherwise we will merely mimic the spirit and operations of the unsanctified governments of the world around us--- both secular and religious---that have been set-up by men.

Certainly one of the prophetic purposes that Jesus came into this world to fulfill was to establish His peculiar government in the earth. The prophet declared, “And the government shall be upon his shoulders . . . And of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end” (Isaiah 9:6,7). And again, “. . .for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (2:3). This is why we are so self-conscious and sober in Zion Assembly about our church identity. To actually be God’s church, the instruments of His government, is serious business and a “high calling.” We are His representatives and ambassadors in the world, appointed and ordained to speak and act for Him (Matthew 16:19; 18:18-20; Luke 19:12-23; Mark 13:34; 2 Corinthians 3:2,3; 5:18-20; 6:1). This is why we walk circumspectly and think so soberly. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!”

All of this is especially true when we “come together” to act in business for God---to interpret the Holy Scripture and to establish our Rule of Faith; to add to the church or to exclude; to perform marriages; to administer the Lord’s Supper and Foot Washing; and to transact any and all business that binds us to certain principles and procedures. Performing these functions demonstrates the true church in action---the body of Christ operating for and with Christ in the earth. This is the understanding and vision of the church we are seeking to restore in the world today.

It was this understanding and vision of the church that caused the General Assemblies in years past to be so weighty and powerful: for the ministers and members were self-conscious of their peculiar calling and purpose to be God’s government in the world; they had a “vision of the church,” and this prompted them to prepare themselves to function in divine order, to consecrate themselves in prayer with fasting, to be sanctified vessels for the Master’s use, so that they could perform at the highest level for the glory of God and the self-edification of the whole body. They understood the church was not some mystical or spiritual body, but a concrete and functioning government in the world, a government in which they all were actively engaged. This high calling and grave responsibility weighed heavily upon them and caused them to seek soberly for God’s

guidance, to know His eternal purpose and to plead for strength to act in His behalf and to effect His perfect will in the earth, and especially to enable the church to fulfill its outward mission to be “the light to the nations.”

This then is one of the primary aims in this present restoration of the church: namely, to restore the proper doctrine of the church and to work toward its visible formation in the world, and for the unity and perfection of all of God’s people. The “other sheep” must be made to see their calling to be formed into the body of Christ--to dwell and work together in one visible and functioning body in the earth: for this is the only way to fulfill the church’s mission in the world.

Now it is important to understand that the church is God’s instrumental government in the world. He governs through ordained ministers and Spirit-filled people who have “come together” by covenant to act for and with Him. This is our common understanding of “theocratic government.” Whereas God works directly in the larger sphere of His eternal and heavenly kingdom, He works indirectly in the earth through His visible church. This then places a special honor and responsibility upon the ministers and members of the church, and gives them a certain distinction and dignity in this present world. This is why elders in particular--bishops and deacons---are exalted in the New Testament, and why we are admonished to hear their counsel and to follow their leadership (cf: Acts 15:2, 22-28; 16:4,5; 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-15; 5:1,17-19; Hebrews 7:7, 17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5): for they are the visible representatives of Christ’s authority and leadership in the church. Then in order for the church to function properly and effectively, there must be a certain reverence for its leaders. They should be counted worthy of “double honor,” and we should “esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”

Section III **“Awake, O Arm of the Lord”**

In Isaiah 51:9 the prophet cries out, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!” Elsewhere in Scripture “the arm of the Lord” is identified with God’s personal power, especially His power to deliver His people and to judge the wicked. Thus it was the “arm of the Lord” that delivered the Hebrews from Pharaoh and the Egyptians and later the church out of Babylon. But here in Isaiah’s prophecy “the arm of the Lord” is identified with the church itself. She is called and ordained by the Lord

to embody and extend His power in the earth---to be the instrument of His will and to effect His righteous purpose. Listen to the prophetic call to this last days Zion: “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get up on the high mountain . . . Lift up thy voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say . . . Behold your God!” (Isaiah 40:9). And then the prophet declares that Zion is His “arm [that] shall rule for him” (v. 10). What a high calling and awesome responsibility!

It is significant that the “arm of the Lord” is more fully identified by the apostle Paul in the New Testament as the “body of Christ.” Here the whole church---ministers and members---under the dynamic power of the new covenant, completely baptized and immersed in the Spirit, is more fully quickened and empowered to act for Christ. Thus the church is not only the “arm of the Lord” but His “hands,” “feet,” “eyes,” “ears,” “nose,” and “mouth” (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Colossians 1:18).

Now see here: whereas the church is called by the prophet Isaiah a few chapters further on to “Arise” (60:1), here in 51:9 she is called to “Awake.” Observe, before we can arise and perform our duties for the Lord, we must awake, that is, we must become conscious of our peculiar calling as God’s church, and be sobered up to our responsibilities. “Awake, awake,” for the world is dying without a Savior, and Christians are being scattered, divided, and weakened by a thousand man-made structures and a million preachers who will have no government but themselves. We must awake to the imminent dangers all around us in these “perilous times.” Time is running out, both for sinners and for sleepy-headed Christians. Hear the prophet: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jeremiah 8:20). Listen to the apostle: “. . .now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:11, 12).

We can “put on strength” by the knowledge of the Word of God and by the power of the Holy Ghost! The prophet calls us to remembrance of the power of the church in “the ancient days, in the generations of old.” Yes, we have advanced beyond our fathers in some ways, but certainly not in power and demonstrations of the Holy Ghost. And certainly this is the strength that we are admonished to “put on” in these very last days.

Let us then awake and “lay aside every weight. . . and run with patience the race that is set before us.” Let us “lay aside” everything that hinders the proclamation and extension of the Gospel in our hands. Put away therefore from yourselves the mundane and frivolous, and “lay up” for yourselves a heavenly reward. Let your treasure again become the eternal things of God. Awake, brethren!---and live and work for Him.

Section IV

The Church of the Mission

The Mission of the Church

The spirit of prophecy came upon Isaiah and the Lord spoke through him, saying: "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). Here the church under the new covenant is foreseen, and the glory of its nature and purpose is declared. Observe, the church not only has a mission, she is the mission. She carries within her the mystery of the Gospel; her life and personality exudes salvation; she embodies the life and message of Christ, even as He embodied the "fullness of the Godhead." This is the design of God for the church; for just as Christ was the express image of the Father in flesh (John 1:1, 14; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3), so the church is called to be the express image of the Son, so that in and through Him the church becomes the witness of the Father and His representative government on earth (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 1:17-23; 3:14-21; 4:4-6; Colossians 3:10).

Christ's Incarnation Extended in the Church

I will speak more of the church as God's instrumental government in this world in a moment, but here I want us to focus on the church as the body of Christ. In this sense the church is the extension of the Incarnation--the enfleshment of Christ--and thus it is laid upon her to complete His mission in the world. So the apostle: we are "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:10, 11). And again, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (3:2,3).

This is why the apostle could say, I "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24). Thus as the church is "beautified with salvation" (Psalm 149:4), she becomes the manifest glory of that salvation everywhere she goes; she carries His light and glory in her body, in her members. In this way, the church then proclaims the message by being!

We are His Workmanship

This also explains the meaning of the prophet who, under another metaphor, proclaimed, “I will beautify the place of my sanctuary: and make the place of my feet glorious . . . And they shall call thee. The City of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One . . . I will make thy officers peace and thy exactors righteousness . . . thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise . . . The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory . . . Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit [you shall be] the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified” (Isaiah 60:13-21). This is why the apostle proclaimed in the same spirit of prophecy, “But God, who is rich in mercy . . . Hath quickened us together with Christ . . . And raised us up together, and made us sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus . . . For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:4-10).

Our mission then is clear: we must “Go” to proclaim the Gospel but especially to embody the Gospel; for “a message lived out is more powerful than a message preached!” Our objective is to plant Zion Assembly congregations in every city and community around the globe, so that every nation and tribe on earth can witness the Gospel first hand lived out in the glory of the church: for the church is “transformed from glory to glory” so that she might be the embodiment---the universal enfleshment--of Christ’s image. Our mission then is not only to “Go” with the message but “to be” the message. We must be a church with a mission, to be sure, but more importantly we must be the church of the mission!

The Light of the World

Jesus said plainly, “Ye are the light of the world,” and “the salt of the earth.” The prophet said, “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.” Behold, Zion Assembly is called to be the manifestation of the mystery of God to the nations of the world, “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” And again, “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . all they gather themselves together, they come to thee . . . the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces [wealth] of the Gentiles shall come unto thee” (Isaiah 60:3-5).

This is indeed the glorious mystery that “in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Ephesians 3:5,6). This is the cause of our exuberant rejoicing: for this eternal mystery is now revealed also to us in Zion Assembly. We have been again called out to be Christ’s church, and now in sacred covenant with Him we are again set to fulfill His mission in the world.

Jews and Gentiles in One Body

It may be seen here that the dispensationalists who hold that fleshly or natural Israel (which has rejected the Messiah, the “chief cornerstone” of God’s house) is still God’s chosen people, even in her apostate state, is a blatant contradiction of God’s eternal plan: for here, as elsewhere, the prophecies of a “royal priesthood” and “peculiar people” are fulfilled in the church under the new covenant. “For there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism . . .” Clearly God does not have two covenants of justification running together at the same time, one for fleshly Israel and one for everybody else. The church is in fact the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), the “one new man” made up of believing Jews and Gentiles in one body of Christ (Ephesians 2:14-22). In fact, under the new covenant unsaved Jews and barbarians are classified together (Colossians 3:10, 11); there are now only those who are saved and those who are not; and those who are saved are being called together into one visible body.

You see then brethren our great and high calling! Most of you here today have answered this call in Zion Assembly. Our wonderful people have dedicated themselves to Christ’s noble mission, and have worked and sacrificed in faith for this great cause---to reach every creature on earth (Jews and Gentiles) with this message of salvation hope! And the efforts have already yielded great dividends. The church has in less than five years established congregations in 14 countries and 19 states. Our overseers, pastors, and congregations are being taught and encouraged to proclaim and more importantly to embody “the whole counsel of God” in the regions and towns where they live and minister. This blesses our souls and excites our expectations. Yet the task is at this time still unfinished. Indeed the “harvest is great.”

Let me encourage you therefore to “gird up your loins” and “roll up your sleeves” and continue to fulfill the glorious mission that our Lord has assigned to us. Let us take heed to the admonition of the apostle: do

not become “weary in well doing.” Pray for strength and joy and power--in Jesus’ name! To further emphasize the point, the apostle’s exhortation to evangelize the lost in Romans 10:13-21 is primarily in reference to the Jews.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of Good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Mores saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gain-saying people.

Mission Strategy

You see then brethren our mission strategy. Our objective is to plant churches and to teach and train the ministers and members in the ways of holiness, so that they may be the light of God in love throughout the world.

This will require two methods. There are still places in the world in which the old mission strategy that began in the late 1700s is needed, that is, to send missionaries from here in the United States to go and live with the people on site in the various countries. But now for the most part, through the advance of Christianity for 200 years throughout the world, and the great advance in media technology, there are capable ministers and workers in most of the nations of the world. These are plenty capable of proclaiming the fundamental truths of salvation and evangelizing their own nations and tribal peoples. Our objective in these countries is therefore to show them the church, to incorporate them into the church, and to teach them more fully in the faith---to guide them and furnish them with the knowledge and tools to do the job.

To be more precise and clear: our objective in these nations is to provide supervision, teaching and training, and material assistance from the International Offices. This in turn requires basically three things: 1)

bringing the leaders here for teaching and training, which includes not only terms in the School of Ministry, but also to attend the General Assemblies. Scheduling mission tours are also helpful; 2) sending workers from here to provide teaching and organizational assistance; 3) to provide financial assistance, including allotments, assistance for transportation, orphanages, buildings, and so on.

Mission work in the United States therefore involves for the most part the raising of funds to help prosecute the mission of the church throughout the world. And this is in keeping with the principle and practice of the New Testament church. The great missionary apostle calls giving of our material means a special grace of the Lord, and entreats us all to participate in the grace of giving. He highly commends the church at Macedonia for giving toward the needs of the ministry and other poor churches (2 Corinthians 8). But the Macedonians themselves were very poor, for their country had been devastated by war and stripped of its wealth by the powers of Rome. Yet because the saints had such an “abundance of joy” in salvation they gave even out of their “deep poverty” liberally to others!

The Corinthians, on the other hand, were better off than the Macedonians but they were not sharing in their material blessings, though they had before promised they would make charitable contributions. Now Paul commends them for their faith and love and diligence in other things, but shows them that they were falling short in their giving, particularly in regard to the promise they had made. The apostle therefore admonishes them now to “perform the doing of it.”

The apostle then addresses the whole grace of giving, warning against those who might hoard up riches while the needs are great everywhere in the church and the world. But he lays down no law, only gives his apostolic counsel, and shows that giving is in accordance with the nature of divine love and the divine will. His conclusion is: “For if there first be a willing mind [heart], it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that their may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack” (vv. 12-15).

It may be seen that this principle was nothing new: for the apostle based it on the divine practice of the church in the wilderness, that gathered the manna from heaven: for “[some] gathered more, some less” but all were supplied according to his need (Exodus 16:16-18). This then should

be our practice in this last days Zion---but we will surely fulfill it only if we have an “abundance of joy” and love.

Now we can accomplish the objectives shown above only as funds become available. And these funds will come into the International Offices only as we continue to branch out in this country and other so-called first world nations. For every church that is established in these countries not only will reach out to evangelize its local community, but will send a portion of its tithe and offerings to the International Offices: for this is according to our Rule of Faith. Reaching out and establishing churches in the United States and other prosperous countries in the world is therefore a primary objective in our missionary strategy. This is part of the prophetic vision of the church.

Section V

The Right Spirit

We have already emphasized the importance of the right form of government and right teachings to identify ourselves as the church of the Bible, and to be able to fulfill the church’s divine mission in the world. Certainly no church can fulfill Christ’s mission in the world if it does not have His message and teachings! But as important as these things are, they are insufficient of themselves. There must be also the right spirit in the church. Zion Assembly must be the embodiment of the “love of God shed abroad in sanctified hearts by the Holy Ghost.” Our corporate personality and disposition must be formed and conditioned by the Holy Ghost. What we are after then primarily is the restoration of joy, peace, and righteousness in the Holy Ghost! We want to magnify and exemplify the fruit of the Spirit---love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. No place must be given to the works of the flesh---adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and the such like.

Now the term, “such like,” that the apostle mentions in Galatians 5:21, is elaborated upon elsewhere, and includes jealousy, gossip, slander, whispering, talebearing, evil speaking, and so on. Observe, we can restore all the right doctrines in the church, and “take a stand,” as we say, against compromising certain truths---like the divine institution of marriage and modesty in dress---and still miss the mark by a hundred miles. In fact, if we emphasize certain teachings without the right motive and attitude, the result is always some form of legalism or Phariseism.

Have you noticed that the legalist often puts emphasis on external

things to draw away attention from sins that he secretly harbors in his heart. This always becomes manifest sooner or later. Right now in Zion Assembly, I can tell you that there is no inclination at work, as far as I know, to change or compromise any fundamental or cardinal truth in our Abstract of Faith. I believe that most every minister and member is firmly behind our external Rule of Faith. Yet we have to admit that Divine Love does not abound among us, yet to its fullest extent: for the apostle says that we should have “fervent love for one another.” When we share this kind of intense love for one another, sinners will more readily be convicted of their sins in our midst, and we will be more attractive to the “other sheep,” and the whole church will “edify itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16).

There is another important reason that we should cultivate Divine Love among us: for where Love is not prevalent, the subtle “works of the flesh” inevitably fill the vacuum; and these ugly works prevent us from shining with the radiance of Christ. Observe, it is seldom open rebellion to what we call “important teachings” that cools our affections for one another and dims our light; it is rather the harboring of bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, criticalness, harshness, cynicism, strife, evil suspicions, and evil speaking. Remember, brethren, “it is the little foxes that spoil the vines!”

A right spirit is also indispensable for the proper function of the decision-making processes in the church, and for the on-going development of our Rule of Faith. Bigoted, egotistical, and harsh attitudes have no place in the church. Zion Assembly is endeavoring to develop reasonable men--moderate men of the Spirit; men who can reason together and arrive together at the knowledge of the truth.

We cannot function in divine order without a right spirit: for we govern and are governed in the church by love, not by force or coercion. Our whole system stands on Love, and its will surely fall if this divine attribute is not cultivated and given preeminence among us. The church will succeed only if the ministers and members are “crucified with Christ.” Subtle works of the flesh harbored in our hearts will inevitably disrupt our unity and thwart any move forward. Inflated egos, subtle pride, stubborn dispositions, unruliness, and such like, are flaws that suppress the joy of the Lord and disrupt the peace of the church.

See here: pride is often couched in a pretense of piety. I have observed during my forty-one years in the church that some who have been celebrated for being firm and uncompromising, actually in a subtle way have suppressed the joy and freedom of the church. Now the way they do this is difficult to put your finger on, because it is couched in an attitude and disposition of subtle pride rather than external things. It is therefore

seldom exposed and seldom seen for what it really is.

The apostle Paul saw himself as “less than the least of all saints” and “not worthy to be called an apostle,” and confessed, “I am what I am by the grace of God.” Now I heard a minister preach on one occasion that we are all nothing, and in the course of his message he asked everyone to look at the person next to him/her and say, “You are nothing!” But this is quite contrary to what the apostle said and especially to what he meant. Paul said, “I am less than the least,” and “I am not worthy,” not “you are less than the least” and “you are not worthy.” Do you see the subtlety here. The twisting of the Scripture here just gave place for pride to express itself under a cloak of piety. See, if I can make you nothing, or less than nothing, then I can subtly make myself more. Listen to the apostle Paul in another place: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than [himself]” (Philippians 2:3).

What we are trying to achieve in Zion Assembly is a fellowship of reasonable men and women, whose spirits are moderated by the Holy Ghost with holy affections, whose speech is “always seasoned with grace,” and who “prefer one another in love.” Our goal is given by the same great apostle: to teach and warn “every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Brethren we will only advance in holiness and achieve our prophetic goal through men and women who are “crucified with Christ” and are baptized in His holy love!

Observe, the corporate personality of Zion Assembly is still being formed. And we are still young enough and tender enough for our personality to be molded into the right image. But what image? What is God’s church supposed to look like? How is she supposed to act? What do we want people to say about Zion Assembly?

I have a few suggestions in answer to these questions. First, we are supposed to look and act like Christ! For we are “recreated in His image!” I believe this is called Christlikeness. Second, wouldn’t it be a blessing and honor if people would say things such as: “Those people in Zion Assembly are the nicest and sweetest people in the world.” “The people of that church are friendly and full of love and joy!” “They really love one another!” “Those people mean business with the Lord, but they are not legalistic and dogmatic about insignificant things!” “They are serious about their faith, but they are not bigots and narrow-minded!” “I like being around those people.” “There is real freedom to worship over there.” “I like to go there and worship.” “You don’t feel undercurrents of envy and strife among them.” “They are genuine Christians.” “They care!” “They are good people.”

International & Regional Appointments

International Staff

Presiding Bishop.....	Wade H. Phillips
Assistant Presiding Bishop.....	E. A. McDonald
Field Secretary.....	Joshua Amara
Field Secretary.....	Danny Ramirez
World Missions Secretary.....	Wade H. Phillips
Assistant World Missions Secretary.....	Joshua Amara
General Treasurer.....	E. A. McDonald
Shepherding Ministries.....	Rocky Dalton
General Sunday School Director.....	Todd McDonald
General Youth Ministries.....	Scott Neill
Evangelism/Voice of Zion Booster.....	Zachary Snyder
Women’s Ministries.....	Jeannie Quillen
Children’s Ministries.....	Cheryl McDonald
Public Relations.....	E. A. McDonald
School of Ministry.....	Wade H. Phillips
Office Secretary/ <i>Voice of Zion</i> layout.....	Marie Crook
Managing Editor— <i>Voice of Zion</i>	Wade H. Phillips
<i>Voice of Zion</i> Layout.....	Marie Crook

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Western/Northwest Region.....	A. B. White
Northwest Region.....	Gary Larsen
Mideast Region.....	Ron Massey
Southeast Region.....	E. A. McDonald
Southcentral Region.....	Ricky Graves
Southwestern Region.....	Joseph Steele

East Africa/England.....Joshua Amara

Southeast Asia.....Boonyong Bureenok

Central America.....Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez

Mission Representative:

Mexico.....Alejandro Garcia

Carribean Islands.....Wade Phillips

National Overseers:

England/Kenya/Uganda.....	Joshua Amara
Phillipines.....	Domingo Resurreccion
Nigeria.....	Yomi Adenkule
Tanzania.....	David Gomba
Pakistan.....	George Assi
Thailand/Cambodia/Myanmar.....	Boonyong Bureenok
Guatemala/Nicaragua.....	Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez

Committees

Assembly Business.....	William Crook, Chairman Ron Massey Zachary Snyder Ricky Graves A. B. White Joshua Amara C.R. Gregory (Alternates) Reginaldo Duarte Ray Dickson
International Properties.....	Wade H. Phillips, Chairman E. A. McDonald Joseph Steele William Crook Charles Fields Reginaldo Duarte Gene Tingler
Construction.....	Wade H. Phillips, Chairman E. A. McDonald C. R. Gregory Clifford Kelton Ricky Graves Sam Monday Jack Little

Ministers

Bishops

Amara, Joshua	McDonald, E. A.
Bodo, Cyprian Qwardo	McDonald, Todd
Bureenok, Boonyong	Melton, James
Butts, Harold	Merritt, Kenneth
Chavez, Ricardo Valenzuela	Neill, Scott
Cook, Claxton	Onyango, Patrick
Crook, William	Phillips, Wade H.
Dalton, Rocky	Reed, Harold
Fields, Charles	Resurreccion, Domingo
Graves, Ricky	Steele, Joseph
Jernigan, Jesse	Terrell, Billy Ray
Jones, William	Webster, Davis
Kelton, Clifford	White, A. B.
Massey, Ron	

Deacons

Ashley, Dave	Okoth, Elisha
Carasco, Sam	Oombo, James Opany
Davis, Clyde (Eddie)	Onwaga, Joash Odongo
Dickson, Ray	Reid, William
Dorris, Earl	Reitler, Edward
Johnson, Richard	Sanders, Ray
Llaneza, Robert	Tingler, Phillip
Mapambano, Stivin	Villers, Tom
Monday, Sam	Were, George
Moore, Wayne	Whitlock, Sidney
Odoyo, Alfanyo	

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Agwanda, Josh
Akali, Ezakia
Akuom, Sulman O.
Alanya, Michael
Aluodo, Richard
Assi, George
Avila, Juan
Barker, Charles D.
Barbour, Roger
Brock, Carlos
Brown, Tom
Bryant, Kerry
Cook, Joseph Norris
Davis, John J.
Duarte, Reginaldo
Garcia, Miguel
Garcia, Alejandro
Garcia, Vicente
Geda, Janes A
Gibson, Dewey
Gomba, David N.
Graves, Trevor
Gregory, Cleatus R.
Gwara, Tom
Haleluya, Martin
Jackson, Carl
Joaka, Juma
Jorika, Moses
Juma, Eliud
Kagose, Peterlis
Kwadhi, Isaiah
Larsen, Gary L.
Linn, Earl
Lopez, Juan
Mang'ira, Antinius
Masese, Antonius Mingira
Mazareigo, Luis
Mchura, Joseph
McKee, Donald
Miduda, Vitalis
Mita, George
Moses, Jorika
Noreiga, Jacinto
Norton, John
Obiero, George Otineno
Oboo, Joanes Okal
Ochali, Frederick
Ochanda, John
Ocholo, Patrick
Ochola, Simo
Ochuodho, Alex
Odhiambo, Tom
Odongo, Michael
Ogira, Ezra Ochollo
Okello, Nabii Joseph
Oketch, Joseph Ombajo
Okeyo, Steve O.
Okong'o, Samwd O.
Okong's Silas
Okumu, Joshua
Oluoch, Saba Saba
Onyango, Joshia
Omondi, Fred
Ooka, Agnes
Ooka, Daniel Chama
Oloo, Almas Oluoch
Opiyo, Lucus
Osewe, Bernard

Otiengo, Boaz
Otiengo, Francis
Otiengo, Peter
Ouma, James Ng'anda
Owiti, Syprose
Oyando, Eucabet
Oyonge, James M.
Parker, James
Perdue, Gary
Pino, Jorge
Pounders, Bobby D.
Pounders, Tim
Punda, Mika O.
Quillen, Joseph
Rajoro, Peter

Ramirez, Danny
Reid, Adam
Reid, Waldo
Sakwa, Jack Obimbo
Saka, John Onyango
Sarry, Pete
Solomon, George W.
Spangler, Mark
Stonell, Raymond
Snyder, Zachary
Tingler, Jerry
Urcadiz, Daniel C.
Wambogo, Janes Mbaga
Wilcox, Bruce

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Atieno, Monica
Clardy, Dorothy
Davis, Andrea Faye
Ferre, Linda
Joselyn, Treva
Kimble, Shirley
McKee, Ofelia
Obuyo, Damaris
Ogonda, Joyce Adhiambo

Okumu, Elly
Owira, Grace Auma
Periera, Rebecca
Pittman, Cora
Quillen, Jeannie
Rivera, Barbara
Romo, Reina
Stephenson, Tina

Churches/ Missions / Pastors

United States

Adolphus, KY.....	C.R. Gregory
Anaheim, CA.....	Juan Avila
Bakersfield, CA.....	Juan Lopez
Barberton, OH.....	James Melton
Bayou La Batre, AL.....	Charles Fields
Butte, MT.....	Gary Perdue
Caledonia, MS.....	Ricky Graves
Chestnut Hills, TN.....	Zachary Snyder
Cleveland, TN.....	Todd McDonald
Clinton, TN (Jacksboro).....	Ray Dickson
Colton, CA.....	Daniel Urcadiz
Dallas, OR.....	Kerry Bryant
Ft. Oglethorpe, GA.....	Harold Reed
Fresno, CA.....	James Parker
Fries, VA.....	Rocky E. Dalton
Glendora, CA.....	Reginaldo Durat�
Goshen, IN.....	Jim Webster
Greenville, SC.....	Scott E. Neill
Hartsville, TN.....	William Crook
Herminston, OR.....	Brian Norquist
Hesperia, CA.....	Danny Ramirez
Las Vegas.....	Jorge Pino
Little Bingamon, WV.....	Tom Brown
Little Rock, CA.....	Rebecca Pereira
Lompoc, CA.....	Pete Sarry
Lompoc, CA (UPO).....	Vicente Garcia
Lompoc, CA(FCI).....	Vicente Garcia
Madera, CA.....	Reina Romo
Okolona, MS.....	Billy Ray Terrell
Pulaski, TN.....	Jim Melton
Rialto, CA.....	Danny Ramirez
Roanoke, VA.....	William Jones
Salisbury, MD.....	Buddy Quillen
Santa Ana, CA.....	Luis Mazariego
San Jose, CA.....	Barbara Rivera

Sheridan, WY.....	Gary Larsen
Saticoy, CA.....	Jose Lozano
Taylor, SC.....	Raymond Stonell
Vallejo, CA.....	George Solomon
Van Nuys, CA.....	Miguel Garcia
Ware Shoals, SC.....	Andrea Faye Davis
Wilmington, (Leland) NC	Robert Llanaza

United States Missions

Dawes, (Sharon) WV.....	Ron Massey
Flintville, TN.....	Roger Barbour
Gainesville, MO.....	Jerry Tingler
Kosciusko, MS.....	Bill Summerlin
Little Rock, CA.....	Rebecca Pereira
Medota, CA.....	James Parker
Saticoy, CA.....	Jose Lozano

International Churches/Missions

Nation	Churches	Missions
United States	43	16
Kenya	32	5
Philippines	1	2
Thailand	19	2
Tanzania	13	3
Pakistan	1	2
Guatemala	2	6
Nicaragua	1	2
England	2	
Mexico	1	1
Nigeria	7	1
Uganda	5	1
Cambodia	1	
Myanmar	2	

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ABSTRACT OF FAITH

Note: The following was read before the entire Assembly on September 26, 2004, and was accepted by unanimous agreement.

INTRODUCTION

Zion Assembly Church of God is a Spirit-filled body of believers who have covenanted themselves together with God to accept and obey the teachings of Christ and His apostles (Exodus 19:3-6; John 14:6, 8; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:24-32). This commitment is firm, even in this present time of apostasy, when so many are “falling away” and “[departing] from the faith” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2; 3:1-12; Jude 3-19).

The ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to live and worship together in this “most holy faith,” to walk in truth, to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” “and to cultivate among themselves the graces of love and holiness.” They seek for the perfections of Christ in their fellowship, and by His grace and power to conform to the image of Jesus Christ so completely that when He appears they shall be like Him (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:1-17; 1 John 3:32).

Besides this internal disposition to cultivated mutual love and care within the household of God, the ministers and members of Zion Assembly have committed themselves to labor for the unity of all believers, until all “see eye to eye,” “speak the same thing,” “walk by the same rule” (Isaiah 52:8; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 3:16). In this manner, they seek to carry forward the apostolic vision: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Zion Assembly has further obligated itself to publish and to proclaim the full gospel into all the world in obedience to Christ’s commission to the church (Matthew 28:19).

Church Membership

Membership in Zion Assembly Church of God is open to all believers whose testimony is evidenced by the fruit of the new birth, and who are willing to covenant themselves together with Christ and the church to walk in the light of the gospel. Candidates become members by the following solemn obligation:

Will you sincerely promise in the presence of God and these witnesses, that you will accept this Bible as the Word of God, believe and practice its teachings rightly divided, with the New Testament as your rule of faith and practice, government and discipline, and agree to walk together as one body in the light of the gospel to the best of your knowledge and ability?

In response to this covenant formula, the candidate answers, “I will by the grace of God.” The minister then lays hands on the new member and offers prayer for divine guidance and strength; the congregation follows with an affectionate welcome, and extends the right hand of fellowship.

Prominent Teachings in the Scripture

Note: The following statements are not meant to form a creed, or to be thought of as an exhaustive statement of beliefs upon which the church is built. They are simply an abstract of some of the important and fundamental teachings and principles set forth in the Holy Scriptures, which form an essential part of the church’s Rule of Faith.

The Trinity—The Bible teaches that the one eternal God exists in three persons: namely the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three have distinct identities, yet they form one undivided Godhead, subsisting in the same nature (Romans 5:5; 15:16, 30; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 5:19; John 3:5; Ephesians 2:18; Titus 3:5). The Father is God (Ephesians 4:6), the Son is God (John 1:1-3; 10-1; Hebrews 1:8; Revelation 1:8), the Holy Spirit is God (John 14:17; 16:13; Acts

5:3; 1 Corinthians 2:10), yet there are not three gods, but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The three persons of the divine Trinity work together in perfect unity for the salvation of man (John 3:5; 6:44; 14:6, 16, 17; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), and God’s “only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Through Him, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received into glory, and now sits on the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Acts 7:55; 1 Timothy 3:16). Through Him alone do men have access unto the heavenly Father. It is through His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross that we are saved. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). He is the spotless “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He is also the head of the church and the savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23).

The Bible—The Holy Scriptures—both Old and New Testaments—reveal God and His will for man. They are inspired, inerrant, infallible, and unchangeable (2 Timothy 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:16-21). The truths of the Scriptures are revealed by prophecy, type, precept, and example, illuminated through the power of the Holy Spirit. The teachings of the Bible, particularly in the light of the New Testament, are the Church’s final rule for faith, practice, government, and discipline (Acts 2:42; 2 Peter 3:1, 2). Walking in the light of God’s Word is the guiding principle and commitment of Zion Assembly Church of God. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

The Church—The church is a visible body of believers formed and incorporated by covenant with God to keep His commandments (Exodus 19:5-8; 24:3-8; Psalm 119:57; John 14:15; 17:6, 8, 14; 1 Peter 2:9). It is theocratic in form and function, providing order and government through the Spirit and the Scriptures for God’s people (Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:7; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 12:28).

The church is presently imperfect, spotted with backsliders and “false brethren” (1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:4; Jude 4). It is thus distinguished from the kingdom of God, the latter being the spiritual realm of all born again believers (John 3:3-8; Romans 14:17; Colossians 1:13). One is “born” into the kingdom; he/she is “added to the church” (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:47). The church will succeed to proclaim the gospel into all the world (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16); will be perfected “with the washing of water by the word,” and will be presented to Christ glorious in holiness (Ephesians 5:26, 27). The General Assembly is the highest tribunal of authority in the church of the interpretation of the Scriptures (Acts 15; 16:4, 5). The purpose of the General Assembly is to promote unity and fellowship among the saints, to search the Scriptures for additional light and understanding, and to resolve differences in interpretations, which tend to be divisive among the ministers and churches. All matters of faith, government, and discipline are discussed before the entire body of the church assembled, and resolved in one accord with the manifest approval of the Spirit (vv. 12, 22, 28), based on the precedent: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.” All male members in good standing have an active voice in the Assembly. Women are a vital part of the church’s life and ministry. In matters dealing with church authority, however, they voice their opinions through their husbands and church elders (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-9; 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-17).

Salvific Work of Grace

Conviction is a revelation to man by the Holy Ghost of the righteous judgment of God. Through conviction, unregenerated souls see themselves as sinners before God, experience guilt, and realize their separation from Him who is holy, just and good (Isaiah 6:1; John 6:44; Acts 2:37, 38). True repentance can be made only through the work of the Spirit in conviction (John 16:7-15; 1 Corinthians 12:3; see also John 8:32; 14:6).

Repentance is the act of confessing one’s sins before God, being willing to forsake them and to turn to Christ with all of one’s heart,

mind, soul, and strength. True repentance can be made only in the spirit of godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10). Repentance is manifested by certain fruit “meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; Romans 6:2). The act of repentance should be followed by water baptism [see below] (Mark 1:4, 5, 15; Luke 13, 3; Acts 3:19; 5:30, 31; 1 John 1:9). Repentance is a prerequisite experience for justification.

Justification is the state of being void of offense toward God. It is made possible through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is the act of God in forgiving the transgressions of a penitent sinner. Justification is the result of repentance and faith (Romans 8:1, 2; 3:23-26; 1 John 1:7). The genuinely justified person has “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:1, 2). Justification signifies the pardon (forgiveness) aspect of the new birth.

Regeneration (Born Again) is the act of God in creating new life in the heart of the believer through the Holy Ghost. It is a definite and instantaneous experience. Man is dead in sins and trespasses through Adam, and can be quickened or regenerated only through faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice (Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5; Colossians 2:13, 14; John 5:24). Regeneration is the same as the new birth. “Born Again” is another term for regeneration. The result of this experience is that the believer becomes a child of God. It is through this new birth that one becomes a part of the Kingdom of God. Jesus said: “Ye must be born again” (John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23). The new birth is a prerequisite condition for the experience of sanctification.

Fruit of the Spirit is of divine origin. It is the very life of God poured into the heart of the regenerate believer. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22, 23). We are admonished in the Scripture to walk in the Spirit and not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11).

Divine Healing is provided for all in the atonement. Christ’s atoning sacrifice on the cross provides healing for the whole man, including

his body. Divine healing is effected by faith without the aid of medicine or surgical skills. In cases where one is healed through the assistance of physicians, medicine, herbs, etc., God is still to be praised: for it is God who heals in any case. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:2, 3; Isaiah 53:4, 5; Matthew 8:17; 2 Peter 2:24; James 5:14-16).

Subsequent Grace

Sanctification is the second definite work of grace wrought in the regenerated heart by faith. In sanctification, the carnal nature is eradicated (“the old man is crucified”) so that the believer no longer has the inclination or propensity to sin; that is, in sanctification the desire to sin is removed (Hebrews 10:10; 13:12, 13; Romans 6:1-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). Sanctification enables the believer to bring his/her body under subjection to Christ, and to live a life consistent with the spirit of holiness and in accordance with the Word of God. Sanctification is a prerequisite condition for the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

Holiness is the result of sanctification. It is a state of grace and purity in which perfect Christlikeness is desired and pursued (Matthew 5:48; 2 Corinthians 7:2). God has called us unto holiness (Thessalonians 4:7). “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15, 16). “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14; see also Luke 1:74, 75; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Titus 2:11, 12; Eph. 1:4; 4:13, 24). Paul expressed his desire to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28). Christ is returning for a church that is glorious in holiness: “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Ephesians 5:27; see also Psalm 45:9-13).

Practical Graces

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken, or the satisfying of one whom otherwise has been wronged (Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8, 9). This act alone does not save, but it gives evidence of a heart that has truly repented. Restitution glorifies the grace of God and supports the testimony of the believer. It also gives opportunity to reconcile with those who have been wronged. It is the fulfillment of the law of love (Romans 13:8). Some restitutions should be made only with great care and with pastoral guidance, in order to avoid further offense or injury.

Sabbath means rest. Observance of the Sabbath in the Old Testament (the seventh day) was instituted to point to the believer's spiritual rest in Christ under the New Covenant. The Old Testament requirement to keep the Sabbath holy is now superseded by the commandment: "Be ye holy," for in Christ the believer is enabled and required to live holy every day. Sunday is not the Sabbath, but is a day set aside by the church to give special attention to the worship of God and the fellowship of the saints (Hosea 2:11; Colossians 2:16, 17; Romans 14:5, 6; Hebrews 4:1-11).

Meats and Drinks—The prohibitions against certain meats and drinks in the Old Testament were not extended into the New Testament church. These ceremonial aspects of Mosaic legislation were "nailed to the cross" of Christ, and done away with in the covenant of grace (Colossians 2:13-17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 9:8-11). What one eats and drinks (with the exception of intoxicating beverages) is now a matter of conscience, and does not violate the nature and principles of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). However, one should be mindful of the Scriptural injunction: "...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (See also: Romans 14:2; 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Tithing And Giving—Tithing is the giving of one tenth of one's increase to Christ, our High Priest. It began as a voluntary act with Abraham, was required under the Mosaic law, and carried forward by

Christ as a discipline for the New Testament church (Matthew 23:23). Tithes are to be brought to the house of God and properly distributed by the ministers having the charge of the treasury (Malachi 3:10). Freewill offerings are to be encouraged and regarded as a gift from the heart. Tithing and giving into the church are part of God's plan to finance His work through the church on earth. We are required in the Scriptures to be good stewards of that which God has entrusted in our care (See also: Genesis 14:18-20; Luke 11:42; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Hebrews 7:1-21).

Swearing and Profanity—Taking an oath is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (James 5:12). Jesus said, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all...But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:34, 37; see also Exodus 20:7). An affirmation of the truth is sufficient; it is acceptable even in secular courts. Similarly, the use of profanity reflects an impure heart and has no place in the life of a child of God (Matthew 15:18, 19; Philippians 1:27; 3:20; 1 Peter 1:15; 2 Peter 2:7; James 3:8-10).

Intoxicating Beverages and Drugs—“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). The Scriptures teach against the consumption of alcohol or other intoxicating beverages because God has called us to perfect sobriety (1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:2). Believers are admonished not to “...give place to the devil.” So-called moderate or social drinking certainly gives place to the adversary and thus believers should totally abstain (Ephesians 4: 27; see also: Isaiah 28: 7; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21). Much of what is said about intoxicating beverages is true also of drugs. The use of drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, opium, cocaine, etc., impair the body and is not in keeping with the teachings and principles of Christ and the Scriptures. These things defile the body and are inconsistent with God's call to soberness (2 Corinthians 7:1;

Isaiah 55:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31, 32; Ephesians 5:3-8; James 1:21). Drugs used for medical purposes should be taken only under the care and direction of a physician, and then only in good conscience.

Gambling (Gaming)—Due to the increase of lotteries and other forms of gambling, we feel that we should make it clear that Zion Assembly Church of God is opposed to gambling in any form. Gambling brings with it a negative effect on society and is immoral and leads to greed (Exodus 20:17; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10). This sin is associated with wasting time, money, and possessions. It also carries with it the stigma of greed and covetousness (see Exodus 20:17; Psalms 10:3; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10; Hebrews 13:5). Gambling of any kind (lotteries, casinos, sports betting, video poker (slot) machines, on-line gambling, bingo, etc.) is denounced in principle throughout Scripture. It is also addictive, leads to increased crime, and often destroys marriages and homes.

Unequal Yoke—The Bible teaches against the children of God being unequally yoked with unbelievers. Binding ourselves with unbelievers in organizations and secret orders with an oath is contrary to the Spirit of Christ and the plain teaching in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:14-17). As the espoused bride of Christ, we have covenanted ourselves to give undivided loyalty to Christ. “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2; Jeremiah 50:5). Membership in organizations which require an oath of secrecy should be dissolved before becoming a member of the church. “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing” (John 18:20).

Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Gifts

Baptism with the Holy Ghost is an instantaneous experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to entire sanctification. In this baptism, Christ is the agent; the Spirit is the element (Matthew 3:11). The baptism with the Spirit on the sanctified life

is accompanied with speaking in tongues: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4; see also: 10:44-47; 19:1-6). The baptism with the spirit is a baptism of spiritual empowerment for service in the kingdom of God (Luke 24:49; John 15:26; Acts 1:8); it also enables one to minister effectively within the church for the self-edification of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Ephesians 4:11-16).

Speaking in Tongues always accompanies the baptism with the Holy Ghost. The believer speaks in “unknown tongues” as “the Spirit gives utterance” (Acts 2:4). “Unknown tongues” is distinguished from speaking by the gift of the Spirit in “divers tongues,” that is, in languages that are known to man (Acts 2:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:2). In either case (“unknown tongues” or languages known to man), the manifestation of tongues (and interpretations) is always consistent with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 14:26). The gift of tongues is a sign to unbelievers (vv. 14:21-23), but serve also for the self-edification of the believer (v. 4).

Gifts Of The Spirit—There are various gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The gifts of the Spirit were in operation in the New Testament church, but thereafter the church began to “fall away,” and the manifestations of the spiritual gifts began to wane. After the apostasy in the fourth century, and the ensuing “dark ages” of Christian history, the manifestation of spiritual gifts (particularly tongues-speaking) were almost non-existent (manifested on occasion mainly among so-called heretics and unorthodox Christians). In these last days (particularly since early in the twentieth century) God is again pouring out His Spirit “upon all flesh” according to prophecy, in order to fulfill His eternal purpose through the church (Joel 2:28-32; 3:16-18; Acts 2:38, 39).

Signs Following Believers—Signs in the New Testament were mainly for the purpose of confirming the Word of God and Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. As believers went forth preaching the Word in Jesus’ name, the Lord worked with them and confirmed

the Word with signs following (Mark 16:15-20). Miraculous signs follow believers in order to confirm the proclamation of the Word of God, to convict sinners, and to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Ordinances

Water Baptism is the act of being immersed in water by the minister of the gospel in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is commanded by Christ and represents His death, burial and resurrection, which are experienced in the life of the believer (Romans 6:3-5). This ordinance has no power to wash away sin, but is the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21). Water baptism is valid only when the candidate is actually born again (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8-10; 16:15, 16; John 3:22, 23; Acts 10:47, 48; 16:33). Water baptism is identified with spiritual regeneration; it is not the door into the church.

Lord's Supper is a memorial meal, which calls to remembrance the sacrifice of Christ, who shed His blood for our sins. Jesus commanded that this sacred meal be observed "in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). The broken, unleavened bread represents His body; the fruit of the vine (unfermented grape juice) represents His blood. This sacred ordinance should be observed with holy reverence, only after careful self-examination (1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17; 11:23-30). It is the outward sign of Christ's covenant with the church (Luke 22:20).

Feet Washing is an ordinance in the church. Following the institution of the Lord's Supper, Christ girded himself with a towel, washed the disciples' feet, and said: "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). This ordinance is distinguished from the cultural practice of feet washing in the Middle East; it has spiritual significance and is commanded to be observed by believers (1 Timothy 5:10). The purpose of feet washing is not fulfilled through charity and good works. It is to remind us that we have one Master and Lord, who is

the head of the church, and we are all His servants, and servants of one another.

Divine Sanctities

Sanctity of Life—Human life is sacred because it is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Taking of innocent life is thus strictly forbidden in Scripture, including abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, genocide, and suicide (self-murder). “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). Whosoever sheddeth innocent blood will not be held guiltless before God (Genesis 9:6; Numbers 35:30, 31; Romans 13:8-10; Revelation 21:8).

Sanctity of Marriage—Jesus said, “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6). Accordingly, marriage is between a male and female until death (Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2); as such it is a divine institution that should be held in the highest esteem among all men and women (Hebrews 13:4). Adultery, fornication, divorce and remarriage are sinful practices that violate the laws of God, and injure the home and family. Nevertheless, unfaithfulness (sexual relationships outside of marriage) is not grounds for divorce and remarriage, for “whosoever marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Therefore, those who remarry while their first companion is alive are not eligible for membership in the church (see Exodus 20:14, 17; Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:15-20; 7:2, 3).

Sanctity of the Body—Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are admonished to glorify God in our body (1 Corinthians 6:20-21). “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy” (3:16-17). We are also admonished to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1), and “...whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31b). Incest, same sex unions, and all homosexual and lesbian

relationships are strictly forbidden by the Scriptures. These practices are an abomination to God, though they may be sanctioned by a state or religious institution (Romans 1:24-28; Leviticus 18:22, 23; 20:10-21). Practices such as “body piercing,” tattooing, mutilating and disfiguring the body are of pagan origin and contrary to the spirit of holiness and biblical principles. These practices should have no place in the lives of believers (Cf: Timothy 2:8-10; Romans 12:1, 2; Isaiah 3:16-22; 1 John 2:15-17).

Eschatology

The Rapture and Pre-Millennial Second Coming Of Jesus—Christ is coming again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:27, 28). “The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; see also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). All who are caught up in the first resurrection will attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Christ will then return to earth and reign with the saints for a thousand years (vv. 4, 6; see also Zechariah 14:4, 5; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 5:10; 19:11-21).

Resurrection—There will be a resurrection for both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will be raised at Christ’s first appearance in the clouds of glory. The resurrection of the wicked will occur after the thousand years reign of Christ on earth. “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15; see also Daniel 12: 2; Revelation 20: 4-6; John 5: 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, 41-58).

Eternal Life for the Righteous—The reward of the righteous is everlasting life in the presence of God. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46; Luke 18:29, 30; John 10:28; Romans 6:22; 1 John 5:11-13).

Eternal Punishment for the Wicked—Those who reject or disregard the call to repentance and salvation are doomed to eternal damnation (John 3:15-21). In hell there is no escape, no liberation, no annihilation. Hell is the “the second death,” and is a place of eternal torment. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8; see also: 20:10-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14:15; Matthew 25:46; Mark 3:29).

Principles for Practical Christian Living and Discipline

The following guidelines are explicitly revealed in the Scriptures, or else shown to be consistent with biblical teachings. They are brought to our attention to enhance our relationship with Christ and one another, and to encourage us to live in a way that will bring glory and honor to the name of Christ, and to support the witness of the church. We are admonished in the Scriptures: “...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12b). Jesus instructs us: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Prayer—Jesus’ admonition to “watch and pray” (Matthew 26:41a) has never been more urgent than today. We live in “perilous times,” and Christ and the apostles warned that the times will only worsen as we approach our Lord’s return. Therefore, daily prayers and family devotions should be a priority in every church home. Maintaining a prayerful attitude is a key to spirituality for every individual and local congregation. Again Jesus said, “...men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1a), and the apostle encouraged believers to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We are also enjoined to “...pray one for another...” (James 5:16a). Special prayers should be made for those in authority and for those who have given themselves in service to God and to the ministry of the Word

(1 Timothy 2:1-3). Prayer is so essential to the life of the church that the church is called “the house of prayer” (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13).

Bible Study—Reading and studying the Scriptures are invaluable to the spiritual welfare of the child of God. Every member of the church is encouraged to be a faithful student of God’s holy Word. Paul instructs us to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God...” (2 Tim 2:15a), for “the holy scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (3:15). Further, he says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (v.16). The importance of the Word of God is eloquently expressed by Psalmist: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” And again, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:105, 11).

Church Attendance and Worship—Worship and fellowship with believers of “like precious faith” is a vital part of the Christian life. Worship should be heartfelt in the Spirit, and in harmony with the Word of God (John 4:23b; Ephesians 5:19). Each member of the church is a part of the body of Christ, and thus the body will be hindered to the degree that one member fails to actively participate in its life and mission. Accordingly, members should actively support every function of the church, and participate as much as possible. The exhortation of the Hebrew writer is worthy of our careful attention: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much more as we see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). Children should be instructed at home, and taught by precept and example to respect the house of God. Ministers and their families should be examples in their lifestyles and conversations. “And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane” (Ezekiel 44:23a). A prayerful attitude creates an atmosphere conducive for worship and the ministry of God’s Word. Believers should therefore be prayerful as the minister delivers the message, lest Satan come

and steal the Word of God from their hearts (Mark 4:4, 15). God's love "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" should fill the atmosphere of our worship services. Love should govern our every action and be shown to everyone without partiality (1 Corinthians 13). We should take special care to show love to visitors. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Walking Circumspectly—Children of God should "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time for the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15,16). Living a consecrated life at home and abroad will give no place for anyone to justly think or speak of you as a hypocrite. Our manner of life and conversation should be holy in word and deed, as becoming to a child of God. As representatives of Christ in this world, and members of the Church of God, we should fashion ourselves with modesty and sobriety (Psalm 1:1-3; Philippians 1:27; Thessalonians 5:15-23).

Entertainment and Worldly Attractions—Christians should never participate in worldly attractions and entertainment where the principles of holiness may be compromised. Believers should participate in activities with unbelievers only with a guarded disposition, lest one becomes entangled or entrapped in the snares of Satan. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8; see also 2 Peter 2:19-22).

Illicit Relationships—Paul admonishes us to "give no place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). Forming too close an intimacy with the opposite sex, even if they are brothers and sisters in the Lord, creates an environment for temptation and gives opportunity for the "wiles of the devil." Samson is a classic case of this unwise behavior, which led to his fall from grace (Judges 16); whereas Joseph wisely fled from a similar situation (Genesis 39). Paul perhaps had Joseph in mind when he exhorted, "Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). The words of James, the Lord's brother, also come to mind: "Lust when it is conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth

forth death” (James 1:13-15). In view of these solemn admonitions, great care should be taken to avoid associations and situations, which could reflect upon one’s character and bring reproach upon Christ and the church.

Outward Adornment—Christians are ambassadors (representatives) for Christ in this present world (2 Corinthians 5:20). As such they should be careful to adorn themselves as befitting their Lord’s plainness and purity. Adorning oneself after a worldly fashion with facial paint, gold, pearls, costly apparel, etc. is inconsistent with the testimony of one professing a life separated unto God. “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel... But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:1-6; see also 1 Timothy 2:8-10; Isaiah 3:16-24; 61:10).

Corporate and Self-Discipline—Self-examinations to evaluate one’s own faith and spirituality are healthy (1 Corinthians 11:28). Sincere concern for others is also good and to be encouraged. We are our brother’s keeper. Counsel should be given only in the spirit of love and with godly wisdom, and according to the rule of discipline outlined in the gospel (Matthew 18:15-20). (A harsh spirit of criticism is detrimental to the spiritual welfare of both the critic and the one receiving the criticism: Matthew 7:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 5:14, 15; Ephesians 4:30-32). Discipline should be administered only as a last resort, and always through prayerful counsel and with the ultimate good of the erring brother/sister in mind (1 Corinthians 5:1-7; Galatians 6:1-5).

