

“Caught Up . . . and Carried Away”

“I knew a man in Christ . . . such an one caught up to the third heaven . . . and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” - - -the apostle Paul

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels . . . saying, 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 apostle John

Editorials . . .

“Caught Up . . . and Carried Away”

Recently I was asked to preach to a small group of friends at a local independent church here in Cleveland, and of course gladly accepted the invitation. I had prepared a message for the occasion, but after prayer and while on my way to fulfill this appointment the Lord inspired me with the following thought: **“Caught Up . . . and Carried Away.”** The point of the message combined the experiences of the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12.1-9 and the apostle John in Rev. 21.9-10, namely, that we desperately need like these two apostles to be *“caught up to paradise”* and *“carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain”* to more clearly hear the voice of God and see more vividly the *“Bride, the Lamb’s wife.”* The common denominations and independent churches seem to have settled in this generation for humdrum worship and routine and mundane service. They are almost altogether naturalistic in their faith and practice of religion. Whereas, it is evident that what is needed today---in this hour---is a baptism of the supernatural power and anointing of the Holy Spirit!

But someone will surely say that John and Paul were apostles with special callings and gifts. Well in some ways that is true; but it is not true that God thinks any less of us in the church today, nor that spiritual gifts, miracles, and supernatural manifestations and demonstrations of the Spirit are any less needed today than they were in New Testament times. It is plainly evident, in fact, that what we need in this hour is some good, old time religion---some burning hot coals off the altar of God, some sanctified, Holy Ghost-baptized meetings that will convict sinners and awaken the saints to hear again the voice of God speaking to His church, and to get a renewed vision of the Bride, the Lamb’s wife!

Oh, how we need in this hour to *“hear what the Spirit [is saying] unto the churches!”* And to be *“caught up to paradise . . . to [hear unspeakable] words . . . not lawful for a man to utter”*, and to *“sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2.6). What a blessing to be *“carried away”* in the Spirit to see those glorious things that are out of the reach of natural eyes and ears (1 Cor. 2.9-16)---things that are seen and heard and discerned only by the senses of the *“inner man”* in and through the Holy Spirit! Grant Lord that it to be so in our churches now in these very last days. Amen!



Wade H. Phillips
Presiding Bishop

Bishop Charles Fields Called Home

We are sad to report the death of Bishop Charles Fields. He passed on to his reward on February 3, 2018. A well-deserved tribute to Brother Fields will appear in the next issue of the *VOZ*. Sister Brenda, his wife, and the family appreciate the prayers of the saints and the sympathetic expressions of love and goodwill.

Kosciusko, Mississippi

We are pleased to announce yet another church that raised some mission money for the October mission drive that heretofore has not been reported. The Kosciusko church in Mississippi recently sent into the International Offices \$150 for this purpose. We appreciate Sister Patricia Summerlin and the few saints there in Kosciusko for their faithfulness and determination to stay the course for Christ and His church.

Zeal for World Outreach March World Mission Drive

Glad to hear that many of our churches have already begun working and raising funds for the March World Mission Drive. The Cleveland church, for example, recently sponsored a barbecue luncheon and netted over \$1100 toward this good and noble cause. We are ever thankful and appreciative of our ministers and faithful workers for all that you do to promote missions and provide the means to fulfill our mandate to the nations. Recall the admonition of the apostle: ***“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”*** (Gal. 6.9).

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“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21.2).



“O Lord, Revive Thy Work”

[*Note:* this is the annual address of the overseer of Guatemala, Bishop Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez, delivered on Sunday morning, December 3, 2017 during the national convention held in the city of Puerto Barrios. It has been translated into English and edited for this issue of the *VOZ*.]

Ricardo Valenzuela Chavez
Overseer, Guatemala

Introduction

“O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3.2).

To revive is a term that refers to a spiritual awakening. The church hopes for a great revival in these last days. As sincere Christians we yearn to see the glory of God just as the prophet Habakkuk hoped to see. We appeal to God to act in favor of His people in the midst of times of desolation; because of evil forces, we pray that God puts an end to the intolerable situation. Today we lift ourselves in prayer in the name of Jesus in order to receive a glorious revival in our lives.

A renewed manifestation of His power

Like Habakkuk, we know that we will not survive if God does not intervene for us with an outpouring of His grace and His Spirit. The prayer of Habakkuk was: *“O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years”*. This makes us think that the word “revive” here is significant; it means to give more vigor and to show one’s true life, rather than to weaken to a point of becoming finally extinguished. Surely, we can agree that we need a spiritual awakening to behold the glory of God in the life of the church in these last days. Of course, this awakening is the work of the Holy Ghost. He is the divine agent of the Father, to carry out a spiritual awakening: to enable us to achieve revival in our lives which we need so much. “Oh Lord my soul gasps (yearns) to see and contemplate your glory in the midst of desolation, just as the prophet Isaiah saw in his day in a vision.”

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he

covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and he house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6.1-5).

There are two important things that we should do for the church to maintain life; these are:

A. The confession of all sin

When the church is comfortable and satisfied with her condition, she will not aspire to a divine work of spiritual awakening. She is like the case of the church of Laodicea in Asia Minor in Revelation 3.14-19:

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The church of Laodicea was arrogant and self-sufficient located in an affluent city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey); it was also a lukewarm church,

and thus deserved the rebuke of the Lord. He calls urgently for her to repent and raise herself up, to be clothed in white clothes, and to anoint her eyes with eye salve to see that she desperately needed the grace of Christ and to put on the robe of His righteousness. She needed the Spirit which illuminates the eyes of the heart, so she could see spiritually, both collectively as a church and as individual Christians. When our flame does not grow and glow each day, it will naturally decrease in intensity over time, and eventually go out altogether. We must confess guilt and let the Holy Spirit be responsible to restore the church to its original purity. Surely today is a “shaking time”, the very foundation of the church is being tested and tried. We see many anguished with sadness in the soul. Therefore, we must plead with the Lord to pour out upon the church His Spirit in these last days: to “*revive Thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years*”. For surely if He does not we will be a dying people. It is necessary to feel conviction and to confess and ask for forgiveness (pardon) and spiritual restoration.

B. To pray in time of anguish and affliction

In time of affliction and anguish, the people of God should recognize that, without the mercy of the Lord, no one will be able to sustain. Habakkuk prayed to the Lord that He would remember to be compassionate: for He knew the people of God had sinned and provoked the Lord to anger and judgment. So, he intercedes and pleads for mercy and compassion and forgiveness. After God revealed His purpose to Habakkuk in a vision, he saw the justice and righteousness of God in using the wicked Chaldeans to chastise His people. The prophet realized that the Lord was doing this for the good of His church. This was the glory of the vision---the expectation of hope and victory! The people of God needed to suffer and be punished to wake them up. So, the prophet prays to God that in His wrath remember mercy. He appeals further to the Lord to act on behalf of His people, not only to put an end to the intolerable suffering but to “*restore Thy work*”.

The normal state of God’s church is to live under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and to rejoice and be victorious! See, happiness depends on external circumstances but joy and victorious spirituality spring from an interior well within us---from having a right relationship with God.

The time of Habakkuk’s prophecy for the church was in the year 606 B.C., but the need today is the same. There is grief and anguish in the people of God today in Guatemala, and it is up to us to lift up

prayers for an outpouring of revival and to put an end to the spiritual coldness. “Oh Lord grant to your church, to our families, to our spouses, and our children to see that you are God and that there is nothing impossible with you. Let us not, O Lord, allow the fiery flame of the Holy Spirit to go out in our hearts, but rather to burn within us to fulfill Thy purpose in us. We do not want to settle for less than what only You can do. Revive Your work in the midst of years, and in Thy wrath remember compassion.”

Pastors, leaders, people of God do not give up! Remember, that though the move of the spirit of the enemy is strong and the currents of this world have power to drag you down, the power of our God is greater. We are motivated by the fire of the Holy Ghost, and we believe “*greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4.4).

Conclusion

“Oh Lord, revive your work in me, in order to reach the region of this world---here in Guatemala--and to establish your church. For this is where I am and where you have sent me. Let the fire of your Holy Spirit touch, change, and transform lives for Christ and His church. Do so today Lord in the midst of the times where the foundations of Your church are in agony. Help me to be Your faithful servant, to declare the message of the Gospel with joy like Your servant Habakkuk. Oh God revive Your work in the midst of these times, so I can declare boldly that you are the God who can do everything--- “*who maketh his angles spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*” (Heb. 1.7).”

Surely, we can see that we are living in times of spiritual draught of both the fire of God and the knowledge of God. I have seen a decline among ministers in the world around us, and in general a falling away from the faith of the Gospel. I have thought that revival comes from a sincere obedience and a return to His Word. I imagine the sadness of the apostle Paul when he asked a few believers of the church at Ephesus, who had been disciples of John, about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They said, “*We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*” (Acts 19.2). Are we not living in similar times--in times when there is “gross darkness” in the land (Is. 60.2)? But see, this means it is also a time for great opportunities for God’s church to shine forth His glory in the midst of the darkness. Recall Jesus’ words, “*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Mt. 5.14-16).



Citizens of God's Holy Nation

Bruce Sullivan

Note: this message was preached in the School of Ministry program on September 7, 2017 during the Fourteenth Annual Assembly in Cleveland, Tennessee.

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4.1-6).

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3.14-15).

This is the General Assembly of Zion Assembly Church of God. We have a unique, and oftentimes misunderstood, vision to restore the church Jesus established. Therefore, it is important that all of us have a mutual understanding as to the purpose for which Christ established the New Testament church. Christ formed the church to be the physical representation of Himself and His Kingdom to the world. Thus, the church is called the “Body of Christ,” the “Pillar and Ground of the truth,” the “Light of the world,” and a “city set upon a hill.”

The church was designed to shine the light of truth to those in darkness, which is to say, those in ignorance and despair. It should be there as conspicuous as a lighted city on a hill guiding the nighttime traveler to his destination. If people want to know the truth, they should be able not only to hear the truth from the church, but to see the truth lived out in the lives of the ministers and members. For God designed the church to teach by precept and example. Christ formed the church not only to teach the New Testament, but to be that peculiar “Holy Nation” with the New Testament as its “constitution.” The church then is a visible, theocratic nation ruled solely by the decrees of God, existing as the “visible, corporate manifestation” of God’s invisible Kingdom in the world.

Members join the church by agreeing together to operate according to the New Testament as interpreted by the General Assembly, the latter of which is composed of all the participating members acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Members or citizens of

this holy nation are then held accountable to teach and live according to the New Testament. All must teach and live by its teachings or they must be “cut off.” Though this may seem harsh, all should understand that false teaching and sinful living are gangrenous to the church. Therefore, it cannot be tolerated. Notice it is “false teaching” and sin which are the gangrene and not the members.

All our efforts should be to rid the members of this infection to save them. For if the infection remains, the infected, impenitent member must be cut off to protect other members of the body from, being infected. Such a concept and practice may seem strange to modern Christians, but this was plainly practiced by the New Testament church (see 1 Cor. 5).

Under the model of the so-called “invisible church”, a concept which the overwhelming majority of Protestant Christianity has accepted, Christians hold and teach contradictory doctrines, and live by different lifestyles; some of which are godless and “*cause the way of truth to be spoken evil of.*” They claim to seek unity but accept and practice denominationalism or else operate independently in local churches and thus teach and practice a multiplicity of contradictory interpretations of the Scriptures. They plead for tolerance, not realizing that you can’t be tolerant of gangrene. Again, sin and false doctrine are as gangrene. They are cancerous, wreaking havoc and destroying souls and distorting the message of Christ.

Further, because the “invisible church” model consists of multiple governments and disciplines, the

members have no means of corporate accountability, particularly on an international and universal scale. These false concepts thus make it impossible for the various divisions of Christians to clearly convey the truth of Christ. On the contrary, the tolerance it is built upon tends toward confusion and chaos. This is the reason we teach the necessity for the visible, physical unity of the church, and the need to restore the church that Jesus established in the New Testament. For that church, led by the apostles and elders had a universal standard, and thus a cohesive doctrine and Gospel message.

The church Jesus established has its own government and operates according to a Divine Standard!

We respect the political nations in which we minister, and, as much as lies within us, we try to live peaceably and to abide by the laws of these secular nations. However, each member of God's church lives by a higher law than the laws of the political nation in which they happen to be a citizen. We live by the law of Christ. Thus, says the apostle Peter, *"We ought to obey God and not men"* (Acts 5:29). He is saying, "We are accountable to a higher power." This is also why he and John would later tell those same national leaders in Acts 4:19, *"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."*

The church is a holy nation, a peculiar people (Ex. 19.5-8; 1 Pet. 2.9). It consists of believers from every nation, kindred, and tongue, who prior to accepting Christ and joining the church *"were not a people but are now the people of God"* (1 Pet. 2:10). Like America, the church is a "melting pot" consisting of citizens of many races from many cultures, who speak many languages. The nations of the world are not like that. Citizens of China, Japan, the Philippines, and others bear predominantly striking physical features due to their common racial and cultural characteristics. In America it is somewhat different. You can look Chinese, English, Hispanic, African, Indian, but you are all Americans. Thus, America has been called a "melting pot" of very different people with various political, economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The church is the same way. Our members consist of various nations,



cultures, with varying physical features, and speaking various languages. But God has made us a single family all born of the same Spirit and walking by the same rule of faith and discipline. Physically we are different but spiritually we are the same. We all bear the seed of God. Like the family of Israel, we have covenanted together to form a holy nation under the rule of God.

We came out of our individualism and diversity of philosophies and ideologies to form a corporate unity with one mind and one heart and one judgment (Acts 4.32; Rom. 15.4-5; Phil. 3.16).

Like the wall between Jew and Gentile, God has broken down the middle wall of partition between us. He has made one nation of people from various cultures, languages and political and economic backgrounds. It was this concept which inspired our forefathers to adopt the "Great Speckled Bird" as one of their primary theme songs. *"What a beautiful thought I am thinking concerning a great speckled bird."* Brother Phillips has pointed out that though many have

said the songwriter misinterpreted that scripture in Jer. 12.3, yet the concept in the mind of the songwriter was nevertheless right just the same. We are a diverse people who have come together in Christ.

The Vision of a Glorified Church

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5.9-10).

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7.9-11).

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Mexico National Convention

“My House Shall Be Called House of Prayer”

The Fourth Annual National Convention in Mexico took place in Tuxtla Gutierrez. The Holy Ghost manifested Himself in a powerful way, and the presence of the Lord was felt strongly beginning on the first day of the convention. Our theme was “My House shall be called House of Prayer.” We had an attendance of 87 brethren. God blessed us greatly: three youth were water baptized; four joined the church; one soul got saved; and a baby was presented and dedicated to the Lord.

The Lord used all the preachers in a powerful way! Brother Leonardo Mendez Perez reminded us that our prayers and alms do reach the Lord. The presence of the Holy Ghost was evident especially during altar times. Chains were broken, some were reconciled to the Lord; some got baptized with the Holy Ghost; and the list goes on. None of those who sought after the Lord went home empty or dissatisfied! A pastor’s wife from our former fellowship received a powerful blessing: she was brought under a heavy anointing of the Spirit of the Lord, and when her spiritual ecstasy came to an end she felt wholly renewed. Bishop Juan Avila reminded us of the importance of knowing *how* to pray so that we may receive *what* we need from the Lord. A powerful message by Bishop L.W. Carter with tremendous manifestations of the Spirit and blessings reminded us that Christ is coming back for a praying and humble church. Bishop Carter later proved his commitment to his ministry by getting into a freezing pool of water to baptize three new converts. He later assisted the national overseer, Bishop Danny Ramirez, in administering the covenant to four new candidates.

It was wonderful to witness these young people promising “to walk in the light to the best of their knowledge and ability”. Prayer was especially emphasized in the messages that were delivered. A highlight of the convention was when Bishop Ramirez called the male pastors to the altar and washed their feet. It reminded us that Christ did the same, setting the example for us. He encouraged everyone to go back and to do the same in their local churches. Sister Rosie Ramirez led the female church workers in this sacred ordinance. Pastor Daniel Urcadiz had the honor of presenting and dedicating a child, and he did a magnificent job at the altar. Several California ministers and members attended the convention and were an encouragement to the saints in Mexico. Daysi Abrego did very well as an interpreter. Dear Sister Josefina assisted in special singing, and Maria Avila gave an encouraging boost to Women’s Ministries. Diana Paz shared her testimony with the youth. We are very grateful to the Lord for everything that He is doing in Mexico; and we look forward to what He will do in the future. There is a lot of work to be done in Mexico, and we pray that the hunger for the Lord keeps increasing in His people as they grow closer to Him. “My house shall be called house of prayer” (Mt. 21.1).





South Kenya Regional Convention

December 6-10, 2017

Othoch-Rakuom Campground

Regional overseer, Bishop Joanes Oboo opened and moderated the convention. The theme was “KEEPING THE COVENANT” based on Ex. 19.5-8.

In the opening service, the youth from various churches opened with praise and worship; they were visibly blessed with a special anointing. The Spirit swept over the convention as the delegates rejoiced in the Lord. A message by Micheal Olal followed. He spoke about Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, namely, that Ruth made a covenant with Naomi, saying, “*Wherever you go, I shall go, wherever you live I shall live. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God too*”. She kept the covenant and from her lineage came forth the Messiah. Roseline Odhiambo later taught a lesson on “Passing through the narrow gate” based on Mt. 7.13 and Gal. 5.22–26. She emphasized that the Holy Spirit will enable us to pass through the narrow gate to God, and to keep the covenant. An altar call was given, and people were delivered in an extended time of prayer.

The next day began with a program for children. The glory and majesty of the true God was elevated in the minds of the children. Ps. 31.14-15 was used for a text. It was emphasized that Jehovah alone can do mighty works, and He will enable us to live in harmony with His Word and Spirit. He is our hope and salvation! The Sunday school program was directed by Florence Aoko Okinyi. The lesson was based around the convention them. Then Brother Maurice Olal preached about the Shunamite woman in 2 Kg. 4.18-37. She was a child of a covenant and her son died; but this mother knew where to go to for the restoration: to the man of God, Elijah. And God showed up miraculously.

That evening the overseer preached on Ex. 19.1–4. A wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit swept over the convention. This message brought the congregation to a tremble, and many people were delivered including the youth. Glory to Jehovah! Even people from outside of the tent were brought and delivered of many afflictions. One person was wonderfully converted.

On day three of the convention, after opening with praise and worship, Brother John Adera spoke on salvation taking for a text Heb. 2.1-4. He emphasized the need for faith based on Heb. 11.6. Afterwards, there were classes on Mt. 19.16 and 1 Cor. 11.3. Each member of a family should know his/her responsibilities, and this will result in the good life for the family and the whole church.

The next session was led by Pastor Ochali. He spoke on 2 Kg. 4.1-7: the Shunamite woman and the multiplied oil. It was God-given wisdom that led the woman to the right place where she could get assistance from the man of God. God showed her favor by multiplying the oil to pay her debts. He is our Provider!

After lunch, reports were given regarding the Youth Ministry and Ladies Ministry. Then a message on marriage taken from Gen. 2.21–23 blessed the convention. It was pointed out that the devil came to separate what God has put together; but Jesus can save and minister to every difficult situation. Guest minister, Bishop Ogaallo, then preached for the second time using Ex. 10.8; Is. 3.7; and Ps. 105.15 to support his subject on magnifying the Lord. That evening Pastor Kenneth Otiego preached on Lu. 7.11. The session closed with a word of prayer from the assistant bishop Brother Michael Ngome Olal.

On Saturday, Pastor Osewe preached on obedience, using Naaman as an example. He emphasized that if we do the Word, all shall be well. Sylvia Akinyi then taught on the ideal life of a Christian using 1 Pet. 3.1 and Eph. 5.21–30. Time was then allotted for a Spirit-filled discussion on family life. Following these programs, the district overseers reported on the churches in their districts mentioning their blessings and their needs. The overseers are: Michael Olal, Kenneth Abongo Otiego, and Jacob Obambo Sakwa.

That evening the regional overseer, Bishop Oboo, preached on “Work and Watch” using for a text 2 Kg. 6.5-6. When we work in the Lord, we must also watch. The man did not watch his axe, and therefore the sharp part got loose without his knowledge. He was left with the blunt end which cannot cut anything---representing a form of godliness with no power.

Roseline Odhiambo again spoke. She used for a title, “Putting God ahead in everything we do”, citing Ex. 13.21–24; et al. Again, people were delivered as the meeting broke for the night.

On Sunday, there was a morning-glory service 6 am. to 7 am---a time especially focused on prayer. The regular program began at 10.00 am with songs of praise. The final message was brought by Bishop Oboo using for a text, 1 Jn. 5.13.

A reference was made to the convention in 2016. It had to be canceled due to the motorcycle accident and injuries of the regional overseer, Bishop Oboo. It was a discouraging and disturbing time. But God has since blessed the bishop and the ministers and churches in the region. This year, there were over 600 delegates in the convention. Praise the Lord! More people came than had been expected. It required five tents and five hundred chairs to be rented to accommodate all the people. The bishop closed the convention officially at 1.00 pm on Sunday.



“Citizens of God’s Holy Nation”

Continued from page 7

There is a lot of confusion and division in the world outside the church today. Men and women are manipulated by the “prince of the power of the air,” the “author of confusion” into prejudices, suspicions, and chaos. Satan attempts to pit blacks against whites and whites against blacks. He wants “White Americans” to resent “Hispanic Americans” and “Hispanic Americans” to be suspicious of “White Americans.” The network news is filled with racist groups hurling insults and threats at each other. Satan uses politics and the media to pit rich against poor and poor against rich in what is termed, “Class Warfare.” He vainly glories the generation gaps he creates, pitting young against old and old against young. He loves to create gender wars pitting males against females and females against males. He wants to pit southerners against northerners and northerners against southerners.

Though these things exist in worldly nations, this is not how we behave in God’s holy nation, the house of God, the church of the living God! Satan would love to bring those evil heresies and divisions into God’s house. We must resist the devil steadfastly!

Satan has always tried to attack the unity of God’s people. In New Testament times, he attempted to drive a wedge between Jews and Gentiles. This is the reason Paul withstood Peter to the face before the church in Antioch. Peter was drawing a distinction in reference to “spiritual cleanness” between the Jews and Gentiles: but Paul pointed out we are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. We are ONE in Christ Jesus, and Scripture says we must “*endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph. 4.3).

Divisions are driven by carnality and must be rejected. They have no place in the House of God. Satan would love the African members to be suspicious of the North American members. He would love for the North American members to alienate those from other continents. He would love to get the Hispanic members to resent and be suspicious of English members. He would love feminism and chauvinism to rear their ugly heads in the church. Not in God’s House! Jesus said, “The Gentiles (pagans) have their way of operating BUT IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU!” As His church, we don’t operate under that system of chaos. Paul said, “*I write these things unto you that you might know how to behave yourselves in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

These hateful divisions will always exist in a sin cursed world, but NOT IN GOD’S HOLY NATION (cf. Rev 7.9-11).

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:26-29).

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4.4-6).

There isn’t a Lord Jesus for the whites and another for the blacks and another for the reds and yellows. There isn’t a God and Father for the men and another for the women. There isn’t an African body and an American body. There isn’t a Mexican heaven and an American heaven. We are all called in ONE hope of our calling. The young aren’t filled with one Holy Spirit and the old with another. We all serve the same Lord, and are children of the same God. As Paul pointed out to Peter, we all got saved by the same faith. We were all baptized with the same Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost, the same Holy Ghost fell upon people from many different nations, and spoke to them the very same message in many languages. The same Spirit fell on young and old, male and female, servants and handmaids, as Joel had prophesied to give witness to the spiritual unity of God’s church in these last days (Joel 2.28-32; Acts 2.2-21).

There is ONE body, ONE Spirit, ONE hope of our calling. There is ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God and Father of all! We are one in the Spirit and in the face of the devil’s attempts to divide us. We must endeavor therefore to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We must fight and disavow every attempt to produce discord between us. For this is not how we behave ourselves in the house of God which is “*the church of God of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*”

In God’s church we follow the law of Christ which is the royal law of love. Love that works no ill to our neighbors. Therefore, we work no ill to each other. Love is full of compassion, so we do good to one another. Love is selfless and patient and doesn’t keep lists of wrongs. Love bears all things, believes

all things, and hopes all things (1 Cor. 13). In God's holy nation, we are members one of another. When one suffers, we all suffer. When one rejoices, we all rejoice. Love is our perfect bond and the bond which makes us perfect. From the beginning of this restoration this has been our cry. Love is the "lost link." Love is what binds us together. In Zion, we rejoice together in our doctrine on the sanctity of marriage. However, the world will not know us because we obey God's commandment against adultery; but rather because we have love one toward another (Jn. 13:35). The world should be able to see the love we have that crosses the boundaries of age, gender, culture, language, ethnicities, color, and social standing.

This love should cause us to shine like "a city set upon a hill." It is this love that makes us conspicuous to the world. It should cause the world to cry out as the ancient pagans did concerning the New Testament church---"O how they LOVE one another!"

We have been called to serve in different nations of the world, in different cultures, in different languages; yet we are all ONE in Christ Jesus. Our pride in and loyalty to our cultural heritages, must NEVER, NEVER, NEVER supersede our loyalty to God, His family, and His church. I'm a citizen of God's holy nation!

The world is changing. Many of the nations are changing their moral standards. But that doesn't change the citizens of this Holy Nation. Our morals, our standards of right and wrong, our "constitution" were not established by the philosophies and whims of men. But rather they were established by our great King, Jesus Christ! We obey God ultimately, not men. My country, the United States is changing. It was built by the Puritans and Pilgrims seeking religious freedom. They constructed its laws based upon Judeo/Christian ethics. This is the reason the Ten Commandments hung in its courthouses for so many years, and why the Bible was taught in its schools. All of that has changed. The Ten Commandments have been removed from courthouses

and the Bible from schools. A new standard of morality is being proclaimed. But that doesn't affect me or God's church. We behave differently in the house of God.

Unfortunately, some "Christians" and some organizations have changed their doctrines to fit a changing society. Still, however, we cannot change! The only hope for the world is by us not changing. The more the world devolves into darkness and immorality, the more conspicuous the lighted "city of God" becomes. Only by maintaining our standards can this Holy Nation lead the lost to safety. Embrace being different. You are a Holy Nation. This makes us different from those whose citizenship is in this world. We are aliens and strangers

"Only by maintaining our standards can this Holy Nation lead the lost to safety. Embrace being different. You are a Holy Nation. This makes us different from those whose citizenship is in this world. We are aliens and strangers here. We are not of this world. We talk different. They speak words filled with filth and hate. Our speech should be always with 'grace seasoned with salt.' We dress different. Let the fashion gurus manipulate others into sensuous dress, we will dress modestly, with shamefacedness and sobriety. They devalue marriage and defile sexuality. We honor marriage and the marriage bed. They destroy their bodies with addictive and destructive substances. We honor our bodies as God's temple and live in sobriety and temperance."

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We honor marriage and the marriage bed. They destroy their bodies with addictive and destructive substances. We honor our bodies as God's temple and live in sobriety and temperance. Our behavior is holy, for our God is holy.

If the church changes to accommodate this impenitent world, we will become salt that has "lost its saltiness." It would be like taking our candle and hiding it under a bushel.

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:14-15).



Senior Ambassadors for Christ

*“Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?
and how do you see it now?” (Haggai 2.3)*



The Roanoke, VA church had their first Senior Ambassadors meeting on October 26, directed by Ruth Tingler. There were 19 present. The theme for her program was ***“Let those who come behind us find us faithful.”*** She also invited several seniors from the community. Some came in wheelchairs, others with walkers. Her program opened with the reading from Phil. 1.6. Vernon Johnson blessed everyone singing, “Let Those That Come Behind Us Find Us Faithful” and “He Raised Me.” The congregation was led in prayer by William Jones. Pastor J.J. Davis gave encouragement to all seniors to understand their important role in the church and community. Ruth presented a great program followed by a cookout. She received several reports of the success of the meeting.

Her encouragement for the Ambassadors was to

stay in the Word, and in the worship and fellowship of the church; and for each one to become a vital part of the local church. Statistics says there are more people living today over 65 years old than those under the age of 18. All pastors and churches should therefore begin to prayerfully seek God to start a ministry for seniors, and, to reach out to seniors in their communities.

Senior Ambassadors are being raised up to assist the local pastor and congregation to fulfill the mission of the church. These are our prayer warriors. Prayer is the most important thing you can do as you begin a Senior Ambassador ministry. It has been said, “You can do more after you pray, but you cannot do anything until you pray.” Seniors have time to pray as most of them are retired. We must involve our seniors in activities and use their talents, time and finances to bless the church today and tomorrow. This is not just another program: it is the backbone of our church.



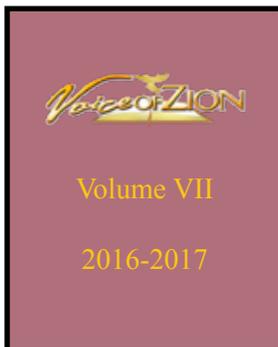
Progress in Guinea, West Africa

Seraphin Philip Gomez, pastor of Zion Assembly in N'zerekore Guinea, and his wife Faveur Gomez continue to be a great blessing to the church not only in Guinea but in assisting us to spread the Gospel to other nations: particularly French-speaking nations. They have begun 2018 with a great desire to win souls for Christ and to bring believers to a prophetic vision of the church. In their recent report to the International Offices, they said, "We believe that God who has called us to do His work is able to do far more than we can think or imagine." Pastor Gomez and Sister Faveur are visiting new churches in Gbangana, N'zerekore and Telepoulou. The computer in the photo [below] has been purchased and was used to publish in French [for the first time] the 2017 General Assembly issue of the *Voice of Zion*. Pastor Gomez speaks French, but Sister Faveur is bilingual in English and French. To God be the glory for the good things happening in Guinea.



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