

United Church of God *an International Association*

Clyde Kilough
Chairman

Roy Holladay
President

Letter from the President May 28, 2004

Dear Brethren,

Norma and I recently had the opportunity to visit with our family in Tennessee and to speak in the Cleveland, Tennessee, congregation. It has been approximately four years since I had the opportunity to speak in Cleveland, and it was very gratifying to see continual growth in the local congregation. The congregation has almost doubled in size over that four-year span. We know a number of members in the Cleveland/Chattanooga area since this was the church area that my mother attended for many years.

We will be observing the Day of Pentecost with the churches meeting in Polson, Montana, on the shores of beautiful Flathead Lake. The main benefit of traveling to visit local church areas is the opportunity of renewing old friendships and making new ones. Travel gets old after a while, but meeting God's people makes traveling worthwhile.

Pentecost pictures another step in God's plan of salvation for mankind. This festival is also called the "Feast of Weeks" and the "Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field" (Exodus 34:22 and 23:16). The understanding of the significance of this Holy Day clarifies that this is not the only day of salvation. God is working with a small group of people that He calls the "firstfruits." There are over 6 billion human beings on earth today. How many is God now personally working with, opening their minds, calling and giving His Spirit? It is difficult for us to comprehend that God has *handpicked* each one of us to be a part of the first harvest. John 6:44 clearly explains that it is the Father who selects us to be a part of His family. This means that the great God of the universe is personally involved in our selection and calling. As Ephesians 1:12 states, we are the first to trust in Christ. The vast majority of human beings will have their opportunity for salvation later.

Titus 1:2 clearly states God's purpose for the human family is to give us the "hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, *promised before time began*" (emphasis added throughout). Time is a function of the material universe—a day is the earth rotating once on its axis and a year is calculated by the earth orbiting around the sun once. Before the material universe was brought into existence, God had a plan that He was working out. This plan involved the need for a savior—Jesus is described as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

How is it possible for "bags of dust" (human beings) to be transformed into the literal sons of God in the family of God? The Day of Pentecost helps to explain that mystery of how we will be transformed from human to divine. The New Testament has numerous references to the mystery of God. The word *mystery* means *hidden* or *secret* things. Paul wrote of this mystery in Colossians 1:26-27: "The mystery which has *been hidden from ages* and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" Through

the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ dwells in us. Even the angels marvel and desire to look into these things (1 Peter 1:12).

The Holy Spirit is the divine power and essence of God. John 4:24 states that “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” This is a very vital scripture because the Bible reveals that Satan has counterfeited the mystery of God—in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 it is referred to as the “mystery of lawlessness” and Revelation 17:5 clearly identifies it as “mystery, Babylon the Great.” Mystery Babylon describes the false religions and philosophies of this age that emphasize rebellion to the law of God as a way of life. The true meaning of many of the customs and activities of this false system are hidden or concealed from its adherents.

The principal purpose of the Holy Spirit in us is to create a new life—a spirit life. Notice 2 Peter 1:3-4: “*As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness . . . by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.*” Just as parents pass on through their genes their own physical characteristics to their children, so God imparts His divine nature to us. The Spirit of God imparts everything that we need to live a godly life.

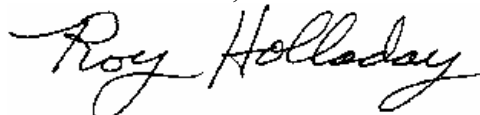
Notice a quick summary of the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives:

- It enables us to understand and discern spiritual knowledge.
- It convicts us of our sins and shortcomings.
- It purges our conscience of dead works.
- It helps to write the law of God on our inward parts.
- It imparts a new way of thinking—the mind of God.
- It gives us the power to overcome the lust of the flesh and eyes and the pride of life.
- It imparts the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of God.
- It motivates us.

We could go on and on, but I think you get the picture. As John 6:63 states, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” It is through the Spirit of God that the eternal purpose of God is carried out in our individual lives. The *firstfruits* are being prepared to assist the Father and the Son in extending salvation to all the rest of humanity during the Millennium and White Throne Judgment period. Pentecost pictures that awesome calling from God and how we are being prepared as the Bride of Christ.

Norma and I wish all of you an inspiring and uplifting Day of Pentecost.

In Christ’s service,



Roy Holladay

PS—We’re pleased to announce the launch of our redesigned *Good News* magazine Web site at www.gnmagazine.org. With a new look, easier navigation, increased search capabilities, plus much more, we trust it will be of even greater service to our readers. Take a look at it today!