

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD  
WORLD HEADQUARTERS  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA 91123

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG  
PRESIDENT and PASTOR

February 11, 1974

Dear Brethren of God's Church:

This letter is extremely important. I am writing as I fly 550 miles per hour more than seven miles over the ocean, having just left California's West Coast enroute to Tokyo and other Far East capitals, ending at Manila for the very first of the new public appearances before large mass audiences in many nations around the world. Due to war threats in Saigon, the first public appearance was moved to Manila -- Saigon next month.

For the first time in their lives, many Filipinos are going to hear the true Gospel, which I have been commissioned by the Living Jesus Christ to get to them as a witness just before His imminent return to rule all nations.

For forty years there was no way open to us by which we might get this vital end-time message to the great nations of the world -- China, India, Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Bangladesh (just to mention the six largest nations on earth, not including the United States). Now the doors are opening.

Our friends in Saigon -- people high in the government -- felt that, due to war conditions that still exist and have flared up more just recently, it would be better to hold the big public meetings there a month later. The final meeting was to be in the outdoor university football stadium (where anywhere from 12,000 to 50,000 might attend). But such a large crowd, especially if President Thieu would be present to introduce me, could attract a rocket or mortar attack, with terrible loss of life.

So we switched the first public appearance to Manila. The first two nights will be in an auditorium seating 1800, and the final meeting will be Sunday night in the Coliseum, seating 15,000. This meeting is being sponsored by two leading members of the President's cabinet.

Brethren, this begins the biggest, most important phase of the very work of the end time, preparing the way for Christ's coming to bring world peace. It's the most important thing ever to happen in this Work.

And just what does God's Work mean to you as an individual member of God's Church? I think some of us are prone to forget the all-important answer to that question sometimes.

Isn't it true that we do allow some of this world's false concepts to rub off on us sometimes? Or perhaps we have never, since conversion, fully erased some of the former erroneous assumptions. Do we fully realize that the god of this world is Satan?; that he has succeeded in deceiving the whole world?

The "Christian" denominations think that now is the only day of salvation. They falsely suppose Jesus Christ's first coming to earth was to "win souls." Soon it will be too late (they think), and no one thereafter can ever receive spiritual salvation. That is all false!

An article will soon appear in the Good News on that subject. This is definitely NOT the time God is trying to "get the world saved". Of some 3,600,000,000 people on earth, nearly all are simply deceived. Some few million have a false "salvation," yet those very people do not know what "salvation" actually is. In God's True Church there are approximately only some 50,000 baptized members -- 50,000 out of some 3,600,000,000.

We, Brethren, have been called by God ahead of time. God is going to call every one of those other 3,599,950,000 -- besides all the billions who have lived and died uncalled in previous years. The Kingdom of God will begin in the Millennium to really save those mortals who live into and through the Millennium. Then, in the Great White Throne Judgement that will follow, all others will be resurrected and called to salvation. There will be no devil for them to resist in either the

Millennium or the Great White Throne Judgement.

Then why were we called before that time, now -- while the devil is still here and active, trying to destroy us? Do you realize it fully?

Do you?

For one great purpose you were called, as well as I. That is: to get Christ's Gospel of the Kingdom of God proclaimed as a witness to all nations. The term "all nations" does not necessarily mean every little tiny nation, including many whose names most people never heard. But it most assuredly does include many or most of these big-population nations.

Think what that means right now!

For forty years in this Work the doors to these nations were closed to us. God opened the doors of radio and the printing press in the U.S. and Canada, and more recently, television in the U.S. and Canada. I walked through those doors. But we got the message into, primarily, only the United States, Canada, and Australia. We managed by those media to get the message to a portion only of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and the Philippines. Yet none of these nations is as large, in population, as Bangladesh, Indonesia, or Japan.

I'll put it another way. Doors were opened for us to reach possibly, say, 300,000,000, but doors were closed to the other 3,300,000,000.

But now, at last, God is opening the doors in several of these big-population nations.

Already the doors are opening in Japan, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand, Nepal, Iran, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Korea, Costa Rica, and the South American nations. I have an invitation through the Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia (who is the former Chief of Protocol in Peking) to visit Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai in Peking. The Russian Ambassador to Nepal is working on a meeting in Moscow with Mr. Leonid Brezhnev. Doors have started to open in Holland, Germany, and France for meetings with their heads-of-state.

I am now continuing this letter in Tokyo. Last night I was the guest of honor at a dinner hosted by the eight Japanese congressmen who flew with us in our plane for two weeks, beginning in India, and whom we then left at Cairo. They said the Prime Minister of Egypt expressed exuberance over my meeting with him, and that President Sadat is now eagerly looking forward to a meeting with me.

Brethren, does the magnitude of this new dimension in the Work sink thoroughly into your minds? You and I were called now, in this age, for the purpose of getting the true Gospel to these nations. Except for that purpose, we would not have been called now!

People in the world can't come to Christ now. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him." God did draw you and me to Christ -- for this very purpose.

Think what it means! For 40 years -- as long as the children of Israel wandered through the wilderness -- God has been opening the doors of radio, TV, and the printing press. He opened doors to reach the people only in the United States, Canada, and Australia -- and, to some extent, in the Philippines. We tried to reach nations like Britain, France, Germany, etc. from outside their borders -- on Radio Luxembourg. But we were not allowed to broadcast on their own stations. The radio stations on which we have tried to reach other nations around the world were those always outside the borders of those nations and they never really got the message over.

But now, at last, God is opening doors right at the very top. Those who can control people's thinking, and what they are allowed to hear, are opening their doors to me. God is giving me great favor in their eyes.

Today Satan is angry at this.

Two or three have broken off from God's Work, seeking a personal following, trying to draw away members from God's Church so they may devour God's sheep for Satan. But they have no way to get Christ's vital message as a witness into these great nations now opening their doors.

Brethren, let's pray more for the true Work of God. For 18 1/2 centuries Christ's Gospel -- the Kingdom of God -- was not proclaimed to the world. No one except the true Church of God is proclaiming it now. We need your prayers now, as never before!

In a former letter, I told you we had called a special team of Ambassador College's most scholarly researchers to re-examine all evidence on setting the day for Pentecost. I personally have now checked and rechecked their findings. New facts have been brought to light.

I want you to read the following paragraph twice, then later, once again -- and never forget it!

God's Church is proclaiming to the whole world the very Gospel God sent to mankind by Jesus Christ -- and no one else is, or has, for 18 1/2 centuries. Your part in that Work is the only reason you were called to conversion NOW, before the time of the Kingdom of God. God's Church is always growing -- both in power and scope of the work - and in knowledge. God's Church is always accepting new knowledge when proved to be true knowledge; always examining; always reexamining; always correcting error when found; always growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; always holding fast that which is good.

No other church group or person can make that statement.

One subject God's Church has most recently been re-examining is the calculation of the annual Holy Day of Pentecost. A committee of our best researchers and scholars at Pasadena Headquarters was appointed to reexamine for me this subject in depth. Their researches have produced new facts. These new facts I have personally examined with extreme care. I give you, in this letter, the result of this reexamination.

I want to give you the true history of how you as a member of God's true Church came to be observing this Feast of Weeks, commonly called Pentecost.

No evidence needs to be produced that the Living Christ, Head of the Church of God, called and chose me to be His instrument which He has used in raising up and guiding His Church of this generation, and, with the Apostle Paul, I say truthfully I am not striving to please men, but the Living God, else should not be the servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10-17).

For I certify to you, brethren, that the Gospel which is proclaimed around the world by me is not after man, for neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ, through His written Word. But when it pleased God to call me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might proclaim His message in all the world as a witness to all nations, just before the end of this age, I conferred not with human men, neither went I to theologians, to human "authorities," nor to religious seminaries, but I went straight to Christ through His written Word, much on my knees, in complete surrender to His will, beseeching Him to open my mind with His Holy Spirit, to give me His knowledge with understanding and complete willingness to receive it with an open, yet careful, mind.

Often I have written you of how God did not reveal all His Truth instantly, but little by little: a doctrine, or prophecy, or teaching at a time. It was a constant almost night-and-day study in eradicating assumed errors, false teachings carelessly accepted prior to conversion, and learning wonderful new truth.

One basic method I had learned long before conversion was to get all the facts, all the evidence, before making a decision. Sometimes later facts, at first inaccessible, totally alter a decision.

God is using fallible human men in His Work. Unless we are willing to be corrected when wrong, God cannot use us -- for it is "human to err." But God works only through men He can thus lead, finally, into His Truth. In those early days after my conversion I was searching frantically to find the one true Church of God. I knew that when I found it, it would of necessity be a church which was willing to confess error, correct it, and grow in truth and knowledge, as well as in grace. That is why I did check to prove the church with whose brethren my wife and I began to fellowship. When their leader was forced to confess the error of a teaching, but refused to correct it, I did not withdraw from fellowship with their brethren -- nor later, when they admitted a truth which they refused to accept or teach as a church. But they had more truth than any of the other churches which I knew.

Yet I did not have to personally accept the point in which they were in error, or reject the truth they refused to accept.

And let me put one thing straight at this point. I was never a member of that church as an organized church. I fellowshipped

with their members. I tried to cooperate with their minister, even in spite of constant persecution and opposition. I never did finally "leave them," as some have erroneously assumed. I was still acting as pastor of their Jefferson church sometime after the "Philadelphia era" was underway, and until our own Work absorbed all my time. I never opposed them. When the broadcasting and other phases of the Work made it impossible for me to be there regularly, I shared that pulpit with one of their own ministers. Finally I was simply unable to be there, even half of the time. But there was no "cutting off" away from them. And I was never a member in the first place.

But this Church has always confessed and corrected error.

A little history of two incidents will illustrate, at this point.

In the early days of the parent church of this present generation at Eugene, Oregon, the Church believed the Great White Throne Judgment took place at the beginning of the Millennium. I had even taught it over the air. A woman who was hostile to me personally stopped me on a downtown street.

"Herbert Armstrong, you're all wet!" she exclaimed in icy sarcasm. She said that the judgment had to be at the end of, or immediately after, the Millennium. I did not argue with her. I simply said I would re-examine the point. I went immediately to the public library to check the original Greek, for I and others in the church had supposed Revelation 20:5 to be a mistranslation: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." There was no mistranslation.

To admit that this hostile woman was right and that I was wrong would possibly have been very humiliating to most men. I doubt that any other church would have changed it. But on the next Sabbath, it was corrected by the church, and on Sunday I corrected it on the broadcast.

Another time a woman said the church teaching was error, as she believed the prophet Ezekiel used the term "mountains of Israel" to mean the nations of Israel, i.e., the U.S. and British people. Often the word "mountain" or "mountains" is indeed used in prophecy symbolically to mean "nation," as in Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1. We rechecked. The woman was right. The church teaching on it was changed.

This Church has always corrected error when found and proved, and has always grown in true knowledge, and I know of no other organized church which has done this. But when dissidents accuse the Church of God of being unwilling to give up error when it is not error, but truth, then we hold fast to that which is good.

Now how did you and every other member of God's Church come to be observing Pentecost at all?

Let me tell you: In my original biblical research and study on the subject of the Sabbath, I saw plainly that the annual Sabbaths were still binding. My wife and I began keeping them, though none of the "Sardis" brethren would. For seven years we observed them alone, not yet knowing why, or the meaning of those days. God commanded: "Keep them." And we obeyed. As soon as the parent church of the present Worldwide Church of God was raised up, the brethren joined us in keeping those annual Sabbaths. Later God revealed the meaning, and the Church began keeping the eight-day autumn festival.

That is how you came to be observing Pentecost.

We did not have, at that time, access to all of the scholarly research that we have today.

In Leviticus 23:15, it says to count 50 days from a Sunday (the morrow after the Sabbath). Now when we count a certain number of days from a day, we begin counting with one. One day from Sunday is Monday, not Sunday. To count Sunday as day one is not counting one day from Sunday. Ten feet from a house on the west is not ten feet beginning at the east side of the house. It is seven days "from" one Sabbath to the next, one day from Sabbath is Sunday, and seven days "from" Sabbath is the next Sabbath. To count by beginning with the Sabbath being the first day counted would put the next Sabbath on Friday, and the one after that on Thursday, etc. The word "from" means "away out of."

This Festival is called, in Deuteronomy 16:9, the Feast of Weeks. There we are told to count seven weeks from the morrow after the Sabbath -- seven weeks from a Sunday. Adding the 50th day (Leviticus 23:16) placed Pentecost on a Monday.

In Leviticus 23:15 in the Authorized Version (King James), it says "seven sabbaths" shall be counted, but other translations,

especially in the Revised Standard Version and the Moffatt, translate it "seven weeks." In Deuteronomy 16:9, the weeks are to be counted, and there the Hebrew word is shavuot -- meaning "weeks." I therefore accepted the other translations "weeks" to be counted, instead of "Sabbaths," in the sense of weekly Sabbaths.

According to the facts available to me and that small parent church at that time -- back in 1927 to 1933 -- Pentecost was put on a Monday.

But now, consider: Why did God use me in founding Ambassador College? Simply to provide an educated ministry for His Church? Ambassador College has indeed provided an educated ministry. It has developed a scholarly research team. Today at the Pasadena Headquarters it has provided me -- and the Church -- with many facilities I did not have in 1927.

And that team of scholarly researchers -- delving into every possible phase of this subject in depth -- has now indeed brought me new facts -- new evidence.

The Hebrew words for "from the morrow after the sabbath" are mi-mohorat ha-shabbat in Leviticus 23:15.

The original Hebrew translated "from the morrow" is mi-mohorat. These identical Hebrew words occur twenty-eight times in the Bible. Our research team brought me the following facts:

In twenty-six of the twenty-eight times where this Hebrew expression appears, it is translated "on the morrow." Only in Leviticus 23:15,16 is it translated "from the morrow," and "unto the morrow."

The same Hebrew mi-mohorat is used in this very same passage in Leviticus 23:11 -- translated "and he shall wave the sheaf before the Eternal, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." The same Hebrew mi-mohorat is used, followed by the same Hebrew ha-sabbat. Here, as in all the places (26 of them) where mi-mohorat appears, to translate it into the English "from the morrow" would obviously distort the meaning.

Then why did all translations but one I have checked translate it "from" in Leviticus 23:15?

Our research team had just presented this much to me when I wrote you the letter of January 31, 1974, saying new evidence had been presented and that it might cause the Church to change the day observed as Pentecost -- but I needed to check further before a decision.

I wondered, could it be possible that the translators understood the Hebrew words here to mean we must begin counting from - that is "a way out of," or beginning to count the first day of the 50 days as the day after this "morrow after the sabbath," which we call "Sunday." That is, one day from Sunday is Monday, and if so counted (as the Church has counted for over forty years), the fiftieth day (Pentecost) is on Monday.

On the other hand, if "on the morrow" is the correct rendering, as in all twenty-six of the twenty-eight places, this Hebrew expression occurs, probably the translators should have added the word "beginning" on the Sunday, that is, the morrow after the Sabbath. Many places in the Bible, in order to make the meaning clear in English, they have simply added such a word, and in the King James translation, such added words are always printed in italics.

That is the reason I was unable to make a firm decision when I wrote the recent letter of January 31st.

It is my responsibility to set the day for the entire Church, as Christ the Head of the Church leads me. For He speaks through the one He called and chose and used in raising up His Church of this time, and the one who is getting His message to the world as a witness. Christ, the Head of the Church, does not speak through self-appointed, would-be "scholars" who take it upon themselves to teach the Church contrary to those Christ has set in His Church, as attested by all the fruits.

I had to be sure. I needed to know why the translators had rendered mi-mohorat as "from the morrow," instead of "on the morrow," as in the twenty-six other places. And this same rendering of "from the morrow" was thus translated by the RSV (Revised Standard Version), Moffatt, Fenton, and all but one recent translation. That is why the Church had always counted Pentecost as 50 days from the morrow after the Sabbath. The Church has counted correctly according to the knowledge that was available. But, as I said, God has not revealed all of His Truth at once, but a little at a time. We had to grow in the Truth.

Of course, none of the translators of the King James Version is now still living. That translation was made in (or completed)

in the year 1611. But undoubtedly the most authoritative later translation is the RSV. That translation is now being carefully re-examined by its scholarly translators; the Chairman of the Revision Committee is Dr. Herbert G. May. I asked our own research team to contact him -- and others as far as possible -- since writing my former letter to you.

Following is our own researchers' report to me:

This research was conducted in direct response to Mr. Herbert Armstrong's question "Why do the translators say 'from the morrow' in Lev. 23:15, whereas all other occurrences of mi-mohorat are translated 'on the morrow'?"

To assist Mr. Armstrong, we contacted world-famous translators -- scholars who actually rendered the Hebrew of Leviticus into English in some most widely-accepted translations of published Bibles -- and asked them this question (and many variations of it from all sides): "According to the Hebrew, does one count beginning on the morrow after the Sabbath (Sunday), or from (away out of) the morrow after the Sabbath (Monday)?"

Dr. Herbert C. May (Chairman of the Committee for Continuing Revision of the Revised Standard Version, now called the Common Bible and accepted by Protestant, Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox scholars) commented on the meaning of the word "from" in Lev. 23:15. Dr. May explained it as "beginning to count on the day after the Sabbath." Dr. May, after checking various English translations, including the New American Bible, admitted that "from the morrow" could be confusing in English -- although the Hebrew mi-mohorat could never be confusing. He said: "You count beginning with the morrow after the Sabbath. And then on the fiftieth day, counting beginning on the morrow after the Sabbath, you get the Festival of Weeks .... I don't think here it would be 'away from.' It would mean a starting point ... and 'beginning with' would probably be clearer."

Dr. May also stated that he would recommend to his committee changing "from the morrow" in Leviticus 23:15 to read "count beginning with the morrow after the Sabbath ...." If his translators accept this revision, the Common Bible will read "beginning with" when it appears in 1982-84.

Dr. Harold Lindsell (member of the Revised Standard Bible Committee, and author of the marginal references for the RSV): "The answer is ... you would count fifty starting with Sunday itself and it would come on the fiftieth day, which would come out on another Sunday." He then encouraged Dr. Dorothy to call Dr. William Lasor, an expert in Hebrew who himself helped translate the Berkeley Bible, a new modern translation (published in 1949 in Berkeley, California).

William Sanford Lasor (translator of three Old Testament books in the Berkeley Version and renowned Hebrew scholar -- also recommended to us as an expert by Luther Weigle [Retired Chairman of Old Testament Translators of the RSV]) stated that he used the word "from" to indicate a starting point to begin with, and that you must begin counting on the day after the Sabbath, which would mean the fiftieth day, Pentecost, is on a Sunday. Of course, Dr. Lasor is relying on an English idiom which allows "from" to be inclusive like the Hebrew.

Dr. Mole (Assistant to the late Dr. Charles H. Dodd, Head of the Committee on the New English Bible): "I see what you mean. The English is ambiguous .... Yes, a very tricky expression." We asked, "Do you feel the Hebrew is also ambiguous?" The answer: "Definitely not ...."

We see then that the world's most renowned translators (the ones contacted represent whole teams of scholars) unanimously feel that the Hebrew mi-mohorat is inclusive regardless of its English translation. Put another way, these translators understand the English "from" as if it said "beginning with."

Why?

We asked that question also and the response was: "That is the traditional translation." But, if that is a problem to some, then they suggest "beginning with" as a more accurate reflection of the original, as in the Hebrew.

Our research team has brought out a number of other points, of greater or lesser significance to one wishing to study into the subject in as great a depth as they have researched it.

But it is not my purpose in this letter to burden all members with a long and highly technical treatise on the subject. In a short time we will prepare a special booklet covering many more technical points and more statements from authorities on the Hebrew language.

It is sufficient in this letter to show you how you came to be observing this Day of Pentecost; why you are in the Church and now called, before the time, to help get Christ's great message of the Kingdom of God to the nations -- especially the great nations now opening their doors -- before Christ's coming and setting up God's Kingdom; how the Church came to calculate Pentecost on a Monday (because the very translators who gave us the Bible in the English language now admit that it is an unclear and ambiguous translation); and why the Worldwide Church of God must now, upon learning this, correct the error and appoint the Day of Firstfruits (which is to teach us that we are the first to be called for this special mission) to be held hereafter on a Sunday.

Brethren, I have had to re-examine all the facts in this case with an open mind. I sincerely hope you can now understand that the Living Christ has put into His Church, at my disposal, the facilities for establishing Truth on any subject -- and that on a subject such as this, appointment of a day of assembly for the Church, we cannot leave it to each individual to decide for himself when he wants to meet -- doing as the Israelites had done in the day of the judges: "Every man doing what seemed right in his own eyes."

When Garner Ted and I say, on the air, to the public, "Don't believe me -- see it with your own eyes in your Bible," that is one thing. But this setting of the day for the entire Church to assemble must be set by Christ as He reveals to His appointed leaders in His Church.

Let us be glad and rejoice that Christ is leading His Church, His Work, His College. I rejoice in great gratitude to God that you are all solidly behind me in this great present phase of God's Work, and that everywhere the Work is showing great leaps ahead. The income is making a good start up since January 1st. Pray earnestly that it will continue.

With much love, in Jesus' name,

Herbert W. Armstrong