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The Good News



WHEN A MAN FROM  
SPACE  
VISITED EARTH





Part 2

# WHEN A MAN FROM SPACE VISITED EARTH...

*Exactly three days and three nights after His death on the stake, Jesus Christ of Nazareth stepped through a solid rock tomb, having been transformed instantaneously back into spirit life. Once again He was able to step back into space — a completely different dimension. But what has your Savior been doing all these nineteen hundred years since?*

by Garner Ted Armstrong

**S**hortly after His resurrection to that humanly indescribable dimension of spirit life, Jesus sped through the universe all the way to the third heaven — His first space flight in over thirty years. Suddenly, He appeared on a gorgeous, translucent sea of glass. Directly in front of Him, quite a distance away, was the Person and throne of the greatest Being in all of this universe — the Ancient of Days, God the Father! Seated on each side were twelve elders, the wisdom of antiquity obvious in their faces. A beautiful multi-colored rainbow shimmered over the scene in sunbeam hues. Lightning flashed and thunder clapped. Millions of angels were in attendance — anxiously awaiting the great event to follow. It was a fabulous sight to behold! I like to envision the scene that followed this way.

**The Coronation Ceremony.** A bedraggled figure, livid with visible wounds, began to walk down the line between those twenty-four elders. He came closer and closer to a great blazing light shining just like the sun in its full strength and sat down at the right hand of God the Father. Then with all the angels applauding, smiling and bowing down, God the Father reached to get a crown and placed it on Jesus' head, proclaiming Him King of the universe and King of this earth. (Remember, Jesus told His disciples some forty days later: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.")

I imagine the angels were saying something like this: "Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, to receive all power and wealth, wisdom and might, honor and glory and praise. . . . Praise and honor, glory and might, to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever!" (Rev. 5:12-13, *The New English Bible*.)

Then Jesus may well have asked His Father: "Why didn't you tell me I was going to have to do it alone?" "I couldn't, Son," came the reply. "I couldn't let you know in advance. It would have been too cruel a blow. You probably couldn't have made it if you ever had to expect there would be an instant in your whole life when you couldn't reach

# 100 YEARS FROM NOW

## Where will you be?

Chances are that no one reading this is going to be a living, breathing human being 100 years from now. It's a bit unsettling, isn't it? Of course, we all know that human beings don't live forever. But thoughts of our own death, no matter how distant that event may seem, lead to thoughts about the "after life." Millions of people feel that for those who live a worthy life — for those who are "saved" — the after-life is in heaven. Such beliefs are supposedly based on the Bible, but are, in fact, non-biblical. The Bible does have a great deal to say about an afterlife, but it's surprisingly different from traditional beliefs. If you'd like to read more about the true biblical teaching on this subject, write for these free booklets: *What Is the Reward of the Saved?* and *Where Are Enoch and Elijah?* Send your request to *The*

*Good News* (see inside front cover for address nearest you).

Where are  
**ENOCH**  
and  
**ELIJAH?**

What is  
the Reward  
of the Saved?



out and take me by the hand. But you did it, and you can't know how pleased and proud I am."

Jesus probably turned to Him and said: "How great was your plan and how thankful I am!"

There was emotion between those two great superhuman, divine, holy Beings that is far beyond our imaginations. I can't envision a God that I can worship and an older Brother that I can adore — before whom I can come on my knees and say "forgive me"; who gave me the capacity to laugh and love and to experience life — without emotion that is boundlessly greater than my own.

**Our Fantastic Savior!** What a fantastic Savior we have! He says you too can have it all — incredible, unimaginable spirit life for all eternity! You too can reach out and step into a much greater dimension of life. "At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalm 16:11).

And you don't have to do it alone. He made that first great big step for you! He said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

Jesus is the *firstborn* of many brethren, the Captain of our salvation — the One who has gone on before. While He was a human being — the Son of man — He was only a prayer away, a thought away, just a moment from stepping into another dimension and actually seeing angelic beings, dealing with them, eating their food, letting them care for Him.

There is spirit life both on this earth and out in the universe. It is life of a completely different dimension. It doesn't depend on beets, carrots, celery and water, the flesh of animals, or grains of wheat. It is life that is self-perpetuating, self-existent. "For as the Father hath *life in himself*; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:26).

One of the members of the God family died so that you, too, could have self-perpetuating, self-existent life! "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have *everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth gave His true followers this fantastic

promise: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: *And I give unto them eternal life*; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).

**Where Are the Words of Eternal Life Now?** The vast majority of the population of this world has never heard these promises of an extra dimension of eternal spirit life. And most of the few who have, never remotely understood them. Our Western Christianity has long preached of a foggily understood retirement plan in heaven. But that's not what God promises. You can prove that for yourself by writing for the two free booklets entitled *What Is the Reward of the Saved?* and *Where Are Enoch and Elijah?*

There is a Work on this earth that actually understands the words of eternal life. God is currently interfering and intervening in the affairs of men through a small cadre of imperfect human beings. They are carrying the words of God as a warning and a witness to the teeming millions who are making a trip through the blackness of space on this jewel-like spaceship we call planet earth.

One of the members of the very God family — Jesus Christ — is going to *revisit this earth* before it would otherwise blast itself out of existence. He is, however, laying the groundwork for His coming space trip through His Church *now!*

When Jesus Christ of Nazareth does come again, He will not come alone. A vast army of angelic beings will make the trip with Him. Jesus will not come again as the humble carpenter of Nazareth, but next time as a powerful, war-making and conquering King taking His rightful office on this earth. John foresaw it all in vision: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11). And the apostle Paul spoke of this same event: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from

heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1:7-8).

But before this mind-boggling event occurs, Jesus is giving the inhabitants of this earth ample warning through His Work *and* promising those who take an *active part in it* rulership and eternal life in the world tomorrow.

**Your Moment on Center Stage.** If you repent of your sins, asking God for total forgiveness, and you *endure to the end* (either of your life or to Christ's coming — whichever comes first) — then you, too, will have your "hour in the sun" — your moment on center stage. Someday Jesus will call your name and all heads will turn, and you will take that same walk that He did! Then He will pick up your crown and say: "This one has your name on it." Angels will be singing and applauding at the moment when you are crowned in another life of a completely different dimension.

You are a spark of life in the midst of the blackness of the universe. God is offering you the greatest bargain that could ever come to a human being. He's offering you eternal life!

All you have to do is *really* repent and really believe that He is the Son of God. Adore Jesus Christ! Grab Him by the feet spiritually and say, "I really love you! Thank you so much for what you did!"

Then look at yourself as a hunk of garbage not even fit to crawl around through the cracks in the floor in His marvelous sight. And then just be good! Be merciful, loving, kind and forgiving.

Neil Armstrong, when he walked out on the surface of the moon, said that he was taking a great step for mankind. Jesus took a bigger step when he went right through a solid rock tomb.

You, too, can step out of your grave in an instant of time when the heavens are rent at the return of Jesus Christ. You can take your walk into eternity.

Are you interested? Then write immediately for our free booklet *What Is a Real Christian?* It could be the greatest step of your life. □

## IF YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE

Many hundreds have written asking if we have representatives in their areas to counsel with them personally and to answer their questions.

The answer is yes, we do.

The Worldwide Church of God stations personal representatives (most are ordained ministers) in the United States and British Commonwealth and many other areas of the world. These men will visit you, if invited, directly in your own home.

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are as follows:

- United States: P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123 (Or simply dial this toll-free number in the *continental* U.S.: 1-800-423-4444. Readers in California, Alaska and Hawaii may call 213-577-5225 collect.)
- United Kingdom, Europe, India, and Africa: P.O. Box 111, St. Albans, Herts., England
- Australia: G.P.O. Box 202, Burleigh Heads, Queensland 4220 (Or dial this number: 075-35-4233 — reverse the charges.)
- Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C.
- South Africa: P.O. Box 1060, Johannesburg 2000 (Or dial this number: 011-216406.)

Other areas of the world should check the inside front cover (staff box) for the address of our office nearest you.

# WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF REAL CHRISTIANITY?

**The world is full of "pseudo-Christians" — but what is the spirit and attitude of a true Spirit-led Christian?**

by C. Wayne Cole

**G**od has perfect character. He is consistent. He is an unchanging God (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). You can count on God to fulfill His intentions and promises. He is reliable, trustworthy, faithful. God is predictable! God's character and purposes are immutable — you can rely on God to come through in a pinch. He won't let you down. He will not fail!

**Humanity Is Fallible.** But in contrast human beings fail. *Men* make mistakes. Human beings are fallible, inconsistent and unpredictable. God reveals that "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

It is to God's glory and credit that He is what He is! But all of us here below are subject to the weaknesses and inconsistencies of the flesh. Jesus Himself acknowledged that human flesh is indeed weak (Matt. 26:41).

Human life is a training ground. We are here on earth training for eternity. It is here, on this earth, that we are to learn to control the powers God has given us. For example, we strive to control the power of speech and to rule over our tongues (James 3:1-10). We seek control over our God-given emotions. God says: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Prov. 25:28). We must rule over the physical power we have to harm others. John the Baptist said: "Do violence to no man" (Luke 3:14).

So it is in the area of human relationships that we all encounter the

greatest difficulties. Because humanity is flawed, imperfect and fallible, human problems arise. Yet God *loves* this wretched world in spite of its problems and overall lack of spirituality.

We are told by the apostle John: "For God so *loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." (John 3:16). God deeply and affectionately cares for His human creation. All men and women are created in the very image of God.

**Future Family of God.** As we mortals look back at our track record and witness the tragic story of man's brutality to man, it is easy to conclude there is *no* hope for mankind.

But God *has confidence* in the ultimate future of mankind! There is reason for *hope* and expectation: God knows that many — perhaps even the majority — of mankind will ultimately fulfill their human destiny, being born into the very family of God. Jesus Christ is the firstborn of *many* brethren (Rom. 8:29). Jesus did *not* die in vain! His death, burial and resurrection were the most meaningful and important events in human experience. Because of it, the bulk of the human race will be saved — but everyone in his own order (1 Cor. 15:22-23).

How, then, did God resurrect Christ? By His vast, spiritual *power*. By the power of the Holy Spirit.

And it is this same power that resides in every truly begotten Christian. Jesus promised His disciples that they would "receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come" (Acts 1:8). That power, which is the very mind of God, will bring about the resurrection of all who possess it (Rom. 8:11). That portion of the Holy Spirit granted to each Christian is merely the down payment, or "earnest" of our inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14).

God has faith in mankind! Faith that His purpose for mankind will be accomplished. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church of God, is called the *Captain* of our salvation. He is the leader, the One who will see His Father's plan through to completion. God and Christ have a personal interest in every last human being who has ever lived and died. If God knows even the sparrow that falls, how much more is He concerned with His human creation? (Matt. 10:29-31.)

The wonderful truth is that *God is creating a family*. God is expanding His own family by the transformation of His human children into spirit beings. Remember that God is a Spirit (John 4:24).

We are instructed by John: "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

**Basic Christianity.** This wonderful plan of salvation, God's reproduction of His own kind through Christ, is at the heart and core of Christianity. Can you possibly comprehend what it would be like to be *just like* Jesus Christ? Can you wrap your mind around the concept? Can you visualize in your mind's eye what it would be like to be *composed of spirit*? To share the kind of *power* that resides in the person of Jesus Christ? The mind simply boggles at such thoughts!

Yet the Bible reveals that God does indeed have such a plan. That great master plan of salvation has been revealed to those who are led by His Spirit. Paul wrote: "For he has made known *to us* in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to *his purpose* which he

set forth *in Christ* as a plan for the fullness of time, *to unite all things in him*, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10).

So God does have a definite plan — *a purpose!* That plan is being worked out by Jesus Christ. Ultimately, at the completion of *Christ's work*, all things in the universe will be united under the rule of God.

In the final analysis, even death will be banished from the universe! Paul explained to the Corinthians: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But *every man in his own order*: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; *when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power*. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, *that God may be all in all*" (I Cor. 15:22-29).

What a marvelous plan! What a wonderful destiny God has in store for mankind! No hyperbole is sufficient to describe the *glory* that awaits those who are born of the living God!

Man is to become literally *born into* the very divine family of the Creator of the whole vast universe! God is a *family* of supernatural, divine, all-powerful Beings. God is actively expanding that family. He wishes to include you and me in it! Peter explained that God is "not wishing that *any* should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

**The Ultimate Goal.** Those who truly understand the will of God and the meaning of His plan await a

resurrection or "change," at which time they will enter into God's own family and continue to exist for all eternity as powerful beings with Christ. They seek to become members of the very *Kingdom* of God.

It is vital that Christians everywhere keep their eyes on this transcendental goal. Christ commanded: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God . . ." (Matt. 6:33). This should be the first and foremost goal of every true Christian. This vision of the Kingdom, of life eternal in the family of God, should dominate our lives. *Nothing* is more important! Everything else in life should be scaled down in relationship to this overriding goal and pre-occupation.

No idea, no esoteric doctrine or teaching, no ideology or philosophy, is more important than the concept that man is destined to become born into the family of the living God. No goal is more noble, more worth working toward. Those who are privileged to understand God's great goal and purpose being worked out through the ages have the "pearl of great price" within their grasp! Never let it go!

**Doctrines in Perspective.** A true Christian is *not* converted to a few esoteric doctrines or prophetic understandings. He is not converted to a "talmud" of dos and don'ts, rules and regulations, or ecclesiastical decisions. *He is converted to Christ and to God!* At baptism each Christian enters into a one-on-one relationship with his Creator that is not dependent upon the shifting sands of theological thought. It is that relationship with God that is *the anchor* of every truly Christian life.

One should not build his faith, his hopes and dreams, around some doctrinal or theological opinion. *A Christian is not converted to a set of*

*doctrines!* He may embrace, accept and live by them. — Indeed, *he should*; but he is converted to *God!* It is in God that we "live, and move, and have our being" (see Acts 17:28). We are saved through faith in Christ — not through belief in this or that teaching.

Paul wrote to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by *faith in the Son of God*, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Our faith is not in an opinion about doctrine — it is in Christ!

This does not mean correct understanding of the teachings of God and Christ is not important. Certainly, the Spirit of God will lead the converted mind into an understanding of the will and purpose of God. But, I have observed people haranguing about, striving over and contending about specific points of technical biblical understanding and obscure, hard-to-understand passages of Scripture to the point that they lost sight of this wonderful, majestic meaning of true Christianity — to become born members of the very God family.

Paul said: "For to me to live is CHRIST!" (Phil. 1:21.) Jesus Christ was at the very center of Paul's life and ministry. And that relationship placed Paul above the petty arguments of religious hobbyists who sought to argue about every imaginable technical point.

Paul instructed Titus: "But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, *for they are unprofitable and futile*" (Titus 3:9).

A viable, spiritual relationship with God cannot be built upon subjective, theological arguments. Rather, a Christian must anchor his life to his belief and faith in Christ

and in God the Father. Paul, and the other early apostles and Christians, found meaning to life in their relationship with God. They were not burdened by a sectarian "talmud" of petty regulations. Yet, they were not without law to God (I Cor. 9:21). Paul and the others taught a way of life, a way of love. Paul said that love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8). Faith, coupled with obedience, constitutes the basis for this Christian way of life.

Of course, Paul did say that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17). But our human understanding of biblical teaching changes as we grow and learn through the vehicle of the Holy Spirit. We are gradually led "into all truth" (John 16:13).

So it is very unwise to "freeze" imperfect human understanding of Scripture into solid concrete. Inevitably, doctrines, teachings, ideas and opinions of men come and go. Prophecies fail (I Cor. 13:8). Decisions are rendered, reversed and revised. But "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). God does not change (Mal. 3:6). In character, intent and purpose God remains the same. He is reliable, consistent and available to those who seek and need Him. One can always rely on God and on His Son, Jesus Christ. But human beings change. We all by nature tend to be somewhat capricious, inconsistent, up and down.

**Coping With New Truth.** As the Church of God is led by the Holy Spirit, we grow into new understanding — better understanding. Doctrines may change from time to time in the light of new insight and study.

This, in itself, is not negative. It is a very positive indication that God is still working with the Body of Christ. The Spirit of Truth is leading the Church into all truth. But this is a process which continues throughout the ages of man — and will do so right up until the return of Jesus Christ!

Mature Christians are not shaken

by carefully researched doctrinal development and growth. Rather, they are encouraged by the progress that is being made. Truly converted children of God are exhilarated by the continual influx of new truth and deeper understanding.

Why?

Because their lives are anchored to Christ! Since some idea or understanding about a specific point of doctrine is *not the central* anchor to the purpose of life, they are not particularly disturbed by the positive process of growth which includes change.

Their faith, their confidence and hope, are *all in Christ!* They look to His leadership in the Body. Their love remains consistent because of their relationship with their Savior and High Priest — Jesus Christ. Nothing can shake them. Nothing can diminish their love because that love is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

As Paul wrote: "Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect . . ." (I Cor. 13:8). A Christian loves, and is in return loved by Christ. Paul said: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35.)

**Not Handling the Word of God Deceitfully.** God's children are *honest* in their use of the Bible. They do not use it as a club, but rather as revelation from God. They are not preoccupied with the cunning, clever arguments of unscrupulous hobbyists who would twist Bible teaching to serve their own personal, sometimes dishonest, ends (see II Peter 3:16).

"We have renounced," wrote Paul to the Corinthians, "disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (II Cor. 4:2).

Paul did not vaunt himself in the sight of men. He was not puffed up with his own importance. Instead he looked upon himself as merely a servant — a minister of Christ. Paul

pointed his followers not to his own person, but to Christ: "For what we preach is *not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord* [Master, Boss!], with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (II Cor. 4:5). And: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

### **God's Church Preaches Christ!**

We preach Him crucified, buried and resurrected (I Cor. 15:1-8). We preach Him as the Head of the Church (Col. 1:17-19; Eph. 1:22-23). We preach Him as the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10); as our High Priest in heaven (Heb. 9:11); as our Savior (Titus 1:4). We preach the Christ of the Bible: masculine, vital, powerful, dynamic. We preach Christ as Healer, Forgiver and Comforter. We preach Him as Creator — the "Word" or "Spokesman" of the family of God who was there at creation and who said: "Let there be light . . ." (see Gen. 1:3; Col. 1:13-16; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2).

The Church of God preaches Christ as our Redeemer, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29; 3:16). And we preach Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords who will soon arrive to bring all human governments under His rule (Rev. 19:16).

Jesus Christ is at the very heart of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Paul spoke of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). He continued: "*Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me*" (verses 28, 29).

That is our great goal as a Church. We seek to proclaim, with all of the power and energy that God will grant us, the gospel of the glorious Kingdom of the living God. We preach Christ and Him crucified and resurrected for the salvation of all mankind.

When you grasp the depth and beauty of the heart and core of true Christianity — that is, Christ in you, the hope of glory — it is not easy to be blown about by winds of doctrine, change, strivings and opinions. Your life is then anchored to solid rock — the Rock that is Jesus Christ. Why don't you try it? □



# THE BIBLE IN A CHANGING WORLD

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Debate still goes on over use of the death penalty for certain criminal offenses.

The earliest biblical sanction for execution of murderers is found in God's instructions to Noah just following the flood: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image" (Gen. 9:6).

Under the theocracy of ancient Israel, capital punishment was carried out for a variety of crimes, including murder, kidnapping, and rape (see Ex. 21:12, 16 and Deut. 22:13-29).

In the New Testament, Christ and Paul recognized the power of government to use capital punishment. In Romans, chapter 13, the apostle Paul wrote: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. . . . For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. . . . If you do wrong, be afraid, for he [the ruler] does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer" (verses 1-4). "The sword" in this case probably refers to the Roman short sword, used to execute Roman citizens. Some commentators write that "the sword" is spoken of here as a symbol of the ruler's authority. In any case, the sword symbolizes the magistrate's power to punish criminals. A sword can be used to threaten, but it is usually to hurt or kill.

In Acts 25:11, Paul again gave his approval to justly deserved capital punishment by saying: "If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. . . ." And Christ acknowledged that Pilate's authority to crucify was given him "from above" (John 19:11). So the Bible shows that God allows human rulers and

governments to execute those who commit serious crimes.

But God doesn't consider capital punishment to be the "final answer" to crime. This is aptly illustrated in the case of the woman brought before Christ who had been caught in the act of adultery. "Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?" her accusers demanded to know (John 8:5). ". . . Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again'" (verses 6-11).

Christ didn't condone the crime. He advised her not to repeat the offense. But, *in this context*, He recognized the hypocrisy in those who demanded the death penalty.

A criminal is ultimately responsible for his deed. But in ways subtle and sometimes flagrant, society is often an accomplice. The whole question of crime and punishments, causes and remedies, is a complex Gordian knot. The ultimate solution is spiritual — a change of heart and behavior on the part of all — criminals and law-abiding citizens alike.

## THE WAGES OF SIN . . .

. . . is, in the long run, death (Rom. 6:23) for the guilty. But there is a price paid by the innocent here and now in this lifetime. And that price is rising far faster than the

inflation index. Last year \$65 billion in crimes against personal property and business were committed in the United States.

Organized crime had the biggest take ever last year — over \$40 billion in gambling, narcotics, hijacked goods, loan sharking, etc. Crimes against property and business totaled \$25 billion. It cost society \$15 billion in taxes to support police, prisons and courts, and \$6.5 billion in the form of higher prices for businesses to maintain their own private crime-fighting programs — guards and surveillance equipment.

The total value of cash and property involved in British thefts last year exceed £86 million. In Canada, thefts over \$200 increased 24.1 percent in 1974 to nearly 80,000.

What is significant about these crimes against personal property is that many of these criminals are middle-class folks and white-collar executives. The common idea has been that it is primarily the poor who steal out of desperate need. But more and more are doing it out of sheer greed!

Theoretically, as the standard of living increases, crimes against property should decline; supposedly more and more people are able to meet their basic needs legitimately. But in real life this theory is breaking down. There are as many as 500,000 "career" criminals in the United States alone, and many of them are pulling down incomes ranging from \$15,000 to \$165,000 or more — and all tax free.

A growing number of people just don't know the meaning of the word "enough." "From the least to the greatest of them, every one is greedy for unjust gain" (Jer. 6:13). It's bad enough that there is so much legitimate avarice. But now inflation-battered innocent people must pay the price for crime with increased costs in goods and services and higher taxes. According to one estimate, the bill came to \$951 for every man, woman and child in the U.S. last year. □



**E**very morning we wake up to a cacophony of fear and despair, chaos and cruelty, coups and corruption. In the newspaper over the morning cup of coffee, we read of crime increases and social disintegrations, bloody revolutions and civil disorders taking hundreds of lives somewhere else while we slept, natural disasters (also somewhere else, hopefully) killing hundreds or thousands in their beds, with perhaps tens of thousands homeless. Not even the comic page is funny: it's sick, because the world is.

Governments are unstable, shaken worldwide by epidemics of distrust of officialdom, a yawning chasm of credibility gaps, the outside pressures of aggressive world powers bent on world domination.

The economic news is no better even in an upswing, because of the unique fiscal dilemma we face of inflation battling the headlines with depression. Odd and contradictory terms like "stagflation" puzzle the mind. Staggering news tells us that the commercial and banking capital of the world, New York City, is on the brink of bankruptcy, perhaps the state of New York may tumble into economic collapse with the city — only the federal government may be able to bail them both out. Other cities face similar problems on the horizon, while many begin to doubt the monetary health of the entire nation despite the fact that it is the richest in the world! Personal and business bankruptcies are on the rise; giants of industry exercise massive layoffs and struggle in

***A favorite song of recent years is titled "What the World Needs Now Is Love, Sweet Love" — but before the world can have love it must have hope!***

by David Jon Hill

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court battles defending or justifying bribery as an essential element of successful commerce: the future is uncertain and doubtful to say the least.

**Sword of Damocles.** While some of us are dying from overeating, nearly twenty thousand a day die of starvation around the world. The hunger bomb and the population explosion seem about to unite in a critical mass and to blow civilization as we know it off this beautiful round blue ball of life we call earth. Our own breadbasket seems in jeopardy as weathermen tell us that we are entering a drought cycle similar to or worse than the dust bowl specter of the 30s. The future looks glum — the black horse of Revelation has just been saddled up for his end-time run.

The sword of Damocles filled with nuclear holocaust hangs over our heads. There is weather upset, fuel crisis, mindless crime, dope addiction, political corruption at all levels, a degenerate low in education for our next generation, pollution of the air we breathe and the water we drink and the land we live on, glowing spark points that could trigger World War III (literally the war to end all wars because it could

end all life on earth). Our own personal problems seem small in comparison, but they are real: you just lost your job, your family is about to break up, you can't make ends meet, your son is sick, your mother just died. . . .

It's just too much — the modern-day pace, communications worldwide and instantaneous bringing of all the problems of the world into our own living rooms, added to the personal crises we face, add up to an overload on our capacity to cope. Hope is long since fled; despair hangs heavy. "What's the use, nothing's going to turn out all right!" is the plaintive cry of many.

**Household Word.** Doomsdayers, sundowners and prophets of doom all have a heyday — their moans and cries of despair and negativism seem very credible in today's world. *Armageddon* is a household word no longer the property of the religious fanatic. People are more familiar with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse than they are with the winner of the Kentucky Derby. Politicians, newsmen, educators, historians, even businessmen have taken over from the lunatic fringe of the clergy the expression, "the end of the world"!

Purpose, direction, a set goal are all missing from our collective lives and from most of us as individuals. Peace, security, happiness are all empty words that have lost meaning in the hopeless world of today.

Thankfully, God has no such plan in mind for mankind. Our Creator is not going to allow mankind to die in the throes of World War III (or any

Edward L. Simpson

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW IS...

**HOPE**

# THE GREAT HOPE OF MAN

Why should Christians call God *Father*? Why should we pray "Our Father which art in heaven"?

Because we are *to be God as God is God!* God is our Father because He is actively and presently in the process of begetting and bringing sons to birth, sons to be born in His image, spiritually perfect as He is perfect, ever-living as He is ever-living, *God as He is God.*

In the Old Testament, God said: "... Israel is my son, even my firstborn" (Ex. 4:22). And: "... O foolish people and unwise... is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made [created] thee, and established thee?" (Deut. 32:6.) Also: "But now, O Lord, *thou art our father*; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isa. 64:8).

Remember what Jesus said? "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? [Jesus here quoted from Psalm 82:6.] If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified... Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:34-36.) Jesus also said: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). And: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11).

Human beings are to share *in this oneness*. Perhaps Romans 8 best explains how it is that human beings become the sons of God in every sense of that expression.

This chapter begins by showing that as physical human beings, in our present fleshly state, we cannot obey the laws of God and please Him. First of

all we have to have a sacrifice to pay for the sins which demand our death, and then receive a new mind, a changed mind — a spiritually, rather than a physically, oriented mind — so that we can begin to think and act and live like God our Father in heaven. Paul put it this way: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

The Father's Spirit joins with our spirit and proves to us that we are the sons of God (verse 16). Then Romans 8 goes on to show that by joining His Spirit with ours, God does not *immediately* bring us into His Kingdom, His family, but that we have to live through experiences, which in many cases are painful, to develop character, to bring us to maturity (Matt. 5:48).

Comforting advice is given to show us that despite all the trials and difficulties we have to endure while we are still human beings, "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (verse 28). Paul goes on to explain in verse 29 that the purpose of God according to which true Christians have been called is that we might be sons of God as Christ is a Son of God, born into the Kingdom and family of God as Christ was born into the Kingdom and family of God! And so it is that Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, is called the "*firstborn among MANY brethren.*"

That is, Jesus Christ, the only human being to be begotten in the womb of a woman by God the Father in heaven, is the first human being to become a Son of God by the resurrection from the dead! (Rom. 1:4.)

*But only the first!*

Any human being, by ex-

ercising the power of the Spirit of God, can join that firstborn Son in God's Kingdom once he is called by God the Father.

It was from the beginning the plan of our great God — the source of outgoing concern, the source of love — to share His eternal life, with all its joy and majesty! Speaking of Christ, Paul quoted the book of Psalms and wrote: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Heb. 2:6-8).

Certainly we recognize that all things are in subjection to Jesus Christ! We all remember the scripture quoting Jesus, after His resurrection explaining to His disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Notice in reading this quote that Paul cites from Psalms that it is not just the Son of Man (Jesus) who is being talked about, but mankind. That God created mankind with the ultimate purpose of sharing His own rulership of all things is manifest by these verses. Christ is not the only One to have Sonship in the Kingdom of God — all of mankind was created with that purpose in mind.

God is called a Father because He is a Father. And it is His will, purpose and plan to become the Father of untold billions — to become your Father to share in His life, His glory, His majesty, His Kingdom — *God as He is God!* That is your great hope — the hope of all mankind!

other world war number). He is not going to sit by and let mankind commit suicide (cosmoscide) through any combination of population explosion, lack of food, pollution, disease, natural catastrophes and economic chaos. He has a hope He is determined to spend His limitless energies fulfilling — the greatest hope there is!

This world needs hope — you need hope.

Hope means, by dictionary definition, "to cherish a desire for something with some expectation of obtaining it."

**If Hope Were Fulfilled.** Let's leave the world scene and start small — with *you*. What do *you* hope for? What do you desire to obtain? What is your own individual and personal hope — apart from the hopeless world? A raise in pay? Maybe just a job? A new car? A home? A husband or wife or children? Financial security? A friendly neighbor? Health? Longevity? Happiness? A freedom from fear?

What if your hope were fulfilled? Let's say you want to get married. So, you get married. Five years pass. You've achieved what you hoped for; you're married, the ceremony is over, it was a lovely church wedding, all your friends were there, you were given fabulous gifts by relatives and friends alike, the honeymoon was a dream fulfilled that you look fondly back on with misty-eyed memory. But now the flower girls are gone, the rose-colored glasses you saw things through have turned to gray. The babies (you so hoped for) are here and the diapers and sleepless nights along with them. Bills are mounting, your mate is nagging, you both work, but you've spent almost as much time going over your budget with cut after cut as you have working on your job. The car needs repair, you don't know how you are going to pay for increasing insurance and fuel rates, the kids are outgrowing clothes faster than you can buy them but your bottomless-pit checking account, your mortgage, your time-payment bills and your credit card balances (all in the red) say you can barely afford to put food on the table.

Your hope of five years ago is fulfilled — and it now seems a hopeless situation. Now what do you hope for? *A raise!* If you just earned one-hundred dollars more a month . . . So, you *get* a raise! Your hope is again fulfilled. But you soon discover that inflation has more than eaten up the advantages of the raise, your four-year-old broke an arm and your wife wrecked the car: you're deeper in debt than before and she's not able to work for a month yet!

Now what do you hope for?

**Tomorrow's Silver Lining.** Hope is a strange thing. You've probably noticed that you never hope for something you already have. You always hope for some future improvement on the present lot in life.

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**The goal, which seemed so golden at the beginning, loses its glitter. Apathy breeds cynicism. Cynicism, in its turn, engenders despair. And the cycle is right back where it started.**

Fortunately, we can change our hopes, upgrade them as each in turn becomes fulfilled (or we give up hope of them being fulfilled). Hope makes the world go around — the possibility of future betterment, of tomorrow's silver lining for the clouds of today. Without hope people don't try. The fact is that each hope fulfilled demands a new hope to live for.

In human history hope has had a strange cycle. Whether you pick Genghis Khan, communism or Christopher Columbus, the same unending cycle occurs. Hope begins in despair. That is, the individual seems to be in a hopeless situation — then an idea strikes and hope flares anew. The individual now has a reason to live, because he feels that there may be some slim

chance of achieving the goal he has now seen. Life has meaning again. He strives (for his individual hope, or perhaps his hope is big enough to include a group as large as a whole nation, religion, or empire) to accomplish that hope. He succeeds!

**Enter Apathy.** Yet, oddly enough, nothing in history fails to quite the extent of success! In the footsteps of success invariably follows one degree or another of apathy. The individual or the group becomes careless with the success achieved. With no bigger, newer hope, there is no reason to strive, to live, to face a challenge anymore. Things bog down. The goal, which seemed so golden at the beginning, loses its glitter. Apathy breeds cynicism. Cynicism, in its turn, engenders despair. And the cycle is right back where it started.

And the reason is because the *hope is never big enough!*

A hope, to be worthwhile, must be big enough so that it can never be accomplished in its entirety. Otherwise a new, bigger and more vigorous hope *must follow* on the heels of a fulfillment of the past hope.

**Example From History.** Let's take Christopher Columbus' hope for an example. Columbus hoped to prove his idea that the world was round indeed and not flat like most of the people of his day believed. For most of his adult years, that hope drove him to accomplish the things which he did. Nothing in his life swayed him from pursuing that one goal. All other things were subservient to it. Family, job, his own health were all spent in feverish desire to prove that one hope. The despair of the humdrum life of his age and circumstance was given meaning and reason. It was a great hope. It was greater than anyone else had come up with in his generation. It seemed foolish, but he believed in it and was driven to accomplish it at all costs.

Finally, he convinced the crown of Spain to back his idea, his goal, his hope. The queen even hocked her jewels to finance his venture. Columbus was given three ships and a crew from the prisons of her government to prove his hope.

# HOPE IN THE BIBLE

**Romans 5:2.** "Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice *in our hope of sharing the glory of God.*"

**Romans 8:19-21.** "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it *in hope*; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."

**Titus 1:1-2.** "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, *in hope of eternal life* which God, who never lies, promised ages ago."

**Psalms 119:166.** "I *hope for thy salvation*, O Lord, and I do thy commandments."

**Romans 8:24-25.** "For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."

**I Corinthians 15:19-21.** "If for this life only we have *hoped in Christ*, we are of all men most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead."

**Ephesians 1:18.** "Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."

**Ephesians 4:4.** "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called *to the one hope* that belongs to your call."

**Colossians 1:23.** "... Provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from *the hope of the gospel* which you heard."

**Colossians 1:27.** "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, *the hope of glory.*"

**I Peter 1:3.** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to *a living hope through the resurrection* of Jesus Christ from the dead."

**I Peter 1:13.** "... Be sober, *set your hope* fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

**I John 3:3.** "And every man that hath *this hope in him* purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

But, believe it or not, his hope was *not big enough!* He hoped that by sailing west he could reach the East, India, China, the Orient, fabulously rich. What proving his hope accomplished was greater than his hope! Instead of proving that you could reach the East by sailing west (and so proving that the world was round and not flat), he discovered a *whole new world!*

Not only was his hope of his life achieved, but a goal far richer than he had imagined was revealed. Of course he was hailed as a great explorer, unique so far as the world of his day realized — he was honored, feted, and sent back to govern the new lands he had discovered. The hope of his entire previous life was fulfilled and then some!

But now what did he have to live for? What *new* hope, greater and more meaningful than the first, did he have to give meaning and purpose to his existence? Unfortunately, none!

**The Human Cycle.** The sad circumstances of the life of Columbus after the fulfillment of his life hope are some of the most painful on record. The ignominy, final imprisonment and utter despair (not to mention abject poverty) in which one of the greatest explorers known to mankind finally died exemplifies perfectly the point that unless your hope is big enough to survive success it is indeed hopeless. Columbus failed miserably in governing what he had discovered. Others took away from him the potential and riches he had discovered over the objections and against the advice of those same others. Columbus ended his life in poverty, having suffered the indignity of chains and imprisonment in the face of the successful fulfillment of one of the greatest hopes ever maintained by man. He died in despair, a hopeless man.

The human cycle had been fulfilled: despair, hope, success, apathy, cynicism, despair — an empty circle, because his hope was *not big enough!*

What about you?

**Hope That Is Transcendent.** In the beginning of an independent life we hope for things, or the

money to get things. If and when those things come to us, we begin to realize "things" are not enough to hope for. Even to keep the things we now have that we hoped for we need security — and security is *not* a thing. Security depends on the economy, on government, on peace, on health, on future stability. All these are hopes that drive us on — we never seem to achieve any one of them for long (and I do not know of any individual who has achieved all these hopes at any one time).

But are any of these hopes big enough? What if you lived in a peaceful, secure, economically healthy and stable state — what would you hope for then? What hope would keep you from boredom; what hope would you seek to achieve that would give meaning to your life, purpose and reason to live, a goal to strive for?

That's where God enters the picture. God holds out a hope that is transcendent, that goes above and beyond the goals and purposes of this life, that offers a challenge that keeps you going all life long; a hope that is never fulfilled in this life, a hope beyond the grave, a reason to live. Someone said a very wise and strange thing once: "The only thing worth living for is that for which you would die!" Do you have that kind of hope?

**God's Hope.** Do you realize that God Himself lives by *hope*? Did you know that God has set before Himself a hope so great that not even He will ever be able to realize it, ever? That His goal and reason for living, that for which He strives, for which He is (has been) willing to die for is so vast and eternally occupying that He will never achieve it?

The God who put this world together did so with a plan in mind. That plan was not the hopeless Nirvana of one major religion of the world which promises your becoming an unconscious part of the great whole of nothing with no worries forever because you have no individual consciousness forever. It is not the bliss of slumbering in a hammock slung between two date palms in an oasis being fed by voluptuous maidens forever, as the promise of the followers of Allah are

assured. It is not walking the golden streets with golden slippers, strumming on a harp with your only worry being how to keep your halo straight as seems to be the promise of the majority of Protestant groups. It is most certainly not the promise of finally being able to look into the face of God and appreciate the beatific vision (whatever that is) as is the promise to those who follow the Catholic faith. What the God who created everything proposes is to bring you into His very family. To be God as God is God! Not just to be a God in the euphemistic sense of our all being brothers and sisters with God as our figurehead Father; but to share his divine nature completely.

Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is

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**God's promise is to make you a son as Christ is now a Son. To grant you membership in the family of God. To give you eternal life as He is eternal. To be holy as He is holy.**

alive and well, not in hiding, at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He fully plans to fulfill the promise He made to us in the name of the Father to bring many sons to glory, to establish His Kingdom here on this earth. God's promise is to make you a son as Christ is now a Son. To grant you membership in the literal family of God. To give you eternal life as He is eternal. To be holy as He is holy. To share all power and joint ownership with the Possessor of the universe. To share the divine nature. To have the character of God, full of love, peace, joy — *to be God as God is God!* This is the purpose of creation — the hope of the world!

**Eternal Reason to Live.** God's real plan is practical. He says of His family kingdom that there will never

be an end to its expansion. His plan is to continue adding sons and daughters who look, feel, act and are composed of the same self-regenerating eternal spirit life as He is, forever! That is why the goal God has set before Himself is a hope that not even He will ever fulfill. Endless, eternal, forever creating an ever-expanding family to enjoy and rule the great creation He has already made — and to have you and me share in future creations without end. A busy, practical, interesting, challenging, ongoing plan that gives an eternal reason to live.

There is no boredom in that plan. Never a time when your interest will run out. No mythical, religious-sounding folderol about some spiritual never-never land where you do nothing forever — but an eternal job of creating, governing, problem-solving with visible benefit.

That's a hope worth living for . . . and worth dying for if necessary in this life. Because God our Father has our life in His hands at all times. No man can take that away from you — because He has the power to resurrect you from whatever death any man can imagine. He created you in the first place for a reason beyond the imagination of *any* religion on the face of the earth — a reason some in the religious field would call blasphemy (to think that the purpose for our creation could be to make us equal with God in every way).

No matter what your many temporary and interim goals and hopes may be — and may they all be fulfilled — be sure to cherish this greatest possible hope God offers us to give transcendent purpose to our lives.

Make this hope *your* hope! □

#### RECOMMENDED READING

The following booklets are available free of charge upon your request. For the address of our office nearest you, see the inside front cover (end of staff box)

*Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: The Pale Horse (Disease Epidemics).*

*Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: The Red Horse (War) Why Were You Born? Come Help Humanity*

# THE CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Robert Fahey  
Regional Director, South Africa

“Groete van Johannesburg!” Greetings from Johannesburg, the headquarters of our Work at the southern end of the African continent. We deal primarily with South Africa of course, but we also have a sub-office in Rhodesia and are responsible for all activities in the African states of Malawi, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland; the former Portuguese territories of Mozambique and Angola; and also the Indian Ocean islands of Madagascar, Reunion, Mauritius and Seychelles. These are all independent states, except Reunion (France) and Seychelles (Britain). The latter will receive independence shortly. There’s also South West Africa or Namibia.

**The People of South Africa.** The whites are divided into two groups and number about four million. The largest group (56 percent) speak Afrikaans, a form of Dutch, as their first language. They are basically of Dutch descent, with a touch of Huguenot and German. The rest of the whites are primarily of British descent.

There are about 16 million Africans or Blacks comprising five major Bantu language groups (each divided into several dialects and tribes). Another separate group called Coloureds are of mixed ethnic origin, but are mostly descended from Bushman and Hottentot stock. These live mostly in and around Cape Town.

Asians, who originally came from India in the colonial days as volunteers to work on the sugar plantations, number about ¾ million. Did you know Mahatma Gandhi spent his early adult years in South Africa and studied law here?

We reach these diverse groups with a *Plain Truth* circulation of over 97,000 (11 percent increase over last year). It is now printed in Cape



GN Photo

**ROBERT FAHEY**, regional director for South Africa, is shown here in his office in Johannesburg.

Town by Cape and Transvaal Printers, the largest printing house in Africa. An outside firm also mails the magazine for us and we’re able to receive a special two-cent postal rate within South Africa because the magazine is registered as a newspaper and certain sorting is done before the post office gets it.

Up until recently our computer needs were handled by Bricket Wood. But now we keep our file in Pasadena and have a tape sent out monthly for our needs. From the tape we can produce our own labels in any combination we choose on a local computer. Premier Milling Company has a suitable computer and is willing to rent us time on it at a very reasonable rate. They also do our data prep, doing all keypunch and verifying for us on an IBM 3741 diskette machine.

**Free Mailing List.** Recently, a leading editor in South Africa was shown a copy of *World Crisis in Agriculture* by one of our members. The editor felt that the booklet was valuable and offered us — free of charge — his mailing list of the 12,000 leading farmers in southern Africa. That was a very valuable contribution because the leading farmers in South Africa are by and large the leaders in every other field. To buy the list would have cost several thousands of dollars. I wrote a special letter advertising *World Crisis in Agriculture* to these men and we received a whopping 21 percent response requesting the



booklet. Fifty-eight percent of these wanted the booklet in Afrikaans, which we had prepared. We included with the booklet a card advertising the *Plain Truth*. Many of them requested the *Plain Truth*, including the State President, Dr. N. Diederichs, the former Minister of Finance who was so highly respected throughout the financial world.

As another direct mail project, we found we had a number of old GN's in stock and sent them to a selected list of *Plain Truth* subscribers as a sample with an accompanying letter suggesting that they join the GN list. We received a 32 percent response to this effort — and also cleared our stockroom. This increased the GN list to 4800. Then last December we mailed a local semi-annual letter to all *Plain Truth* subscribers offering them the GN. The response sent our projections through the roof, and currently the list stands at 13,000. The letter also gave news of the planned *Plain Truth* format change and told subscribers that they can once again hear *The World Tomorrow* broadcast in southern Africa.

**The Broadcast.** The Rhodesia Broadcasting Company (RBC), the only radio station in Rhodesia, now airs *The World Tomorrow* broadcast twice monthly on Sunday nights at 10:00 p.m. This is a government controlled station, and we have this unusual opportunity as a direct result of the contacts made when Mr. Ted Armstrong visited here in 1971. Out of that visit came an article for the *Plain Truth* and three television broadcasts on Rhodesia. The broadcast is also aired throughout all of southern Africa on the medium and shortwave bands and most all of our members now have the opportunity to hear *The World Tomorrow*. And incredible as it seems, RBC is giving us the time totally free.

What's more, they are putting on our television specials free of charge as well. The "Hunger Bomb" was broadcast on the only

television station in Rhodesia on the 7th and 14th of December, and the Portland Campaign was aired on December 28 and January 4 — again all *free of charge!* This has resulted in RBC requesting more TV programs, and so we have selected topical ones for screening this year.

One of the big problems we have with offering material free is that in many cases people will take it not to learn, but because it's free. This makes agonizing decisions for our mail readers because we want to put our literature in the hands of all who sincerely want it. But if we don't use some caution we could find ourselves with insufficient funds and completely out of stocks. The new policy of waiting for a return letter before sending the next lesson of the Correspondence Course has helped to deal with this problem. We already have the Bible Correspondence Course in Afrikaans and are now endeavoring to print all the back-up booklets offered in the Course in Afrikaans. That's a big and expensive job, but it's getting done.

**Church Activities.** The Church is showing good growth. Church attendance is 35 percent up on last year for the entire area. Membership is up 19 percent to 1021 — 284 nonwhites, 737 whites. We presently have churches in Johannesburg, Benoni, Pretoria, Soweto (Black city outside Johannesburg), Durban, two in Cape Town (European and Coloured), two each in Bulawayo and Salisbury (European and African), and another in East London. In addition, we have just begun church services in Bloemfontein, Welkom, Kimberley, Port Elizabeth, northern Transvaal and in Krugersdorp for Europeans, and in Pretoria and Durban for non-Europeans.

*Plain Truth* lectures have been very profitable here. Last year we tried to set them up in every possible place we could. We reached several thousand people and our church attendance benefited. This

year we are planning on going back to the larger centers only. Thirty-six two-night studies are being set up for all racial groups throughout the whole area. These will be followed by four additional studies from the local pastor. Smaller studies will be considered if they seem advisable.

Another important aspect of the Work here is the surprising favor we have with the leadership of South Africa. Last year Dr. Herman Hoeh was our guest during the Feast of Tabernacles. Since he has very wide interests and is a Senior Editor of the new magazine *Human Potential*, I thought it a good idea to have him meet several leaders here. We were able to arrange an appointment with the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Heinrich Schoeman, and also the Deputy Minister of Coloured Affairs (responsible for the administration of South West Africa), Mr. Hennie Smit. Both of these men gave Dr. Hoeh a very warm welcome, and each invited him back again to tour their respective areas of influence. This can only work to good for the Church as a whole, and we're looking forward very much to having Dr. Hoeh out here once again.

I have had occasion to meet several leaders in southern Africa, including the chairman of the South African Foundation, Dr. Jan Marais. Dr. Marais feels that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong has a "unique contribution to make to peace and stability in Africa." As chairman of the South African Foundation, Dr. Marais has invited Mr. Armstrong to visit South Africa, which Mr. Armstrong tentatively plans in June. Members of the Foundation include all the top non-political leaders (it's a non-political organization and privately financed) in southern Africa, such as Harry Oppenheimer, Anton Rupert, Dr. Chris Barnard, Gary Player and several dozen more that may not be internationally known. King Sobhuza of Swaziland, who has been on the throne since 1923, is also interested in meeting Mr. Armstrong when he is in the area. □

# WHAT DO YOU MEAN— GOD DOESN'T CHANGE?

***Are you a spiritual stick-in-the-mud? Do you resist the influx of new doctrinal understanding because you believe that God Himself is incapable of change? This challenging article takes on the sacred cows of traditional spiritual intransigence.***

by Brian Knowles

**T**he religious leaders of Jesus' day were not noted for their open-mindedness. Jesus came bringing light and truth (John 12:46; 14:26, etc.), but the sectarian world of that day rejected the light — "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

The religious leaders of that time were unable to accept the new understanding brought by Jesus from God the Father. They had built up a code of law containing dozens of "dos and don'ts" with which they were quite comfortable. They sat in Moses' seat (Matt. 23:2). They — along with their rivals, the Sadducees — were ensconced in an impregnable position of ecclesiastical power, wielding authority over thousands of devout followers.

Jesus rocked their boat.

He came as a disturber of the status quo — an iconoclast with powerful and authoritative convictions. Academically, the Pharisees were unable to resist the wisdom with which Christ spoke. *Emotionally* they resisted it to the point of crucifying Him!

**Parable of the Wineskins.** Following the selection of the tax collector Levi as one of Jesus' disciples, Levi made a great feast in his home to celebrate the event. Jesus, His disciples, and many other tax collectors (publicans) were invited to the meal.

As usual, the Pharisees and

scribes found fault. *They assumed guilt by association.* They judged Christ (falsely) by the company He kept. "And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Luke 5:30.)

Jesus pointed out that He was there to call *sinners* to repentance, not the "righteous" — that is, the *self-righteous!* But the Pharisees were relentless in their criticism. When they found they could not prevail in one area, they shifted their focus to another — to the question of fasting. "And they said to him, 'The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink'" (verse 33).

The Pharisees had a *quantitative* standard of righteousness. They were concerned with *how much* one prayed, *how often* one fasted, and *how much* one offered. Jesus debunked this approach to righteousness in Luke 18:1-14, where He showed that what is important to God is *attitude* and quality of prayer — not mere quantity! God would rather hear a short prayer performed in humility than a long, sonorous prayer done out of self-righteousness.

Unfortunately, the Pharisees and their associates were unable to accept Christ's approach to true spirituality. To them it was too new, too "liberal," too hard to take. Jesus healed on the Sabbath against Jewish law. He and His disciples plucked grain in the fields on the Sabbath. They ate and drank with "gusto" and ran roughshod over the idol of Judaic legalism.

This approach was philosophically intolerable to the Pharisees. They gnashed their teeth in anger and frustration at the teachings of Christ. They sought opportunity to kill Him time and time again.

Jesus addressed their stubborn and intransigent attitude in two succinct parables:

"He told them a parable also: 'No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old'" (Luke 5:36).

Jesus' doctrine was like a patch of brilliant new cloth attached to the threadbare fabric of ancient tradition and legalism. The resultant tension could do nothing but create a rent in the garment of existing tradition.

Then Christ gave a second parable to drive the point home: "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins" (verses 37, 38).

Jesus' teaching was likened to new wine, sparkling, fresh and invigorating. The Pharisees were like old wineskins, brittle, unresilient, inflexible. Figuratively speaking, they were "bursting" with the influx of the new wine of Jesus' doctrine. They were content with the dregs of their tradition which made the words of God "of none effect" (Mark 7:8, 9, 13, KJV). They preferred the sediment-laden, traditional teachings to the fresh new wine of God's updated revelation!

They said, "The old [wine] is better" (Luke 5:39, KJV).

Later, the great Christian martyr, Stephen, defined the problem this way: "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, *you always resist the Holy Spirit.* As your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51).

"*You always resist the Holy Spirit!*" Here is the crux of the problem! Those who resist the teaching

of Christ resist God's Holy Spirit! **Spirit of the Pharisees.** The spirit and attitude of the tradition-bound Pharisees lives on today in those professing Christians who resist change. Even in today's modern world of professing Christianity there are those who resist new understanding. As the Holy Spirit leads converted Christians to understand more and more of the real meaning and intent of the Word of God, there also will always be those who resist this new knowledge.

But, in truth, they resist the Holy Spirit of God just as the Pharisees did nearly two millennia in the past.

Jesus explained to His disciples that the purpose of the Holy Spirit was to lead them into more and more truth: "When the Spirit of truth comes, *he will guide you into all the truth . . .*" (John 16:13).

This is a *progressive*, continuing process. Each generation of true Christians is led into new avenues of spiritual insight and understanding. The Church of God is a dynamic, living, changing organism — ever growing into greater and deeper understanding. The apostle Peter instructed Christians to "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (II Peter 3:18).

Paul instructed the evangelist Timothy to "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (II Tim. 2:15, KJV). Those who do not study the Word of God are often embarrassed by their lack of knowledge when they must answer a "hard question." Like the Pharisees whose spirit lives on within them, they "*do err, not knowing the scriptures*" (Matt. 22:29, KJV).

Solomon wrote: "Get wisdom; *get insight*. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of

wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, *get insight*" (Prov. 4:5-7).

The motto of Ambassador College reads: "The Word of God is the foundation of knowledge." It is the aim of the Worldwide Church of God to continually grow in knowledge and be corrected by the Word of God. The process of growing in knowledge is often painful to those who become entrenched in tradition. Each new doctrinal change has a shattering effect on those who are not conditioned to be receptive to such change.

**Malachi 3:6.** Some, in a desperate attempt to justify an attitude of spiritual intransigence, have resorted to distorting certain scriptures. One such passage is found in Malachi 3:6.

"For I the Lord do not change. . . ."

This statement from the minor prophet Malachi is often quoted, out of context, to justify a rigid stance on doctrinal understanding. Those who use it conclude one of two things: 1) that God never changes His teaching on any doctrine; or 2) that New Testament doctrine is identical to Old.

Both conclusions are in error.

Note the *context* of the verse — Malachi is talking about a time when Christ will return to "purify the sons of Levi" (verse 3). He indicts the "sorcerers . . . the adulterers . . . those who swear falsely . . . those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the orphan . . . those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me [God] . . ." (verse 5).

The prophet is listing the national sins of Israel — of Judah and Jerusalem (verse 4). He is addressing the Levites — the priesthood tribe — who were failing to fulfill their responsibility in caring for the spiritual condition of the nation. *Then*

he says, quoting God: "*For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed*" (Mal. 3:6).

The *subject* of this verse is *God's mercy* — not His doctrine and teaching. God is explaining that He is just as merciful as He ever was — and *therefore* He will not utterly destroy (consume) the nation for the aforementioned sins! God is talking about His own character — of the fact that He is, by nature, intrinsically merciful and forgiving. To use this scripture to show that the Church of God cannot change an understanding that was accepted in the 1950s, for example, is an absurd distortion of the first magnitude!

**Church Changes.** It should be pointed out, by way of qualification, that the teaching of God in terms of His written revelation has remained static for nearly two thousand years — since the close of the Canon. The words of the Bible have not been altered or changed in that period except to a small degree by transmission and translation.

What has changed is the Church's understanding of the meaning and application of those words! As the Church grows in knowledge, changes and adjustments are made to conform to the leading of God's Holy Spirit. These adjustments in teaching in no way change the truth of God. Rather, they draw us closer to it!

To say that the Church may never change its teaching is to assume that we have had perfect understanding of the will of God from the beginning. This is to belie the Bible itself, which teaches that Christians first receive the *basics* of doctrine: the ABC's, the milk of the Word. Later, when the Church has grown to greater spiritual maturity, God provides spiritual meat (see Hebrews 5 and 6).

# DOES GOD EVER CHANGE?

**Hebrews 7:12.** "For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well" (RSV).

**Hebrews 8:13.** "In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (RSV).

**Hebrews 10:9.** "He abolishes the first in order to establish the second" (RSV).

**Exodus 32:14.** "So the Eternal changed his mind about the punishment he had threatened to his people" (Moffatt).

**I Samuel 24:16.** "And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented of the evil and reversed His judgment, and said to the destroying angel, It is enough; now stay your hand" (The Amplified Bible).

**Jeremiah 26:19.** "Did they not reverently appease the Eternal, till the Eternal relented and withheld the evil he had pronounced against them?" (Moffatt.)

**I Samuel 15:35.** "And the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel" (RSV).

**Jonah 3:10.** "And when God saw that they had put a stop to their evil ways, he abandoned his plan to destroy them, and didn't carry it through" (The Living Bible).

**I Kings 21:29.** "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days [as originally decreed]; but in his son's days I will bring the evil upon his house" (RSV).

**Exodus 4:10-16.** God allows Moses (upon a strong emotional appeal) to substitute Aaron as spokesman to Pharaoh.

The disciples themselves provide a microcosmic example of what the Church in general has always had to go through in terms of maturing. Those twelve men grew from spiritual infancy, when they made absurd assumptions and acted in childish, yet foolish, exuberance, to become the spiritual giants of the New Testament period.

The Church, in any age, must proceed from infancy to maturity. Each generation of Christians must "grow up in Christ" (see Eph. 4:15). Each must change and adjust to the influx of new knowledge.

Those who fail to do so become casualties and "fall by the wayside" as the Church moves on.

Those who resist change often give credence to the old axiom, "The Bible can be used to prove anything." They persist in using certain passages of Scripture like Malachi 3:6 to "prove" their point that Church doctrine cannot be changed. Another such passage is Hebrews 13:8.

**Hebrews 13:8.** "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

This scripture is very similar to

Malachi 3:6 in that it is talking about the *person* of Christ — not about what He does or does not *do*. To understand the true implications of this verse we must do two things: 1) look elsewhere in the same book (Hebrews) to see if similar statements are made which amplify this one, and 2) take the verse *in context*.

In the opening verses of Hebrews, the author provides us with our first clue: "Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thine hands; they will perish, *but thou remainest*; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. *But thou art the same, and thy years will never end*" (Heb. 1:10-12).

Here the apostle Paul, accepted traditionally as the author of Hebrews, is quoting from the eighth Psalm to contrast the transience of the created universe with the permanency and agelessness of its Creator. He is showing that *God always lives* — that He is eternal, immortal.

One of the principal purposes of the letter to the Hebrews was to contrast the superior priesthood of Christ with that of the Levites. Jesus is shown to be superior even by His immortality: "The former priests were many in number, because *they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he* [Christ] *holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever*. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, *since he always lives to make intercession for them*" (Heb. 7:23-25).

Here the picture is made even clearer! Since Christ lives forever, His priesthood is infinitely superior to that of the mortal, human priests of the tribe of Levi. He is always on the job ready to intervene for those in all ages who come to God. He is a faithful, consistent and *permanent* high priest!

**Context of Hebrews 13:8.** The book of Hebrews was written largely as encouragement to those Jewish Christians who were having difficulty making the transition from traditional Judaism to dynamic

Christianity. Persecution and pressure from fellow Jews who had not accepted Christ was heavy. Apparently many were beginning to let down in the performance of basic Christian duties. Strife and sinful practices were beginning to break out among them. Therefore Paul wrote: "Let brotherly love *continue* . . . Let marriage be held in honor among all . . . for God will judge the immoral and the adulterous" (Heb. 13:1-4).

Paul was warning those who were letting down. They were forgetting about Christ, who was still actively watching over the Church as its living, eternal High Priest. Therefore Paul wrote: ". . . Be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you.' Hence we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper . . .'" (verses 5-6).

Then, after admonishing the Church to once again look to the example of its leaders (verse 7), Paul writes: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever!"

Now it should be obvious what the verse means! Since Christ is still alive, functioning in His office as merciful High Priest, immortal, eternal in the heavens, *don't let down in living as a Christian!* Don't allow yourselves to degenerate and forsake your faith, for *Christ has not changed.* He is still on His throne in heaven, alive, actively intervening for His people. Now is not the time to descend into immorality and false doctrine (verse 9).

The verse has nothing to do with whether Christ changes *doctrine* or not! And, *if it did* imply that, it would contradict the entire purpose of the book of Hebrews which was to explain some fundamental changes which Christ had made!

**A Book of Change.** The letter to the Hebrews explains, perhaps more than any other New Testament book, some of the *changes* in law, administration and doctrine that God was making. To use any verse in Hebrews to "prove" that God never changes doctrine is to overlook the entire thrust of the book! Notice, for example, Hebrews 7:12: "For when there is a *change in the priesthood*, there is

necessarily a *change in the law* as well."

Who made these changes of law and administration?

God did!

God changed! He *altered* His teaching — doctrine ("doctrine" merely means "teaching").

God *changed* the covenants from the Mosaic to the New. The new agreement is said to be "better" than the old — founded upon "better promises" (Heb. 8:6-7). Yet, did not God make the Old?

Yes, He did — but He later *changed* it.

God has not only changed His doctrine and teaching from age to age but He has also *changed His mind* on occasion. God is not rigid, unyielding and intransigent as are some of His human subjects!

Yet, God is not fickle and capricious. He is ageless, eternal, *consistent* in purpose and in character throughout all eternity. He is ever-merciful today as always.

Christ, like His Father, is not "double-minded" to use James' terminology (James 1:8). God's consistency of purpose and character are described by James: ". . . The Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17).

But God does render new decisions concerning teaching and practice when the situation warrants it. God *does* reverse His own decisions (as is evident from *many* verses of Scripture) — as circumstances dictate. God is at once flexible and consistent.

**Repent Means Change.** God expects His human subjects to "repent." That means *change!* (Acts 2:38; 3:19.) He demands that we allow ourselves to be corrected by the two-edged sword of His Word (Heb. 4:12-13; 12:7-11). Those who refuse to change (as God's Word indicates that they should) resist the Holy Spirit as did the Pharisees of old. "Stubbornness," says God, "is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23).

Will you be a spiritual stick-in-the-mud? Or will you be big-minded enough to change with the Body of Christ as we grow into a more perfect understanding of God's will and Word? □

## TEST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Answers are found on page 29.

**Multiple Choice** (circle the correct letter):

1. Ancient King David A. went to heaven when he died. B. will ascend to heaven when resurrected. C. is still dead and buried. D. may never be resurrected.

2. The Bible teaches that Christians A. go to heaven immediately at death. B. go to heaven after Christ returns. C. will rule on the earth after being resurrected from the dead. D. will spend the millennium in heaven.

3. Jesus Christ came A. to show, by example, that all resurrected Christians will go to heaven. B. to "confirm" the promises made to the fathers. C. to be obedient to God in our stead. D. to show us the way to heaven.

4. Abraham is vitally important to Christians A. because he was a perfect man. B. only because he was willing to sacrifice his son. C. not because he became the "father" of the faithful. D. because God made him a promise to which Christians are "heirs."

5. The Bible says A. Christians will go to heaven to live in the "mansions" Christ is preparing for them. B. no man, except Jesus Christ Himself, has ascended into the heaven of God's throne. C. all the righteous men of old ascended to heaven. D. Christ is coming to take the resurrected saints to heaven with Him.

**True or False** (circle T or F):

1. Other than Christ, Enoch and Elijah are the only persons to have ascended to the heaven of God's throne. T F

2. Abraham inherited the promises when he died. T F

3. The Bible specifically mentions that David will be resurrected from the dead. T F

4. Those who overcome in this life are promised rulership with Christ over the nations on this earth. T F

**Q**UESTION: "Please explain Exodus 23:19: 'Thou shalt not seethe [boil] a kid in his mother's milk.' Is this verse saying it is wrong to eat meat and milk together?"

C.B.,  
Colony, Kansas

**A**NSWER: In analyzing the context of this particular verse, we notice that it does not refer to just any kind of meat or milk — but specifically to the meat of a kid seethed in its own mother's milk. The association of these two products of the mother's body suggests that this scripture is referring to something connected with pagan fertility rites. *Peake's Commentary* shows that this is so: "The significance of this prohibition has now been made clear by the Ras Shamra texts. According to the *Birth of the Gods*, i, 14, a kid was cooked in its mother's milk to procure the fertility of the fields, which were sprinkled with the substance which resulted" (p. 232).

Referring again to the same page in this commentary, we find something which a careful reading of the text of Exodus itself also shows — that verses 10 through 19 are a unit which is concerned with Sabbath and Festival (annual holy day) worship.

Verse 18 states: "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning." Unleavened bread was eaten with the Passover on the day preceding the seven-day festival of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:8). It was a standing rule that no fat should be eaten (Lev. 7:23-25; 3:16-17). The Passover lamb was roasted whole, but its fat was not to be eaten. It, along with any other remains, was to be burned the morning after (Ex. 12:9-10).

The same sequence of thoughts is repeated in Exodus 34:21-26, and it is definitively stated to be in reference to "the sacrifice of the feast of the passover." The first-

fruits mentioned in both places refer to the "wavesheaf" offering which is described in more detail in Leviticus 23:10-14.

But why does this verse refer to *kids*, when the Passover sacrifice was traditionally a lamb? We know that originally *kids* (young goats) from the "flock" and even calves from the "herd" (Deut. 16:2; II Chron. 35:7) were permitted as well as lambs (Ex. 12; John 1:29, 36; I Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6, 12). But, "Later Jewish ordinances, dating after the return from Babylon, limit it [the Passover animal] to a lamb" (Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 213).

But what does not seething a kid in its mother's milk have to do with the Passover? Just this: God did not want the Israelites to *confuse the Passover with the pagan rites of the heathen* (Ex. 23:32-33). He did not want the Passover to become a spring fertility festival! Israelite amalgamation of the Passover with this heathen practice (or rather the abandonment of the Passover in favor of the other practice) was a very likely possibility.

From the preceding it is obvious that the command against "seething a kid in its mother's milk" had to do with safeguarding the observance of the Passover. It was never meant as a dietary law.

**Q: "There are two accounts of the second coming in the New Testament. The first account says Jesus will come 'as a thief in the night,' and in the second account He will 'come in the clouds of glory, and every eye shall see him.' Now, which one (if any) can we believe?"**

C.K.,  
Willow Springs, Missouri

**A:** Revelation 1:7 ("Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him") refers to the *manner* of Christ's coming. The statement that "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10) refers to the *time* of his coming. He will arrive like a thief — at a time

no one expects. The context of I Thessalonians 5:2 shows this: "But as to the *times* and the *seasons*, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." Matthew 24:42-44 expands on this idea: "Watch therefore, for you do not know *on what day* your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the householder had known *in what part of the night* the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming *at an hour you do not expect.*"

There is no contradiction between these two concepts: Christ will arrive in a dramatic, obvious *manner* (Matt. 24:29-31), but the *time* of this coming is known only to God the Father (Matt. 24:36) and it will take many by surprise just like a thief in the night.

**Q: "On page 8 of your booklet 'Where Are Enoch and Elijah?' it states that 'The first death is appointed unto men (Heb. 9:27). That death cannot be evaded. It is inevitable.' If this is so, what of those that are still alive when Christ comes and are at that instant taken into the clouds to be with the Lord for eternity, without dying first?"**

Robert R.,  
Baltimore, Maryland

**A:** These people are the one exception to Hebrews 9:27. But this occurrence is unique throughout human history. All other human beings apparently do have to die.

**Q: "In the booklet 'The Plain Truth About Easter,' Mr. Armstrong states that the Church as the true body of Christ has existed continuously since the first century. What books should I consult in investigating this question for myself?"**

James D.,  
Gumberry, North Carolina

**A:** As the booklet explains, the true Church is composed of those —

# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

and only those — who have truly repented and have therefore received the Holy Spirit of God (Acts 2:38). These people are comparatively few in number, though the number of people claiming the name of "Christian" is large. Therefore, the true Church is small (Luke 12:32). Furthermore, its people are scattered. But wherever they are, those Spirit-led individuals *are* the body of Christ.

Historically, in addition to the large organizations of so-called Christians, smaller groups have always existed, standing for doctrines differing from the beliefs of the mainstream churches. You should be able to find encyclopedias in your local library which deal specifically with religious sects. You will want especially those dealing with the earlier periods of the Christian era. From these you can learn the names of so-called "heretical" groups, and read brief statements of their main beliefs and histories. Then you can inquire about more thorough works on such individual groups.

We generally consider certain Ebionites, some of the Waldenses, Anabaptists, Paulicians, the earliest Seventh-Day Baptists, and several other groups as standing more or less in the direct lineage of the Church of God. But, remember, no *organization* is the body of Christ. Rather, the Church is an *organism* often composed of scattered individuals (see I Corinthians 12). And usually those individuals do not make historical headlines. They are therefore almost all but impossible to trace.

For more information on this subject, write for the free booklets *Where Is God's True Church Today?* and *Seven Proofs of God's Church*.

**Q: "If Jesus wasn't guilty, why wouldn't he give a straightforward simple answer when Pontius Pilate asked him, 'Are you a king?'"**

**Anonymous,  
Seattle, Washington**

**A:** Jesus did give a straightforward answer. But there was a very important reason why He first asked Pilate a question. If the Roman ruler thought Christ had political ambitions, that would have classed Him with the enemies of the ruling Romans. But Jesus was no enemy of Caesar's government (see Romans 13:1-7).

If, on the other hand, Pilate was asking the question because the Jews had called Jesus a king, the answer would have been yes, because the kingdom they were referring to was the one promised to the fathers of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

When Pilate confirmed that he would never have thought such a thing had he not first heard it from the Jews, Jesus declared: "My kingship is not of this world [this age, this society]; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world" (John 18:36). He confirmed that He was indeed a king, the Messiah to redeem and eventually rule the Kingdom of God.

With the question and its source clear, he answered plainly: "... I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (verse 37).

**Q: "Although I wish to live as close as possible to God's way, I do not desire eternal life. I may be missing the whole point of my existence and the reason for obeying God, but living forever does not interest me."**

**Norman D.,  
Holland, Ohio**

**A:** Perhaps living forever conjures images in your mind of boredom, ennui, or eternal sterility. Perhaps you have not fully pondered the possibilities of such a plane of existence. Talk about mind expansion! You would be able to operate unfettered by the pain and weakness of a physical body. You would be free from the limits of time and space,

able to will anything and have it immediately occur. You would be able to instantly communicate mentally or telepathically with a host of other sons of God like yourself anywhere in the entire universe.

When we are born into the Kingdom of God, we will be able to see colors we never dreamed existed, hear sounds that have never been experienced and have life on an incredible level of accomplishment. Think of the power you would have! The vast wealth of the whole universe would be yours to share with those born into the family of God. You would manage the activities of angels (I Cor. 6:3). Every sense would be expanded and accelerated, and you would grow forever, learning and creating new things, and delving into areas our minds can't begin to comprehend now.

If eternal life were not worth striving for, then why did Jesus Christ go to such lengths to regain it for Himself and open the way for us to attain it? If there were something wrong with living forever — if it were dull, boring, or otherwise undesirable — He had every opportunity to get out while He had the chance. As a mortal human being, all He needed to do was sin, and He would have reaped the wages of sin, which is death (Rom. 6:23).

It would be logical to assume that as a spirit being, you, too, would have the same option Christ had. But Christ Himself desperately wanted to regain His former state of being. Just before He was crucified, He prayed: "And now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made" (John 17:5).

Paul also had been given a glimpse of life on a spirit plane (II Cor. 12:2-4). He was ready to do *anything* to be in the first resurrection, to gain that kind of existence (Phil. 3:7-11). God says that "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (I Cor. 2:9). □

# THE SABBATH AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

***Is the Sabbath still a part of the Decalogue? Or is it the only one of the Ten Commandments that is now obsolete?***

by John R. Schroeder

**N**owhere in the New Testament are the Ten Commandments listed in order from one to ten. Nowhere in the New Testament is the Sabbath command repeated verbatim. Without the Old Testament we would not know the exact construction of God's basic law. Without the Old Testament we would not even know that the exact number is ten. These are startling facts that many of us have never stopped to consider.

What about it? Is there any logical biblical reason why we should keep the Sabbath today? Should we now keep all ten of the Ten Commandments — or only those points that pertain to our neighbor? Should we love God only in a very general manner?

**Old Testament Background.** By way of a brief background, the first Sabbath day followed the six working days of creation (Gen. 2:1-3). A command to remember this first Sabbath day was later inculcated into ancient Israel's basic constitutional law listed in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 (see accompanying box on next page). These fundamental oracles were the only ones spoken and written by the Creator Himself. All other laws, statutes, judgments and ordinances were relayed to Moses through angelic mediation.

Moses later summarized God's personal role as Lawgiver in the

book of Deuteronomy: "At that time the Lord said to me, 'Hew two tables of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tables which you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.' So I made an ark of acacia wood, and hewed two tables of stone like the first, and went up the mountain with the two tables in my hand. And he [God] wrote on the tables, as at the first writing, *the ten commandments* which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me" (Deut. 10:1-4).

Another summary account is also well worth quoting. It shows the vital significance that God attributes to His basic moral law: "... The Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them *hear my words* [personally and directly — not through either Moses or angelic mediation], so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children so.' And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain. . . . Then the Lord spoke to you. . . . And he declared to you his covenant, *which he commanded you* to perform, that is, *the ten commandments*. . . ." (Deut. 4:10-13).

**New Testament Application.** James, leading apostle of the Jerusalem Church of God, referred to the whole Decalogue in his general epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel. He wrote: "If you really fulfil *the royal law*, according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well. But if you

show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors [sin is the transgression of the law, see I John 3:4]. For whoever keeps *the whole law* but fails in *one point* has become guilty of all of it. For he [remember this is God] who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' said also, 'Do not kill.' If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty" (James 2:8-12).

James, here, establishes several significant facts:

1) The royal law is summarized by the Old Testament command to love your neighbor as yourself (see Lev. 19:18).

2) The royal law has distinct points.

3) Two of those points include the sixth and seventh commandments as listed in the Decalogue.

4) Transgression of any of these points is sin.

5) Failure to keep one point is considered, spiritually, as breaking them all.

6) This royal law is also termed the "law of liberty."

7) Christians are to be judged by this royal law of liberty.

A few questions should be asked at this juncture. Do the points James mentions exclude the first four commandments defining man's relationship with his God? Or do they refer to *all ten* as duly delineated in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5? Are Christians only required to *specifically keep* the last six commandments defining man's proper association with his neighbor, while observing the first four only in some sort of an ethereal sense?



Let us withhold judgment until we have examined a few more of the New Testament documents.

**Jesus and the Ten Commandments.** A rich young ruler once came to Jesus and asked Him a vitally important question: "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16.) Jesus answered: "If you would enter life, *keep the commandments*" (verse 17). But the young man wanted to know *which* commandments Jesus was specifically referring to. "And Jesus said, 'You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, *and*, You shall love your neighbor as yourself' " (verse 18).

Here Jesus specifically enumerated five of the last six commandments and capped them off with the summary commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

Later, a lawyer asked Jesus a very similar question: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25.) This time, because of the motive of the questioner, Jesus answered in a different manner: "He said to him, 'What is written in the law? How do you read?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself' " (verses 26-27). The lawyer replied by first loosely quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, and secondly Leviticus 19:18, in the Old Testament. Love of God was emphasized first and then love of neighbor. Jesus did not disagree with this lawyer: "And he said to him, 'You

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

### Love for God

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make yourself any graven image.
3. You shall not take the name of the Eternal your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

### Love for Neighbor

5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

*have answered right; do this, and you will live' " (verse 28).*

Another account in Matthew phrases virtually the same answer in *Jesus' own words* (examine any red letter Bible). Jesus was asked: "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he [Jesus] said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. *This is the great and first commandment.* And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and prophets' " (Matt. 22:36-40).

Are we to believe that the second overall commandment to love your neighbor has distinct points, but the first and great commandment has none? Are we to believe that the God of the New Testament does not tell us how we are to love Him in distinct, practical ways?

**New Testament Emphasis.** Nonetheless, whenever a substantial portion of the Decalogue is quoted in the New Testament, the emphasis is nearly always on "love your neighbor." Why?

James gives us just a hint. He wrote: "With it [the tongue] we *bless the Lord and Father*, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so" (James 3:9-10).

Apparently, at the time when the events were happening that occasioned the later writing of the New Testament documents, the main, outward problem revolved around the violation of the last six commandments specifically pertaining to one's neighbor. For instance, the Pharisees made a fetish out of the fourth commandment. They used it as *an excuse* not to love their neighbors. They severely criticized Jesus for healing a man blind from birth on the Sabbath day (see John 9). They, in reality, did *not* love the poor man. Instead, they wound up threatening to ostracize both him and his parents from the religious community. But the point is: they used the Sabbath commandment to camouflage their disobedience to the great principle of loving one's neighbor.

This particular *modus operandi* — playing one commandment against

another — was part and parcel of their favorite bag of “religious” tricks. They even excused themselves from economic support of their aged parents for “religious reasons.” Jesus said to these hypocritical types: “How well you set aside the commandment of God in order to maintain your tradition! Moses said, ‘Honour your father and your mother’ [the fifth commandment]. . . . But you hold that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Anything of mine which might have been used for your benefit is Corban’ (meaning, *set apart for God*), he is no longer permitted to do anything for his father or mother. Thus by your own tradition, handed down among you, you make God’s word null and void” (Mark 7:9-13, *The New English Bible*). These Pharisees were claiming that funds which might have been earmarked for parental support were dedicated to the service of the altar of God. But there is no way to dishonor one’s parent and simultaneously love God. It simply can’t be done!

The apostle John deeply understood this inextricable inter-relationship between loving God and loving neighbor and the irony of claiming to do one while omitting the other. “If any one says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, *cannot love God* whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also” (I John 4:20-21).

It also works the other way. Notice in the next chapter: “By this we know that we love the children of God, *when we love* God and obey his commandments” (I John 5:2). Love and obedience to God go hand in hand: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (verse 3).

**The Sabbath Commandment.** As we stated earlier, nowhere is the Sabbath command repeated verbatim in the New Testament. However, *neither* are the first three commandments (showing us how to love God) repeated verbatim. This is a fact people often forget. One really

has to hunt in the New Testament for even veiled references to these three commandments. In actual fact, there is more quantitative New Testament information and instruction concerning the Sabbath commandment than any one of these other three.

So the emphasis in the New Testament is on the last six commandments and also on *the inter-relationship* between the broad principles bridging the last six and the first four. In Ephesians 5:5, the apostle Paul related that *covetousness* (number ten) is idolatry (number one).

However, the Ten Commandments, as magnified in the New Testament, still represent one whole, complete law *with ten points*. Jesus tells us that to love God is the first and great commandment; James tells us that there are points to God’s royal law; John tells us that we cannot hate our fellow-man and love God simultaneously.

The Ten Commandments are a “complete package” — one commandment cannot be arbitrarily ripped out of God’s ten-point law. If one is broken, all are broken in principle.

The Sabbath is still one of the Ten Commandments! It has, however, been greatly magnified by Jesus’ own personal example and instruction, typified by His famous statement that “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27). Keeping God’s seventh-day Sabbath does *not* involve an endless list of burdensome dos and don’ts. The Sabbath was intended to be a great blessing for mankind — *not* a terrible yoke of bondage.

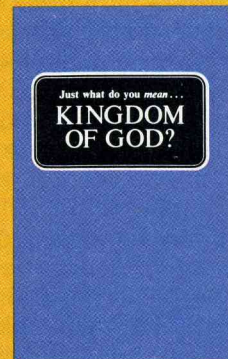
This article has broached but one aspect of the overall Sabbath question. We recommend the following booklets and articles as further study guides: *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*; *Which Day Is the Sabbath of the New Testament?*; *The Ten Commandments*; “Were the Ten Commandments in Force Before Moses?” and “Are All the Ten Commandments in the New Testament?” Be sure to request this free literature. Mailing addresses are in the staff box on the inside front cover. □

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD-

## What does it mean to you?

**King-dom** *n.* A politically organized community or major territorial unit having a monarchical form of government headed by a king or queen.

The phrase “kingdom of God,” which appears frequently in the Bible, is often heard in religious circles. It is generally assumed to be a reference to heaven or to a condition of mind held by believers. Almost no one would apply the standard dictionary definition of “kingdom” — a type of government over a specific territory. Yet that is precisely how the term is most often used in the Bible. The real meaning of the term “kingdom of God” is far more interesting and exciting than the traditional vague concepts. The booklet *Just What Do You Mean . . . Kingdom of God?* clearly explains what the Kingdom of God is and why it’s important to you. For a free copy, write to *The Good News* at the address nearest you. (See inside front cover for addresses worldwide.)



# NEW LIGHT ON THE AGE OF JEREMIAH

by Lester L. Grabbe

**T**he army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the remaining cities of Judah, Lachish and Azeqah. For only these remained unconquered of the fortified cities of Judah."

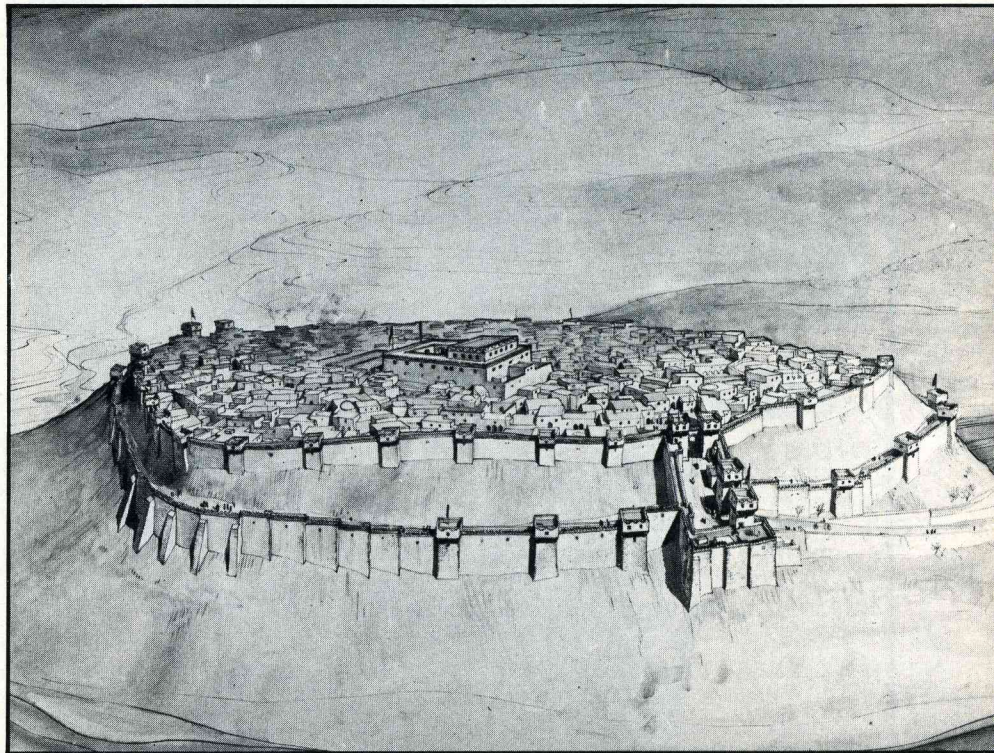
This record in Jeremiah 34:7 is likely to be passed over by the casual reader. Yet that verse suddenly took on new significance when the ancient city of Lachish was excavated. Among the rubble of centuries appeared letters from the time of Jeremiah the prophet.

One of these letters, when translated, contained the following statement: "Let it be known that we are watching the fire signals of Lachish according to all the signs which my lord gave. But we do not see those of Azeqah" (all translations are the author's).

A number of scholars related this statement to the last stand of Judah, speculating that Azeqah had already fallen to the Babylonians. This would explain why the fire signals were no longer visible. Too little information is preserved to know for certain. Yet scholars realize that the Lachish letters are one of the most valuable finds of Hebrew documents from the time of the Old Testament.

**Important Documents for Hebrew History.** Hebrew written records from the time of the Old Testament are rare. This means that every scrap of writing is important. Even single words and names — such as are found on coins — are treasured finds. It is hardly any wonder, therefore, that the Lachish letters with about 90 lines of writing are among the most important original sources in Hebrew from Palestine — perhaps second only to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The letters were discovered during the excavation of Tell ed-Du-



*Institute of Archaeology*

weir, believed to be the site of the ancient city of Lachish mentioned in the Old Testament and other sources. Eighteen were found in 1935 and another three in 1938. Details of the archaeology of the site as well as of the letters were published by Oxford University Press in a four-volume series entitled *Lachish*.

At the time the letters were originally written, good quality writing material such as papyrus or vellum was somewhat expensive. Brief messages not requiring the privacy of a sealed communication were often simply written out on potsherds. Potsherds, often called *ostraca* (singular *ostrakon*, from Greek), were abundant, since earthenware pots were widely used. Broken pottery fragments made a quite usable surface for writing with pen and ink. The Lachish letters are

**ARTIST'S RECONSTRUCTION** of the ancient city of Lachish as it appeared in Old Testament times. The reconstruction is based on excavations carried out by archaeologists in Palestine during the 1930s.

all *ostraca*. This may be quite fortunate since, if they had been papyrus, they might not have survived.

**The Time of the Letters.** The letters are almost universally dated to the last few years before the conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (sometimes called Nebuchadnezzar). This puts them in the very few years before the fall of Jerusalem in about 587 B.C., perhaps in the very last year of Judah itself. There are several reasons for the dating.

The first is the archaeological



## TRANSLATION OF LACHISH LETTER NO.6

"To my lord Yaosh: May Yahweh cause my lord to see this season in good health! Who is thy servant but a dog that my lord hath sent the letter of the king and the letters of the princes, saying 'Pray, read them!' And behold the words of the princes are not good, but to weaken our hands and to slacken the hands of the men who are informed about them . . . And now my lord, wilt thou not write to them saying, 'Why do ye thus even in Jerusalem? Behold unto the king and unto this house are ye doing this thing!' And, as Yahweh thy God liveth, truly since thy servant read the letters there hath been no peace for thy servant . . ." (translation by W. F. Albright in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd edition, p. 322).

Photo by Palestine Archaeological Museum

stratum in which the letters were found. These were in what is labeled Level II at that site. The city of that level or stratum had been destroyed by fire. The fire was presumably caused by conquest since the various remains of fortifications show the evidence of damage, hasty repair, and further damage — the likely result of a siege.

The stratum just below (Level III) also shows evidence of destruction by fire. Only a few years seem to have intervened between the two destructions. Also, while the fortifications destroyed in Level III were rebuilt to form a part of Level II, a palace of Level III was not. This indicates an urgency to repair the fortifications but nothing else.

The date 587 B.C. for the destruction of Level II by Nebuchadrezzar is "accepted by all scholars" (*Archaeological Encyclopaedia of the Holy Land*, p. 184). There is not full agreement about the destruction in Level III. (Many put it to another invasion of Nebuchadrezzar in 597. But some feel it is even earlier. See also G. E. Wright, "Judean Lachish," *Biblical Archaeologist Reader 2*; K. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, p. 291 ff.; II Kings 24:10-17; 25:1-12; Jer. 39, 52.)

Another reason for the dating is the style of the writing. The letters are written in the "Phoenician" or "paleo-Hebrew" script. (This differs from the so-called "square" script adopted by the Jews after their return from Babylon and still used for modern Hebrew.) Enough examples of the old script have survived for paleographers to trace the history of the writing style. The particular style used in a document can usually be dated within a century or two.

The Lachish letters were originally dated from the writing alone by a scholar who was unaware of the particular archaeological context in which they had been found. Thus, his calculation confirmed the archaeological dating within the normal limits of each method.

A third aid to dating is the names mentioned within the letters. There are approximately twenty personal names identifiable in the letters. Six of these are found in the one chap-

ter of Jeremiah 36 alone: Jeremiah, Neriah, Gemariah, Elnathan, Shelemiah, Shemaiah. Other names common to both the letters and Jeremiah are Coniah, Hoshai, Shallum and Jaazaniah. Although these names are not necessarily confined to the book of Jeremiah in the Bible, they are concentrated in the late monarchy or early exilic period. The personal names certainly cluster around Jeremiah.

Finally, the language of the letters corresponds to classical Old Testament Hebrew of the monarchy but seems to have closest affinity with that of the book of Jeremiah (D. W. Thomas, *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1950, 4). Interestingly, the word for "fire signal" (*mas'et*) is used absolutely in the Bible only once — in Jeremiah 6:1. The use of internal vowel letters is also very important. In the earliest Hebrew inscriptions, none occur. For example, there are not any in the Siloam inscription of a century before. A few occur in the Lachish letters. They are used more and more in the succeeding centuries until they reach wide usage in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Those in the Lachish letters fit precisely with what would be expected from their normal dating.

When all these things are considered, it becomes clear that, in the words of Dr. Kenyon: "The names used, the language, and many small details reflect the conditions prevailing at the time at which Jeremiah wrote" (*op. cit.*, p. 296).

#### **The Prophet Within the Letters.**

Since the letters seem to fit the time of Jeremiah just before the fall of Jerusalem, it is not surprising that one might find some clues to events of his time within the messages of the letters. In fact, the word "prophet" clearly occurs in one of the letters (no. III, line 20). However, this reference seems somewhat insignificant since the prophet seems only a messenger and is not otherwise identified: "And the message of Tobiah, the servant of the king, which the prophet brought to Shallum . . ."

Another letter contains language strongly reminiscent of Jeremiah 38:4. The Jeremiah passage states, "The princes said to the



## **THE SEAL OF GEDALIAH**

In ancient times inscribed seals, usually made of stone, were often used to mark objects with the owner's name. Usually a small lump of clay was affixed to the object and then stamped with the seal, thus making an impression of the owner's name on the clay. In Palestine, many seals or sealings bear the inscription "(belonging) to the king" and were evidently used to mark items collected as taxes.

Along with the letters inscribed on potsherds, several inscribed stone seals from the same period as the letters were found at Lachish. Among them was one inscribed in archaic Hebrew characters reading "(belonging) to Gedaliah who is over the house." Scholars have concluded that this seal may well be that of the Gedaliah who was the governor of Judea under Nebuchadnezzar after the Babylonians had conquered Palestine. Gedaliah and his retainers were killed by a party of rebellious Jews led by Ishmael, a member of the exiled royal house, while they were guests at the governor's official residence in Mizpah (see II Kings 25:22-26; Jer. 40:6-41:18).

*Photo by Sir Henry S. Wellcome (Lachish) Expedition*

king, Let this man die because he weakens the hands of the remaining fighting men in this city, and the hands of all the people." Letter VI reads: "Now note that the words of the . . . are not good, weakening your hands and loosening the hands of the men . . ." (lines 5-7).

This letter is severely damaged and has several tantalizing gaps, especially at the subject of the statement just quoted. *Who* was "weakening the hands"? The word is obliterated. Many scholars have restored the word "princes" (He-

brew *sarrim*). Some, though, have concluded the word was most likely "prophet" (Hebrew *navi*). The latest handbook of northwest Semitic inscriptions (J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. I), for example, restores the word "prophet."

A name ending in *-hu* occurs in another letter (no. XVI). The first part of the name is illegible, but some have tried to see Uriah (Hebrew *Uriyyahu* — Jer. 26:20-23) or even Jeremiah (Hebrew *Yirmeyahu*) in it. Either of these would be quite

interesting if correct. However, the identification with Uriah seems definitely excluded for a number of reasons. Also many names of the time ended in *-hu*, so it is unlikely to be either.

Considering the possibilities in a number of passages, one can only regret that the writing of many of the letters is damaged and often totally unreadable. In such situations a scholar can only work with what he has and hope for new discoveries to clarify the many dilemmas.

**A Mission to Egypt.** A passage in letter no. III reads, "It was related to your servant that the captain of the army, Coniah son of Elnathan, came by on his way to Egypt" (lines 13-16).

The purpose of the mission is not explained since the recipient of the letter would probably have already been aware of it. But several possible explanations present themselves when we look at the book of Jeremiah. The name Coniah is a shortened form of Jeconiah. The king Jehoiachin also had this name (Jer. 22:24), though he evidently was not the one mentioned here.

On the other hand, a rather prominent person by the name Elnathan is mentioned several times in Jeremiah. He was the man in charge of the mission to Egypt to extradite the prophet Uriah who had fled there (Jer. 26:20-23). Later Elnathan advised king Jehoiakim not to burn the scroll which Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation (Jer. 36). The king, of course, did not heed, but burned it anyway.

We cannot be certain that the Coniah of the Lachish letter was the son of the Elnathan of the book of Jeremiah. But we do know that this Coniah was commander-in-chief of the army at the time and thus a very important personage. One strong possibility for his trip to Egypt would have been the attempt to gain military assistance from that quarter.

Jeremiah 37:5 tells us that the Pharaoh brought an army against the Babylonians while they were besieging Jerusalem. As a result, the Babylonian army temporarily withdrew. We are not told that the

Egyptian army came at the request of Judah, but that seems likely. Coniah's mission in the Lachish letters indicates arrangements were likely to have been made in advance by some sort of treaty before the Babylonian invasion.

Later history informs us that the attempt of the kingdom of Judah to obtain military help from the Egyptians was useless. Although the Egyptians realized the danger from the rising Babylonian empire, they were unable to keep it out of the West. Pharaoh Neco had been

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**The record in Jeremiah 34:7 is likely to be passed over by the casual reader. Yet that verse suddenly took on new significance when the ancient city of Lachish was excavated. Among the rubble of centuries appeared letters from the time of Jeremiah the prophet.**

marching northward to join with the Assyrians in fighting the Babylonians several years before (about 609 B.C.). Josiah foolishly tried to oppose the Egyptian army and lost his life (II Kings 23:28-30). But the Babylonians were not so easily overcome.

Another document from about the time of the Lachish letters (but in Aramaic) contains the pitiful plea for help from a petty king about to be swamped by the Babylonian army. The letter, generally thought to be from the ruler of the Philistine city of Ashkelon, tells Pharaoh that

the Babylonian army is nearly upon his territory. The writer proclaims his loyalty to Egypt and asks for help to save him from the Babylonians. (See Donner-Röllig, *Kanaanäisch und Aramäische Inschriften*; also John Bright, *Bib. Arch. Reader I*, pp. 98ff.)

Like the Jews, he found Egypt a "broken reed" to lean on.

**The Last Days of Judah.** The final siege and conquest of Judah is vividly described in the books of Jeremiah and II Kings. This picture can now be supplemented by ancient records from Babylon, Egypt, and now even Judah itself. Except possibly for the Lachish letter (no. IV) quoted at the beginning of this article, most of the letters do not seem to show an actual state of war.

A number, though, indicate preparations for war are in progress (nos. IX and XIII). One hints darkly at some sort of conspiracy (no. V). As Dr. Gibson writes: "The impression one gets is that the enemy onslaught is any moment imminent" (*op. cit.*, p. 35). This certainly fits the turbulent time during the last days of Zedekiah.

Yet the black day on which Jerusalem fell was not the end. At that time King Jehoiachin was a captive in Babylon where he had been taken years before (about 597 — II Kings 24:8-17). He is mentioned in a series of Babylonian tablets which listed the provisions given to foreign captives (see W. F. Albright, *Bib. Arch. Reader 1*, p. 106ff). Years later, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, who was now the king of Babylon, removed Jehoiachin from his prison and allowed him to eat at his own table for the rest of his life (II Kings 25:27-30).

While in captivity Jehoiachin had a number of sons, the eldest of whom was Shealtiel. This Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel headed the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1-6).

Judah was to continue for quite a few centuries. So was the line of Jehoiachin. It was through him that Jesus' descent was reckoned (Matt. 1). This Jesus was not only to give hope to the Jews of his own time — but to all men of all time. □

## ANSWERS

**Multiple Choice** (test is found on page 19):

**1-C.** Peter said of the patriarch David "that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. . . . For David did not ascend into the heavens. . . ." (Acts 2:29, 34).

**2-C.** See Revelation 5:10: "And hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth." This will occur after the saints are resurrected from the dead (Rev. 20:4).

**3-B.** Romans 15:8 says Christ came to "confirm the promises given to the patriarchs." Our booklet *What Is the Reward of the Saved?* proves that the promise given to the "fathers" of old (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) was eternal inheritance of the whole earth, not heaven.

**4-D.** Galatians 3:29 emphasizes that Christians are heirs to the promise given to Abraham.

**5-B.** Read John 3:13. The "mansions" mentioned in John 14:1-4 are explained in our booklet *What Is the Reward of the Saved?*

**True or False**

**1-F.** Christ said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man" (John 3:13). Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (II Kings 2:1, 11), but this was not the heaven of God's throne. This, along with Enoch's "translation" (Heb. 11:5), is discussed in our free booklet *Where Are Enoch and Elijah?*

**2-F.** "These all [including Abraham, verse 8] died in faith, not having received the promises" (Heb. 11:13).

**3-T.** Jeremiah 30:9 says David will be "raised up." This is referring to the resurrection of the saints which will occur at Christ's second coming (I Cor. 15:50-54; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

**4-T.** "He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26, 27; see also Rev. 3:21; Dan. 7:18, 22).

**Tithe in the 20th Century?**

I just wanted to write and express how much I liked the article on tithing in the February *Good News*. Like many others, I've experienced the blessings tithing brings.

George M.,  
Huntsville, Alabama

**The Second Commandment**

"Is the Second Commandment Obsolete?" by D. Paul Graunke in the February GN was a stimulating, scholarly approach to some fine instruction!

Mr. and Mrs. D. G.,  
North Pole, Alaska

**Remember the Widow**

The article in the February GN was very helpful and useful for those of us who need a reminder to "Remember the Widow," but what about the widow herself — what can she do on her own?

The February issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* published a list of agencies which provide women alone with information and moral support. I thought it might be a good follow-up to publish these addresses:

Alliance for Displaced Homemakers  
6422 Telegraph Avenue  
Oakland, California 94609

The Gray Panthers  
P.O. Box 3177  
Washington, D.C. 20010

National Organization for Women  
Task Force on Older Women  
434 66th Street  
Oakland, California 94609

Jobs for Older Women  
3102 Telegraph Avenue  
Berkeley, California 94705

Widows' Consultation Center  
136 East 57th Street  
New York, New York 10022

Family Service Association  
of America  
44 East 2nd Street  
New York, New York 10010

Write to them directly or check the Yellow Pages of your phone di-

rectory for the address of your local branch of these organizations.

Kitty G.,  
Colville, Washington

• *The GN editors have not checked out these programs personally, so we cannot give any recommendations either pro or con. But they all sound very helpful.*

**New Typeface**

The February 1976 issue of the GN gets my praise because it employs a typeface throughout that you have used sparingly in previous issues. Also, rather than putting space between sections, they are merely separated by words or phrases in bold print. This facilitates studying for me, makes the material more organized and easier to assimilate. So keep the new type and boldface divisions. I like it — I like it very much.

Radd Z.,  
Topsham, Maine

**Christ's Titles**

In the February issue of the GN, the box "The Offices and Titles of Jesus Christ" left out one very important title: Shepherd.

The title and office of Shepherd is found in the following scriptures: I Peter 5:4; I Peter 2:25; Hebrews 13:20; John 10:11, 14, 16; Mark 14:27; and Revelation 7:17.

David G.,  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

**Overjoyed at Baptism**

After church this past Sabbath I was baptized. I know there are horrible problems in the world, but I feel so happy. How can things be better? I've waited all my life for this. I have looked for the truth from the time I must have been ten or so and I never found anyone saying what the Bible said, until I first heard Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

Mrs. J. H.,  
Mill Run, Pennsylvania

• *If you would be interested in attending services or counseling with a minister of the Worldwide Church of God, see the box on page 3.*

The Good News  
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# Why water baptism?

It's true that you are saved by grace, but salvation requires more than just "believing on Christ." According to the Bible there are conditions and water baptism is one of the most important steps of all. The free booklet *All About Water Baptism* answers your basic questions about this essential act of conviction and helps you evaluate your attitude towards it. (See inside front cover for address nearest you.)

