

The Good News

March/April 1998

Lessons from the

TITANIC

*The Marshall Plan Revisited • Archaeology and King Solomon
The Old Testament in the New Testament • Reconciliation*

Titanic: A Lesson for Today

T*tanic*. The name has conjured up powerful images and emotions for decades. Dozens of books and several major films have recounted her tragic story. The latest movie, *Titanic*, is well on its way to becoming the top-grossing film of all time.

Although April 14 marks the 86th anniversary of her sinking, we are still fascinated by her story. The magnitude of the disaster seems unthinkable: More than 1,500 passengers and crew lost their lives in the icy North Atlantic while only 705, mostly women and children, were saved.

Many of us have heard the “what if” questions: What if the ship’s lookouts had seen the iceberg in time to turn and avoid it? What if *Titanic* had struck the iceberg at a different angle? (Had she hit head on, the ocean liner would have been severely damaged, but likely would have survived.) What if *Titanic* had heeded the warnings of ice in the area and slowed down rather than continuing her course at top speed? What if she had carried enough lifeboats for all the passengers and crew? What if the *Californian*, only 10 miles from the dying *Titanic*, had heard her frantic distress calls? (*Californian*’s radio operator was apparently fast asleep while the disaster unfolded.)

Perhaps part of our grim fascination with the doomed ocean liner is the profound sense of unease it creates in us. After all, *Titanic* had everything going for her. She was likened to a luxurious floating palace, one equipped with the most advanced engineering and safety features of her day. Her captain was one of the most respected and experienced men in the White Star fleet, making one last voyage before his planned honorable retirement. It shouldn’t be surprising that before she set sail, one of her crewmen boasted, “God Himself could not sink this ship!”

Titanic was so magnificent that the White Star Line’s managing director made it a point to join her on her maiden voyage. Some of the wealthiest men in the world chose her to travel from Europe to the United States. Several hundred less-wealthy passengers in the third-class section looked forward to building a new life in a new country.

But it was not to be.

History shows that a series of small errors and miscalculations compounded to create catastrophe. Everything that could go wrong did. The best of human intentions, engineering skills and construction methods proved powerless to avert disaster. Man and woman, rich and poor, young and old alike met a common fate.

This issue briefly recounts *Titanic*’s tragic tale. But it also asks an urgent question: Are there lessons we should learn from this catastrophe?

As we approach the turn of the millennium, there is rising interest in what the future holds for planet Earth—as well there should be. Although the Bible makes no connection between the year 2000 and Christ’s return, its prophecies have much to say about the end of this age of man and the dawn of a new age to come. Several articles in this issue explore that theme in considerable detail.

The Bible makes it clear that although we cannot know the exact time of events prophesied to come, we nonetheless have a distinct spiritual obligation and responsibility. In Luke 21:36, after describing the earth-shaking events that would precede His return, Jesus Christ warns His followers: “But *keep on the alert at all times*, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man” (New American Standard Bible, emphasis added throughout).

He tells us to be vigilant in getting and keeping our spiritual house in order that we might be prepared for that time. “*Be on guard*, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and *that day* [of Christ’s return] *come on you suddenly like a trap*; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth” (verses 34-35, NASB).

Let us not be like the ill-fated *Titanic*, racing forward in the darkness while ignoring the signs of danger gathering around us.

—Scott Ashley

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Publisher: David Hulme
Managing editor: Scott Ashley
Writer/researchers: Jerold Aust, John Ross Schroeder
Copy editors: Jeannette Anderson, Dixon Cartwright
Art director: Shaun Venish

Editorial reviewers:

John Bald, Robert Boraker, Roger Foster,
Bruce Gore, Paul Kieffer, John Meakin,
Brian Orchard, John Ross Schroeder,
Richard Thompson, Lyle Welty, Dean Wilson

United Church of God Council of Elders:

Gary Antion, Robert Dick (chairman), Jim Franks,
Roy Holladay, David Hulme, Victor Kubik,
Dennis Luker, Les McCullough, Burk McNair,
Peter Nathan, Leon Walker, Donald Ward

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International addresses:

Australia: United Church of God—Australia
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia
Phone: 07 55 202 111 Fax: 07 55 202 122
Web site address: <http://www.ucg-aus.org.au>

Bahamas: United Church of God
P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas
Phone: (242) 324-3169 Fax: (242) 364-5566

Canada: United Church of God—Canada
Box 144, Station D
Etobicoke, ON M9A 4X1, Canada
Phone: (416) 231-9379, (800) 338-7779
Fax: (416) 231-8238
Web site address: <http://www.ucg.ca>

French-speaking areas:
Église de Dieu Unie (Suisse romande)
Rue de la Servette 91, Case postale 47
1211 Genève 16 Grand Pré, Suisse

New Zealand: United Church of God
P.O. Box 22, Auckland 1030, New Zealand

South Africa: United Church of God
P.O. Box 4345, 2125 Randburg, South Africa
Phone: 011 792-4601 Fax: 011 791-0711
Web site address: <http://www.ucg.org.za>

Spanish-speaking areas: United Church of God
P.O. Box 458, Big Sandy, TX 75755, U.S.A.
Phone: (903) 836-4928

United Kingdom: United Church of God (UK)
P.O. Box 5929, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 6YX,
United Kingdom
Phone: 01635-528063 Fax: 01635-522797

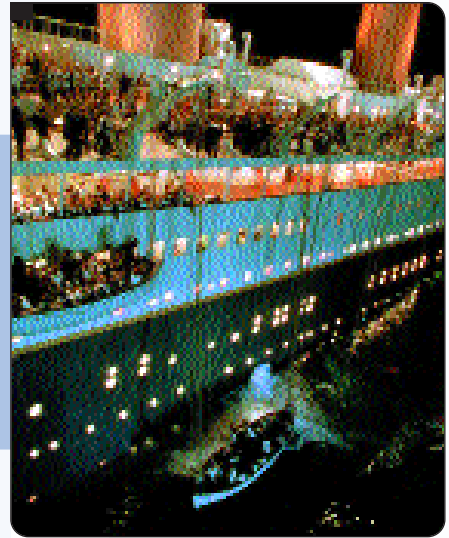
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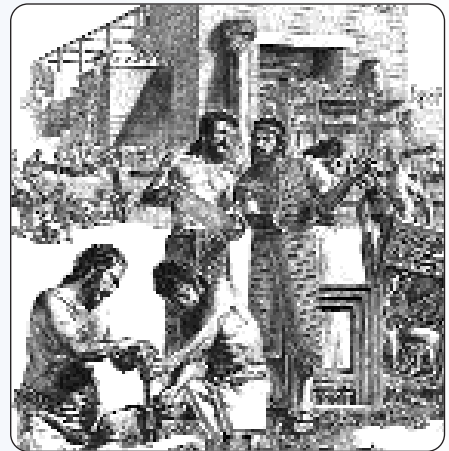
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TITANIC



by John Meakin

And the band played on . . .” is a phrase inextricably linked to one of the most well-known maritime disasters of all time: the sinking of the *Titanic*.

On the freezing, still night of April 14, 1912, the 46,000-ton British luxury liner *Titanic* was on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York City. About 95 miles south of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, she met her premature and tragic death.

She had steamed all day at a speed of upwards of 20 knots, covering 546 miles in the previous 24 hours. The temperature had dropped rapidly through the course of the evening, but the weather was fair and the sea calm. There was a relaxed party atmosphere on board as more than 2,200 passengers and crew enjoyed the amenities on the most luxurious ship afloat.

No rigid, organized routine was enforced, and the passengers came and went as they pleased. The liner had everything you could possibly imagine; no expense had been spared in the construction of lavish staterooms, sumptuous dining rooms and luxurious smoking rooms. She had libraries, a swimming pool, a Turkish bath, a gymnasium, a squash court, even an eight-piece orchestra—comforts to satiate all the desires of her passengers.

One thing, however, was lacking. There were not enough lifeboats. In fact, she had only 20, which was enough for fewer than

half the passengers. The builders and owner were so confident in the *Titanic*’s construction and safety features that they considered additional lifeboats unnecessary, and regulations at the time required no more. After all, with 16 watertight compartments, the most luxurious and largest ship afloat was unsinkable. Or was she?

Warnings received and ignored

Earlier in the afternoon of that fateful day, radio messages about ice in the area had been received from other nearby ships. As the passengers sipped their afternoon tea and ate toast, warnings were received from the *Caronia*, *Baltic*, *Amerika*, *Californian* and *Mesaba*. But *Titanic* captain Edward J. Smith—one of the White Star Line’s most experienced and respected captains, with 38 years’ service and on his final voyage before a much-anticipated retirement—saw no need to slow down. As darkness fell, however, the crew did maintain a careful lookout. It was a cloudless, calm night. The air was chilly, and the sea temperature was close to freezing.

The *Californian*, stationary about 10 miles away, radioed at around 11 o’clock that more ice was in the area. But the *Titanic*’s radio operator, Jack Phillips, was frantically relaying radio messages from the passengers to the relay station at Cape Race in Newfoundland. He sharply told the *Californian* not to interrupt, that he had many more messages to send and already knew of the ice. So the

A N I C

The Unfinished Voyage



Californian ceased contact without relaying the position of the approaching iceberg, and Mr. Phillips did not inform the captain.

At 11:40 first-class passengers still awake in their opulent state-rooms felt a faint shudder, a kind of jarring as though they had hit something. One passenger later described it as “someone drawing a giant finger along the side of the ship.” There was no major jolt, nothing dramatic to show cause for concern. Whatever it was, most passengers concluded it must not have been important.

Shortly afterward, the familiar hum and vibration of the engines and the ship moving through the water ceased. The massive liner had stopped. It was the silence that attracted the most attention.

A number of passengers went outside to see what had happened. They were assured all was well. Stewards explained that they had struck a little ice, but that there was nothing to worry about. Before long some of the passengers noticed that the ship seemed to be listing ever so slightly, but they quickly dismissed the thought as unimportant.

A terrifying realization

Up on the ship’s bridge Capt. Smith; Bruce Ismay, the head of the White Star Line; and Thomas Andrews, the ship’s builder, stood in disbelief as the full horror of what had happened sank in. The situation was dire. The *Titanic* had collided with an iceberg. From first

sighting to impact had been only a little more than 30 seconds. The floating mountain of ice had caught the liner a glancing blow on the right side of its underbelly, about 12 feet above the keel, buckling the hull’s steel plates and opening a 300-foot gash in the first five watertight compartments. The compartments were rapidly filling with water and beginning to pull the ship down at the bow.

The *Titanic* could not stay afloat for long—no more than two hours, according to the estimate. The unsinkable ship was sinking, fatally punctured, the wound in her side open to the icy ocean water rushing in.

Just after midnight, as below decks crewmen fought furiously to keep the ship afloat, water surged into the mailroom. At 12:05 the order was heard to uncover the lifeboats. There had been no lifeboat drill, no practice, no warnings, no preparation. After all, this was the steamship that could not sink.

There was little noise—no bells, no sirens, no general alarms. The first-class stewards simply went from cabin to cabin politely but firmly asking first-class passengers to go up on deck and don life belts. At first there was joking, passengers voicing both amusement and disbelief—a complete lack of comprehension of the gravity of their plight. One passenger joked with the ship’s squash professional that he had better cancel his booking for the morning. What he didn’t know was that the water was already up to the squash court’s ceiling.

Second officer Lightoller was placed in charge of loading the lifeboats on the port side. He rigidly insisted that only women and children could embark. On the starboard side, things were a little less strict. Everywhere was polite confusion. After all, they had never done this before.

Striking up the band

It was now that the band struck up, playing ragtime. Perhaps it would keep people calmer and happier. Some children started to cry. A chilling anguish crept into the eyes of many a parent, husband and wife as they began to realize a fear more powerful than any they had ever known.

Up on the ship's bridge, frantic efforts were made to reach the *Californian*. But that vessel's radio operator was asleep and had turned his radio off. Meanwhile, the band played on—even louder now—and the deck began to slant a little more.

Women and children were loaded progressively into the lifeboats. Tearful farewells were made with the realization that husbands, fathers and brothers might be seen no more. Some brave wives elected to stay by their husbands' sides on the ship.

By now it was 12:45, more than an hour after the collision with the iceberg. An explosion of distress rockets flew high into the air, lighting up the night sky over the

deck continued to tilt even farther. Mr. Lightoller was setting the lifeboats adrift with their precious cargo of women and children. But many were well short of full. On the starboard side, some men were luckier and a few were taken on the boats, including Bruce Ismay.

The minutes ticked away. By now the deck was tilting precariously; and still, the band played on.

Desperate cries for help

For the two hours until she sank, many radio messages were sent and received as the *Titanic* desperately signaled for help. A few ships responded, including the *Frankfurt*, *Mount Temple*, *Virginian*, *Baltic* and *Birma*. But the *Californian*—the only vessel within range—remained oblivious to the *Titanic*'s plight. The *Carpathia*, 58 miles away, responded at 12:25 and promised to come as quickly as she could. Even the *Olympic*—the *Titanic*'s sister ship, 500 miles away—replied to the distress calls.

By 1:15 few passengers yet understood their peril and how swiftly the mighty *Titanic* was filling with water. It was inconceivable that the unsinkable ship, the largest vessel afloat, was really sinking.

At 1:40 the crew on the bridge fired the last of the rockets, and the last remaining lifeboats filled. By 1:55 the last one was

The mighty *Titanic*, now filled with water at the bow, began to tilt alarmingly, and the stern soon rose high in the air, exposing the massive propellers to the night sky and icy air. Some people jumped for it and swam toward the lifeboats. Most never made it.

Death of a great vessel

Survivors in the lifeboats witnessed the vivid and catastrophic end to the once-mighty steamship. The lights, which had remained on thanks to the diligence of the engineers, now blinked before disappearing for good. A hideous, unimaginable roar thundered from the ship as furniture, chandeliers, pictures, glassware and crystal came loose and shattered, a din mixed with the anguished cries of the doomed.

A massive funnel broke off and plummeted into the sea in a shower of sparks. Then came a roar as no other, which some later said was the breaking back of the immense vessel as the ship was torn asunder. At precisely 2:20 a.m., two hours and 40 minutes after she had struck the iceberg, the gigantic ocean liner died, sliding quickly into the blackness of the deep and plunging to her final resting place some 12,500 feet below. The survivors gasped and sobbed in disbelief.

The final drama unfolded as desperate survivors waited and hoped for rescue. Many who had jumped from the ship in its dying moments were still alive, struggling in the icy water. Those on the boats could hear them thrashing and milling around, the dark, still air ringing with their cries for help. But, apart from one lifeboat that saved just three lives, the other boats never went back to help; their occupants were too fearful for their own lives.

One by one the desperate cries grew muffled, until a haunting silence descended on the scene. All those not in the lifeboats had succumbed to hypothermia and exhaustion.

The *Carpathia* steamed at full speed and reached the spot by 4 a.m. Shocked at the realization that the mighty *Titanic* was gone, they began to take on board the hapless, freezing survivors. Over the next few days some 325 bodies were recovered; the rest had joined the ship in her watery grave.

The *Titanic* lay undisturbed on the ocean floor until 1985, when a research team using remote-controlled submersible craft found her resting place. A fascinated world was then reintroduced to a tragedy that need never have happened. *GN*

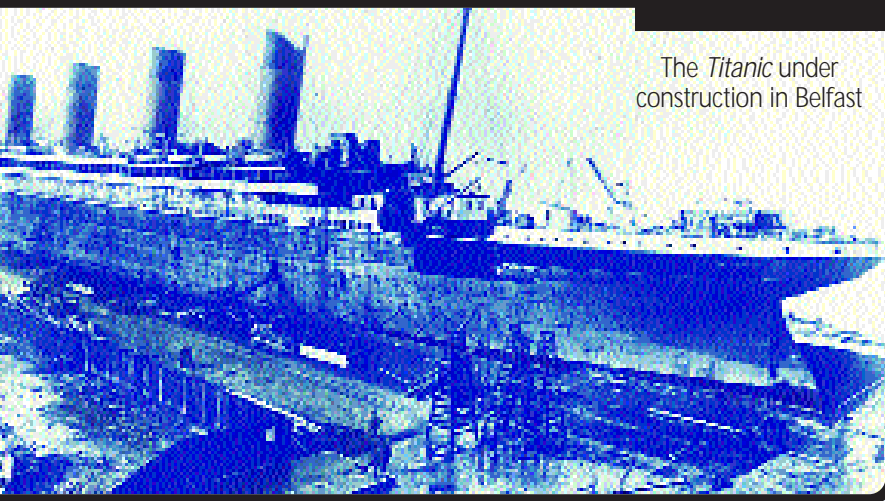
nightmarish scene. This would continue for the next hour. Ten miles away crew members on the *Californian* observed what they thought were continuing festivities on a much-celebrated maiden voyage. It never dawned on them that the *Titanic* was sinking, and that what they saw was in reality a desperate plea for help from a ship in her final throes.

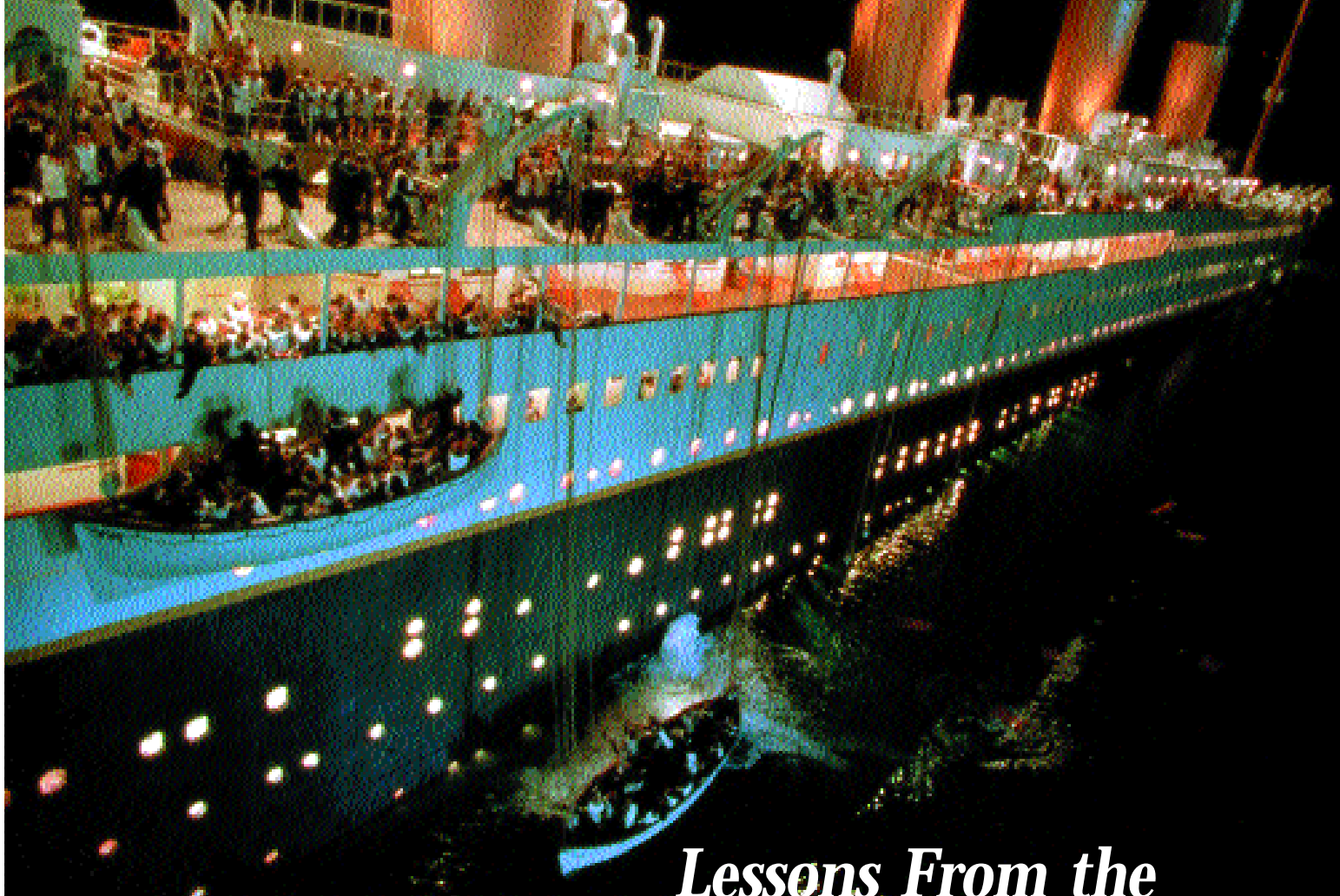
And all the while the band played, as the

lowered to safety. In all, 705 people were to survive by means of these lifeboats. That left more than 1,500 people still aboard with nowhere to go.

And the band, which had played on and on, finally finished its last piece. The closing strains seemed to hang like ice particles in the frigid air. It was a sound that would haunt the survivors for the remainder of their lives.

The *Titanic* under construction in Belfast





Lessons From the

TITANIC

by John Meakin

She was the largest and most luxurious ship afloat. On her maiden voyage, she epitomized the leading edge of the technology of the time, inspiring awe and wonder. With her 16 watertight compartments, she was thought to be unsinkable; in fact, when one of her deckhands was asked at the beginning of the voyage whether she really was unsinkable, he replied, “God Himself could not sink this ship.”

The *Titanic* is perhaps the world’s best-known ship because of the tragedy that befell her. The loss of this great liner has long since passed into legend. But perhaps

the most tragic part of the saga is that it *didn’t have to happen*.

The story of the *Titanic* (described in more detail in the preceding article) is moving and harrowing, and presents an important spiritual lesson for our day.

Technologically advanced though she was, the capacity of the *Titanic*’s lifeboats was only 1,178, while the ship was built to carry 3,000 passengers and crew. This is part of the macabre fascination people have with this story: There was simply no way any more than half the ship’s complement would survive should the unthinkable happen. So

when the tragedy occurred, only the few survived. Many lifeboats were well short of their capacity—only 705 out of about 2,220 escaped to the safety of these craft.

In many ways the modern era is like the *Titanic*. Ours is a technologically advanced age, with a greater array of luxuries and conveniences than ever before. We are speeding forward into dark, uncharted waters at full throttle. Most people cannot believe this society could ever sink; the idea seems so remote that few allow the possibility into their thinking.

Yet according to your Bible this age will

founder. This world—this age and society with all its wonders and marvels—*will* fall because it functions on the wrong foundation. It violates with apparent impunity God's law based on the Ten Commandments. It resists the will of God and lurches inevitably toward a time of terrible trouble. When that moment of destiny arrives, like that icy mass that shattered human complacency, pride and arrogance 86 years ago, there will be a kind of lifeboat available, but by no means will it be accessible to all.

In Matthew 24 Jesus Christ was asked by His disciples when the end of the world (Greek *aion*, meaning "age") would come and what signs would precede it. Christ's

In many ways the modern era is like the Titanic. We are speeding forward into dark, uncharted waters at full throttle. Most people cannot believe this society could ever sink.

answer focused on a time of great trouble, the likes of which the world has never seen, even to this day. It will be so bad that it will require the return of Jesus Christ to intervene and save mankind from destroying all human life. However, said Jesus, "for the elect's sake those days will be *shortened*" (verse 22, emphasis added throughout).

In Revelation 3:10-11, in a passage connected with that same time, God promises to keep His people (the elect) "from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world."

The apostle John later described a woman, representing the Church, who would be protected from the rampaging serpent, representing Satan the devil (Revelation 12:9, 14). Satan is prevented from hurting the woman, but is allowed to "make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verse 17). God provides deliverance and protection for a few. Others will not enjoy that same protection or deliverance.

The basis of selection for this "lifeboat" is not so much physical—how much money you have, who you know, the way you appear on the outside—but the way you *really are* on the inside. This selection applies to all those called by God's grace to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, but who respond in an appropriate way. It applies to Christians who are determined to *hold fast* to God's way of life.

An earlier lifeboat for humanity

Noah, called "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), lived thousands of years

ago. In his time the world was in a sorry state, much like its condition in our time. The world was corrupt and evil. Mankind despised God's laws, and God was angry. "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

God so abhorred people's behavior that He regretted creating humans (verse 6), and determined to destroy them and give society and civilization a fresh start.

So, quite literally, God instructed Noah to prepare a lifeboat so that, when their world sank beneath the waves, Noah and his family would be spared.

Many scoffed and ridiculed Noah as he built this massive lifeboat. But they quit laughing when the rain came and the waters began to rise. Like the helpless victims on the *Titanic*, they were trapped in the waters with nowhere to go. They all drowned.

Jesus Christ tells us that just before His return, at the end of this age, conditions will be strikingly similar to the state of the world in Noah's time (Matthew 24:36-42). When the *Titanic* that is human society goes down, God will have a lifeboat of sorts planned out and available.

Sad to say, men and women everywhere will be unaware that anything is really wrong. Just as the ship's band continued to play as the *Titanic* took on icy Atlantic water through the mortal wound in its side, society today continues its slide toward disaster, blissfully ignoring the danger all around.

The lesson of Lot and Sodom

After the flood came a time when God was again so repulsed by evil that He intervened to destroy sin and its effects. In the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, sexual perversion was rampant (Genesis 19:1-13), aided and abetted by pride, arrogance, prosperity and idleness (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

Warned by angels of the coming destruction of Sodom, righteous Lot tried to alert his immediate family so they could escape. He was rebuffed: "But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking" (Genesis 19:14). The joke, however, was on them. Fire rained on and destroyed both cities, which have since become a byword for sin and its consequences. "And it came to

pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt" (verse 29). Only Lot and his daughters escaped.

The examples of Noah and Lot are linked together as profound lessons for our day (2 Peter 2:4-8). Whether we recognize it or not, *our world* is like that of Noah and Lot. Wickedness and disregard for God and His ways are almost universal. Many of our cities and towns are morally no more than festering cesspools, not unlike Sodom.

God will not forever turn a blind eye to the ever-increasing corruption around us. Nor will He abandon those whose outcry against society's sins rises to His ears. A day of reckoning for sin approaches. A time of deliverance for the righteous beckons.

If God punished sinners and delivered the righteous in the time of Noah and Lot, then we can be assured that for our time also "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (verses 9-10). God delivered righteous Noah and Lot. He will do the same for the godly in our day—those who resist the prevailing, pervasive sins that characterize this age.

A world caught unaware

Noah and Lot are again mentioned in the same context in Luke 17:26-37, where Christ describes conditions at the end of the age. The timing of the events that lead up to His return will catch most people unaware. In the time of Noah and Lot, in spite of these two men's warnings, people continued in their normal routines until disaster suddenly struck. So will it be, said Jesus, in the day of His return to earth.

In spite of warnings from God's servants, those who do not heed will face a time of supreme trouble, without God's protection and promise of deliverance. Verses 34-37 describe how some will be miraculously spared, delivered from the calamity about to envelop the world. Truly God knows how to deliver the righteous from a time of trouble.

This passage illustrates the tendency of human nature to assume that the longer something has been going on the longer it will continue to go on. The Bible, however, shows the danger inherent in that assumption. The ancient Israelites expressed these thoughts in proverbs and sayings of their day. "The days are prolonged, and every vision fails," said one (Ezekiel 12:22). "The

vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off," said another (verse 27). In both cases God makes it clear that His word *will* be done, and judgment for sin is certain.

Did people react the same way to the preaching of Noah and Lot? Apparently they assumed that "every vision fails" or that Noah or Lot prophesied "of times far off." They didn't realize that the vision of Noah and Lot pertained to their own eras.

A time of reckoning

As a society, we seem to think we can get away with almost any despicable act without facing the consequences. In effect we proclaim, "God Himself could not sink this ship!" As the apostle Paul bluntly put it, "There is no fear of God . . ." (Romans 3:18).

One of Britain's favorite patriotic songs proclaims, "Rule Britannia . . . Britons never, never, never shall be slaves." But the continued existence of all nations is actually determined by the goodness and grace of God. No nation is unsinkable, and one day we may well learn that at great cost.

Most people go along with the crowd, participating in and coexisting with sin while thinking little of it. But God is looking for those who stand out from the crowd and resist evil. He looks for courageous, concerned men and women "who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done" in society around us (Ezekiel 9:4), whose conscience, morals and values are in tune with His. He will hear their anguished outcry, just as He heard Lot and Noah.

In a compelling prophecy for the time immediately preceding the return of Christ, Malachi discusses the end of this age. A time is coming, he says, when *the unthinkable will happen*. Just as the supposedly unsinkable *Titanic* met disaster, so will civilization face unimaginable catastrophe. "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "that will leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1).

A lifeboat is available

At this prophesied time, the returning Christ will intervene and provide a lifeboat of sorts for some. The way of life we lead will determine whether *we* will be on that lifeboat or not.

Who will be spared at that time? God, through Malachi, gives us several indica-

tions: those who have a godly fear, respecting and honoring God and His way of life (verse 2), and who "remember the Law of Moses, My servant" (verse 4).

God gave His laws to Moses for His redeemed people of Israel. That law is based on His Ten Commandments and was expanded through statutes and judgments. Jesus Christ Himself clarified that these laws are based on the two great spiritual principles of loving God and fellowman (Matthew 22:37-40). The law is holy, just and good (Romans 7:12), and is a reflection of God's unchanging character, which is based in love (1 John 4:8, 16).

God's Church today is, spiritually, a continuation of that physical nation and is now "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16), God's new "holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9) and the true children of the promise (Romans 9:8). These believers are expected to uphold the standards and pattern of behavior God revealed to ancient Israel through His laws, which are relevant and applicable to all humanity.

The burgeoning sins of our increasingly lawless societies will exact their inevitable penalties. Like ancient Israel, many people don't wish to be told of their sins and defi-

Just as the ship's band continued to play as the Titanic took on icy Atlantic water through the mortal wound in its side, society today continues its slide toward disaster, blissfully ignoring the danger all around.

ance of the laws of God. Their attitude is expressed in Isaiah 30:9-10: ". . . This is a rebellious people . . . who will not hear the law of the LORD; who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.'"

Because most people increasingly despise God's ways, viewing them as irrelevant to their way of life, God will intervene. Like the proverbial bulge in the wall that has been there so long that it has come to be ignored, its "breaking comes suddenly, in an instant . . ." (verses 12-14).

Don't go down with the ship

We don't have to be like the people described in these scriptures. We know the ship is going down. The signs are all around us. The wall is bulging. The cracks are starting to appear.

Little can be done about the massive problems facing mankind. Life continues pretty much as usual, with occasional exciting

technological advances to satiate and titillate us as we continue our collective moral degeneration. One day—as was the case for those in the days of Noah and Lot, and for the doomed passengers and crew of the *Titanic*—"life as usual" will be no more. The wall *will* come tumbling down.

Seeing that all these things are certain to happen if we do not change our ways, God asks of us a serious question: "What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness . . .?" (2 Peter 3:11).

It bears thinking about, doesn't it? Did God hold the key to survival at the time of Noah and Lot? Was the deckhand who said of the *Titanic* that even God couldn't sink her proven wrong? Does God hold the key today?

Of course He does. And the lifeboat He is preparing has everything to do with your relationship to Him and the way of life you lead. God provides a lifeline, through Jesus Christ, to all who will fear and obey Him.

Let's be clear. This age *is* like the *Titanic*. We naively assume society to be unsinkable. Yet it is destined to go down. *But we don't have to go down with it.* By establishing a relationship with God and upholding

the way of life He calls us to, we can locate a lifeboat.

When you look around at the glitter, glamour, splendor and wonders of our age, remember the *Titanic*, which no one believed would ever sink. Remember the haunting description of that mighty ship's last moments: "The band played on . . . and the deck continued to tilt." *GN*

RECOMMENDED READING

Why are you here? What is the purpose of human life? Where is this world headed? Although the answers have been available to man for thousands of years, few have understood them. You can discover the answers for yourself in the free booklets *What Is Your Destiny?* and *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Just contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 of this issue.



An Overview of Conditions

Sidelining the Ten Commandments



Says one British newspaper: "The Ten Commandments have been sidelined by the Church of England . . . in a controversial attempt to make services less 'sombre' and more populist. The move has prompted a storm of protest from [conservative] clergy who accuse the bishops of *finally surrendering any claim to moral leadership in Britain*" (emphasis added).

Earlier this year new statistics were published that revealed that the Anglicans had suffered their biggest drop in attendance in more than 20 years. Outraged synod member Phil Gore commented that "many in the Church do not want a God that makes too many demands on them. Therefore they want to dismiss the Ten Commandments as irrelevant to our modern age."

A similar protest was voiced by David Wilkinson, a lay member from Derby. "The secular world is crying out for the Ten Commandments. Relativism in ethics has taken such a hold on society that fewer and fewer people have a clear idea of the difference between right and wrong."

This news is sadly reminiscent of the apostle Paul's prophecy that "in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, . . . unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, . . . headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London]; 2 Timothy 3:1-4.)

Genital herpes infects 45 million Americans

In the last two decades genital herpes has doubled among white adults in their 20s while increasing fivefold among white teenagers, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Now about one in five teens and adults—*some 45 million Americans*—has the disease, with

Now about one in five teens and adults—some 45 million Americans—has herpes, with most of them unaware that they are infected.

most of them unaware that they are infected. Although some sexually transmissible diseases have seen declines in number of infections, researchers attribute the rise in herpes infections to young people increasing their frequency of sexual activity, number of sex partners and rate of unprotected sex.

Genital herpes, which has no known cure, often causes outbreaks of painful ulcers or itching around the genitals and can lead to painful inflammation of the cervix, where it

can also be spread to newborns at birth. Medical studies have also indicated that herpes sores may increase the likelihood of a person contracting the AIDS virus during sexual contact with an AIDS-infected partner.

This is but part of the damage people inflict on themselves when they ignore God's commands prohibiting sex outside the marriage relationship. Such suffering could be avoided if young people would heed the biblical advice to "flee fornication." (Sources: The Associated Press; Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:18, King James Version.)

Like to buy a used church?

Shrinking church attendance throughout much of Europe is forcing church leaders to face a troubling question: What can be done with the thousands of enormous churches, chapels and monasteries that no longer receive enough use to justify the high costs of their maintenance?

In much of Europe church attendance began a serious slide in the 1960s before plummeting in the 1980s. Consequently, unused churches are scattered throughout Germany, France, Britain and other northern European countries. Many have simply shut and locked their doors.

In Germany and France, churches receive some government support, so churches that would otherwise close have remained open. In the crowded Netherlands, however, where some 40 percent of the Dutch claim to belong to no church or religion, a cash-strapped clergy has sold more than 250 church buildings and properties in the last two decades. Many were converted into cultural centers, libraries, apartments, shops and even discotheques. (Source: *The New York Times*.)

World to share Asian financial pains

The ongoing Asian financial firestorm will affect virtually the entire world in 1998, according to projections issued by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The report predicts slowing economic growth and rising unemployment and trade deficits. The biggest risk for industrial nations, the IMF said, is decreasing consumer confidence caused by ongoing turmoil in financial markets. As if to underscore this prediction, world stock markets gyrated wildly as 1997 drew to a close and 1998 began.

The United States, it warns, is in danger of exploding trade deficits, estimated to increase by 29 percent to some \$230 billion as currency devaluations lower the costs of imported Asian goods and slow U.S. exports.

Just before the Asian financial crisis began, the IMF had predicted worldwide economic growth of 4.3 percent. Just two months later, as Asia's dilemma deepened, the IMF lowered its projected increase to 3.5 percent, the lowest increase in five years.

"The repercussions in regional and global financial markets . . . have proven much deeper and more extensive than seemed likely only a few months ago," said the report. "The economic implications can now be expected to be more serious." (Source: The Associated Press.)





tions Around the World

Seventy atheist priests

"God does not exist as an independent agent. God is a figure created as a human ideal." Such words might not sound unusual coming from an atheistic scientist or philosopher. But what are we to make of such words coming from the spokesman for a group of Anglican priests?

Conditions in the Anglican leadership have deteriorated so much and so quickly that one newspaper columnist wonders, "Is it time to shut down the Church of England?"

As reported in one British newspaper, "more than 70 serving Anglican priests are members of an organization that does not believe in the literal truth of the Bible or in the existence of God."

Conditions in the Anglican leadership have deteriorated so much and so quickly that one newspaper columnist wonders, "Is it time to shut down the Church of England?" He is particularly provoked by a leading bishop who condones consensual homosexual relations for people as young as 16. (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London].)

Pornography fuels cyberspace advancements

Easy access to pornography has made it one of the most lucrative moneymaking industries on the Internet. Demand for virtual sex helps drive advances in cyberspace technology, according to Internet entrepreneurs.

Although no firm figures are available, a survey by *Interactive Week* magazine concluded that 10,000 sexually explicit sites could be bringing in as much as \$1 billion annually from credit-card charges for accessing the sites. An analyst for one company that tracks use of on-line services reports that more than one in four households owning computers visits such sites monthly.

Sexually explicit sites are among the first to use such advanced (and expensive) technology as T3 phone lines, through which compressed, high-resolution video images can easily be transmitted and viewed. One pornography provider recently announced a \$10 million effort offering multiple computer video channels much like cable television.

Says one porn model turned computer entrepreneur (who manages her own Web site featuring herself), "Sex is still the most searched-for word on the Internet, and that's why our service is growing so well." (Source: The Associated Press.)

More troubling trends in the Middle East

A disturbing recent communiqué reveals that "teams of technicians have arrived in Teheran to work on the final stages of Iran's long-range missile programme, providing the ayatollahs with the ability to pose a substantial threat to the entire Middle East." The article explains: "As the West concentrates its attention on curbing Iraq's attempts to develop non-conventional weapons, Iran has been developing its own weapons of mass destruction, uninhibited by the prying

eyes of United Nations inspectors."

This feature continues: "The Iranians are trying to complete development of the Shahab three and four missiles, which would have a range of up to 1,000 miles."

Conditions in the military and political world may not have changed as much as we might have thought. "Apart from working closely with the North Koreans and Chinese, the Iranians are still co-operating with Russian missile experts. An estimated 350 Iranians are registered as 'students' in Russia, conducting experiments at the two main missile research establishments in Moscow, the Tsagi and Mai institutes."

Finally, a stern warning from the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), comprised of 331 members of the British Parliament ranging across all political parties: "When it comes to acquiring weapons of mass destruction, there is essentially little difference between Iraq and Iran. Like Iraq, Iran wants to build an arsenal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. It is in the interests of international security that effective action is taken to stop them from doing so." (Source: *The Sunday Telegraph* [London].)

Good news about diet

Green salads keep cancer cells at bay: Recent research at London and Aberdeen hospitals shows that "a plate of green salad before a meal can protect against stomach cancer."

Further, "green vegetables such as lettuce have been found to contain chemicals that, when naturally converted into potent anti-bacterial agents, also combat food poisoning." (Source: *The Sunday Telegraph* [London].)

Why bad news in *The Good News*?

Speaking of world conditions preceding His return, Jesus Christ said, "It will be a time of great distress; there has never been such a time from the beginning of the world until now, and will never be again" (Matthew 24:21, New English Bible).

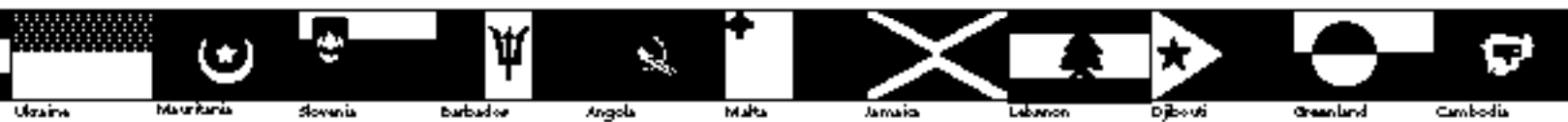
The United Church of God, whose members and supporters provide the financial backing for *The Good News*,

The world is filled with bad news. Yet the future holds incredible promise: Jesus Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God.

believes in and teaches the return of Jesus Christ. This section reports on some of the consequences of human behavior leading to the very conditions Christ described: a dangerous world of chaos, confusion and apprehension in which man faces the terrifying possibility of human extinction (verse 22).

The world is filled with bad news. Yet the future holds incredible promise: Jesus Christ's return to establish the Kingdom of God (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15), ushering in a time of peace, prosperity and plenty during which all people will at last learn to live God's way of life. This truly is *good news* on which you can stake your future.

—John Ross Schroeder and Scott Ashley



The Marshall Plan Revisited

At the end of World War II much of Europe lay in ruins. Here is the story of how one man's vision helped restore much of the Continent to health and prosperity.

by John Meakin

It's hard to imagine today that 50 years ago much of Europe's industrial production had been destroyed. Germany lay in ruins. Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands and other European countries had been badly mauled and were exhausted.

All across the Continent, villages, towns and cities had been pounded into rubble. Transportation was unreliable or nonexistent. Roads, bridges and railroads lay wrecked and demolished. Tens of millions of men, women and children had been killed or maimed. Millions more struggled just to find food to eat and a dry place to sleep at night. For many the peaceful and prosperous life widely known a decade earlier was a shattered, far-off memory.

The fallout of World War II

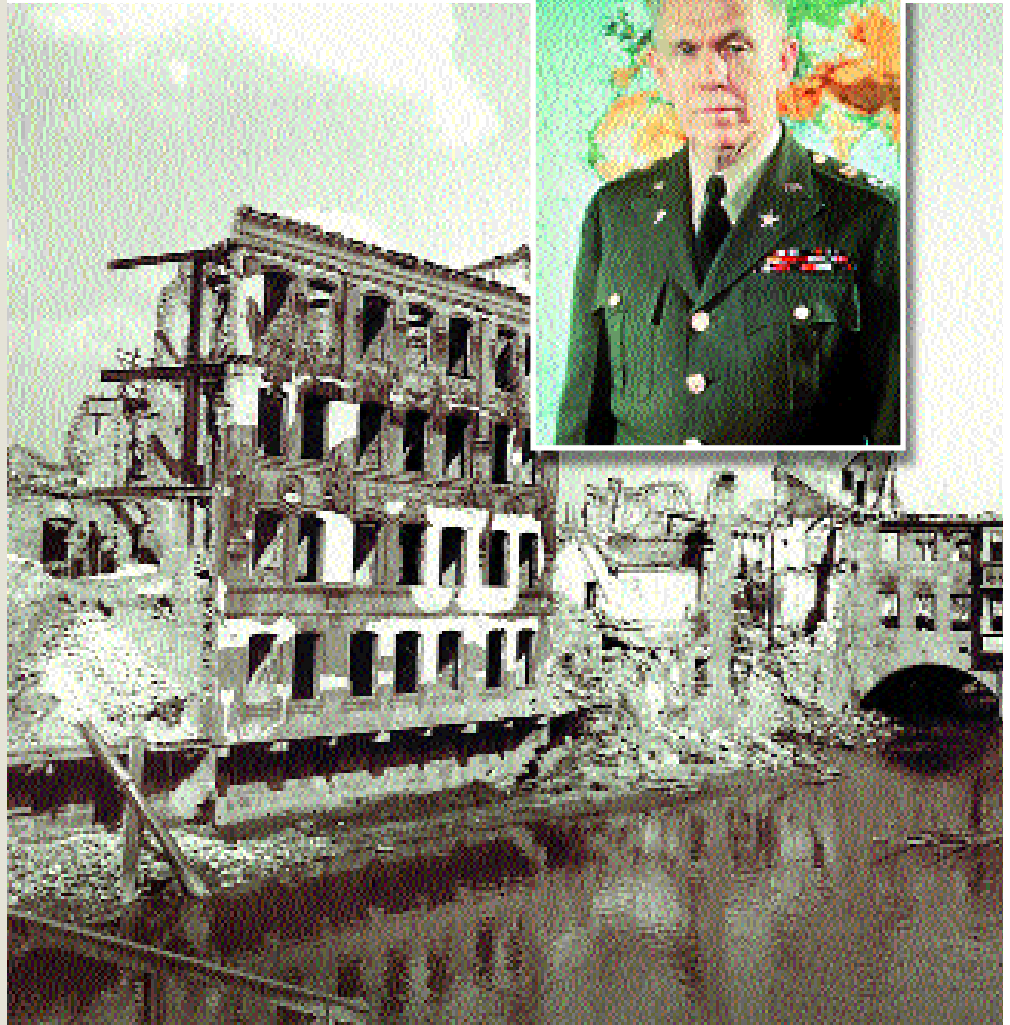
Western Europe had just seen decades of progress battered into dust in the firestorm of World War II. The economy was in shambles; Britain faced a desperate shortage of coal and electrical power. Trade was paralyzed, and factories had been crippled across Europe. Farms, mines and manufacturing concerns struggled to provide food, shelter, clothing and power to the war's survivors. Nothing came easy on a continent on which neighboring countries had spent six years fearing and hating each other, killing and being killed.

A shattered Europe was starved for capital to reinvest in industry; capital with which to relieve a crippling debt burden; capital to enable Europeans to get their people back to work and adequately feed them.

The particularly severe winter of 1946-47 only exacerbated the problems and shortages. Reconstruction required products from the United States, and the Europeans simply did not have the dollars to purchase such material.

Few could imagine how the misery would end. But end it did, and the Europe of today is vastly different. What made this recovery possible?

This year marks the 50th anniversary of



A devastated Europe faced severe problems in the aftermath of World War II. Much of the continent's infrastructure was destroyed or damaged. Through the visionary efforts of George C. Marshall (inset), Europe was able to recover and rebuild.

the enactment of a remarkable and visionary strategy: the Marshall Plan, as it came to be called. It was an American plan that provided for the reconstruction across Europe of economic and political systems badly damaged by war.

Europe owes much to George C. Marshall's understanding and foresight. But how did this plan come about, and what did it do for Europe?

During the spring of 1947, after George

Marshall (who had served as a general in the U.S. Army during the war) had been appointed U.S. secretary of state, the gravity of the European situation became apparent to American leadership. True, a small-scale recovery was already under way, fueled by a little-publicized infusion of aid from America, mainly in the form of loans.

From July 1945 until December 1947 America pumped roughly \$11 billion into Europe. But this aid was oriented toward

relief and was largely unfocused. It had not achieved the progress that had been hoped for. A more coherent and effective approach was necessary.

In March 1947 Secretary Marshall attended the foreign ministers' conference in Moscow. Political and economic developments were not promising. The East-West ideological divide was becoming even more pronounced. Alarmed at the failure of the conference, on his return from Moscow Mr. Marshall declared that "the patient is sinking while the doctors deliberate."

Over the next six weeks the secretary set his department working feverishly to come up with a workable solution. The plan that eventually emerged was simple and far-sighted and broke new ground. America would commit itself to provide, over several years, aid to European countries that would agree to respond cooperatively. Remarkable as it may seem from a Cold War perspective, this plan even envisioned including the Soviet Union and its newly acquired Eastern European satellites.

The goals were straightforward: alleviate the dollar shortage; provide a catalyst for recovery; head off any reversion to authoritarian solutions, thus alleviating the developing communist threat.

The new program would target investment and reconstruction. It would include what we now call technology transfer and involve advisers in economic modernization. America envisaged a rebuilt Europe in which nations would act together, cooperating as the American states had done for decades. Modern production methods America had mobilized so successfully during the war effort would be emulated.

This new aid would be sustained over several years and targeted in a way that would help alleviate balance-of-payments problems. It would stress productivity and cooperation between capital and labor across the region, and emulate the United States' productive political economy. This plan was publicized as "a hand-up," not a handout.

An outline for restoration

On June 5, 1947, George Marshall launched the program during the now-famous Harvard University graduation ceremonies at which he received his own honorary degree. In modest and

understated tones he described the dangerous situation in Europe and laid out the rationale for American involvement in nothing less than the rebuilding of Europe.

In what has been called the "ultimate commencement address" of around 1,200 words—which took only 12 minutes to deliver—Mr. Marshall argued that Europe "must have substantial additional help or face economic, social and political deterioration of a very grave character."

He noted that "it is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace."

He made the case for why his plan was needed: "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos."

The basis of the project, he said, was to be a partnership. "It would be neither fitting nor efficacious for this government to undertake to draw up unilaterally a program designed to place Europe on its feet economically. The initiative, I think, must come from Europe."

Mr. Marshall added two handwritten paragraphs at the end of the speech to emphasize concerns he had voiced at the start: "It is virtually impossible at this distance merely by reading or listening, or seeing photographs and motion pictures, to grasp at all the real significance of the situation. And yet the *whole world of the future* hangs on a proper judgment" (emphasis added).

The State Department was concerned about initial adverse reaction, and the speech was purposely understated and short on specifics. American publicity was muted. Many people failed at first to grasp the importance of the discourse.

However, such was not the case in Europe. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin of Britain heard the speech and its dramatic offer on the BBC news and immediately telephoned the French foreign minister, Georges Bidault. Both governments quickly affirmed their acceptance of the offer.

A continent begins to rebuild

Mr. Bevin and Mr. Bidault rapidly organized a unified European response.

History's Verdict on Marshall's Plan

Many have been generous in their praise of the Marshall Plan. It became the largest foreign-aid program in America's history and the most successful peacetime American foreign policy of this century. It would later be thought of as a superior example of enlightened self-interest. The policy presented the United States and its citizens in the best possible light or, in W.H. Auden's words, as "a friend of the future."

The vision of the Marshall Plan created a new postwar order in Western Europe favorable to American interests. But America and Western Europe as a whole were partners in the task of reconstruction. It was this spirit of cooperation and tolerance, the emphasis on self-help and mutual aid, that accounted for the plan's success and enabled it to stand as an enduring lesson for later generations.

The integration of Western European economies was a great achievement and one in which the Marshall Plan played a significant part. This integrated economic order, with its central institutions, helped to channel the resurgent energy of the Federal Republic of Germany in constructive ways and provided a combined front to act as a bulwark to contain Soviet power to the east. It was to set Western Europe on a path that would lead it to the Common Market of the 1960s and the European Community of today.

To grasp its tremendous significance, consider how international leaders viewed the Marshall Plan at the time.

President Harry Truman observed: "I believe that in years to come we shall look back upon this undertaking as the dividing line between the old era of world affairs and the new—the dividing line between the old era of national suspicion, economic hostility and isolationism and the new era of mutual cooperation to increase the prosperity of people throughout the world."

British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin called it an act of "generosity . . . beyond belief" and "an idea which translates the problem from one of individual countries to one of a continent, and only a country that is a continent could look at another continent in that way . . . I felt it was the first chance we had ever been given since the end of the war to look at [the] European economy as a whole."

Ludwig Erhard, chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (1963-66), talked of the plan's selflessness. "This magnanimous support [the Marshall Plan] deserves above all to be assessed from the point of view of its moral effect. It gave the German people the feeling that they were no longer written off by the rest of the world but that they could again take part in the progress of the free world. Its economic and financial significance was, moreover, no less."

Dirk Stikker, foreign minister of the Netherlands (1948-52), noted that "Churchill's words won the war; Marshall's words won the peace."

Perhaps Winston Churchill himself summed it up most memorably when he called the Marshall Plan "the most unsordid act in history."



Winston Churchill on George Marshall

“During my long and close association with successive American administrations, there are few men whose qualities of mind and character have impressed me so deeply as those of Gen. Marshall. He is a great American, but he is more than that. In war he was as wise and understanding in counsel as he was resolute in action. In peace he was the architect who planned the restoration of our battered European economy and, at the same time, labored tirelessly to establish a system of Western defense. He has always fought victoriously against defeatism, discouragement and disillusion. Succeeding generations must not be allowed to forget his achievements and his example.”

The next month 16 European nations met in Paris to outline a joint recovery plan. The Soviet Union and countries under its control declined to participate. Western Europe worked with U.S. State Department officials to draft an acceptable proposal.

But progress was slow, and it took two months to draft a suitable plan. Not until December was the first official version of the plan submitted to Congress.

So the Marshall Plan, officially called the European Recovery Program, came into being. On April 3, 1948, the United States Congress passed into law the Economic Cooperation Act, which outlined a massive and far-reaching program of European aid.

A new agency in Washington called the European Cooperation Administration administered the program. In Paris a separate agency called the Organization for European Economic Cooperation coordinated and approved each nation's recovery plans. This later became the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

By the end of 1952 the Marshall Plan had channeled more than \$13 billion to the cause of rescuing Europe and setting it back on its feet. This represented between 5 and 10 percent of the U.S. federal budget over the lifetime of the program, or about 2 percent of gross national product over the same period. At today's dollar values this represents a staggering \$88 billion that America committed to provide for a single program in the cause of European recovery.

Foundation for growth and recovery

The plan served as a substantial stimulus in expanding European agricultural and industrial production; it helped restore sound currencies, budgets and finances; it stimulated trade among European countries and

between Europe and the rest of the world.

During the program's four years of operation, the participating countries saw their combined gross national product rise more than 30 percent and industrial production increase by 40 percent over prewar levels. Improvements in agriculture were less successful but still rose 9 percent while feeding a population increase of many millions over the period. Steel production rose above prewar levels by more than 20 percent, and oil refining rose four-fold. Coal production did not improve so rapidly but rose 27 percent higher than 1947 levels.

Harder to quantify was the amazing psychological boost to morale. Almost overnight Europe's mood changed substantially.

The United States viewed itself as a model for the development of Europe, with the relationship among American states viewed as a pattern for relationships among the countries of Europe. By 1949 it became the explicit policy of the Marshall Plan to encourage the unification of Europe. Clearly, substantial groundwork was laid with respect to this ongoing quest.

Of course, these were the early days of the Cold War. Perhaps the greatest inducement to America for setting up the Marshall Plan was the containment of communism. By rescuing Europe, America hoped to so change the political and economic landscape that communism would be neutered. In this she largely succeeded.

The Marshall Plan dramatically strengthened the role of American power and prestige in Europe. It played its part in paving the way for the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, which brought the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) into existence.

America saw that a partnership between

herself and a strong, united Europe, sharing the same essential values of freedom and democracy, provided the best means to combat communism and other regional and global challenges. It would provide the essential platform on which a truly worldwide system of free trade could be built.

The legacy

George Marshall, who died in 1959, is best remembered and honored for the plan that bears his name. In 1953 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to European recovery.

The Marshall Plan encouraged joint efforts and cooperation between America and Europe, and laid the groundwork for the integration of Europe that has progressed to become the European Community of today. Its purpose was to encourage otherwise weak and divided countries to cooperate so they could become strong politically and economically and play their full role in the community of free nations.

The Marshall Plan is considered by many to have been the most effective of all American foreign-aid programs. It succeeded in preventing the deterioration of European economies and in so doing helped to offset communism. It led to stable and prosperous free economies. It cemented the special transatlantic relationship that has existed between America and Europe from that time.

The spirit of George Marshall lives on as America and Europe work toward the same grand vision of shaping the peace, freedom and prosperity of the world based on democratic values.

Will America and Europe succeed in accomplishing this millennial vision? We need to be aware of some serious impediments to its attainment.

Not least, we need to be aware of what biblical prophecy has to say regarding our future. The picture it paints is rather different from what America and Europe expect. Many unpleasant surprises lie ahead, according to Scripture. The eventual outcome is even more dramatic than we can imagine. (Be sure to read "Needed: A Viable Plan to Rescue the World," beginning on page 15, for further details.)

For further information about the Marshall Plan, consult the George C. Marshall Foundation Web site and other linked sites on the Internet. The site is at www.GCMarshallfdn.org/index.html. **GN**

Needed: A Viable Plan to Rescue the World

Fifty years from the end of World War II, not only Europe but the whole world still needs to be rescued from numerous evil influences. How and from where will that deliverance come?

by John Meakin

The Marshall Plan, inaugurated 50 years ago this April, provided a necessary impetus toward integrating the free nations of Western Europe. It did this by providing massive aid, conditioned only on Europe planning her own collective recovery.

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the nations of Eastern Europe can now also pursue their destiny. Several of them have applied to join an enlarged North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Community. In doing so they are returning to their roots.

The vision of a free, undivided and peaceful Europe remains a cornerstone of American foreign policy. Many observers believe prospects for peace and widespread prosperity have never held more promise.

But could events and circumstances yet derail this rosy world vision? Does Bible prophecy provide any clues? What can we expect for America and Europe in the years ahead?

The answers are shocking and sobering. They deserve our urgent attention.

The danger within

On June 5, 1997, 50 years to the day after George Marshall's speech at Harvard University's commencement exercises outlined a visionary plan to rebuild a shattered and divided Europe, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright delivered a visionary and comprehensive commencement address of her own on that campus. It was a speech worthy of her predecessor.

In her address Secretary Albright appealed for a wider vision than just focusing on Western Europe, as George Marshall had done (see "Excerpts," p. 16).

The world is an interconnected community facing more-diverse threats than those that occupied Secretary Marshall's generation. Mrs. Albright attempted to galvanize American leadership to complete the Marshall vision on a grander scale—the whole of Europe and every continent. She reminded America that it must heed the lessons of the past to provide adequate world leadership. She said America must invest the resources to keep itself economically, militarily and politically strong. She also referred to threats to that vision.

Mrs. Albright implicitly referred to the moral health

of America. She warned that "the greatest danger to America is not some foreign enemy; it is the possibility that we will . . . take for granted the institutions and principles upon which our own freedom is based."

Losing foundational values

The deteriorating moral condition of the Western world should rightly raise serious concerns. In America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, strength and freedom have been based on the Bible and its values. Yet those values are increasingly neglected, ignored and forgotten. Not only are they taken for granted; increasingly they are trampled underfoot.

A rising tide of immorality, drug trafficking, family and marital collapse, environmental degradation and the threat of terrorism are issues that demand the attention of Western nations. These factors sap any nation's moral strength and diminish its vision and leadership. The lesson of biblical history is that, when a nation departs from biblical values, disaster may not be far away.

"Unlike Marshall's generation, we face no single galvanizing threat. The dangers we confront are less visible and more diverse, some as old as ethnic conflict, some as new as letter bombs, some as subtle as climate change, and some as deadly as nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands."

Madeleine Albright
U.S. Secretary of State

America's moral, political and financial strength is eroding. Consequently her leadership role is at risk. Already it is practically impossible to mount the level of financial assistance that the Marshall Plan delivered.

In spite of apparent advances on many fronts, America has actually lost much of her power. Today's equivalent sum of Marshall Plan aid is \$88 billion. That sum far surpasses the \$62 billion of economic, food and military assistance the United States provided to more than 146 countries and numerous other organizations and banks in the four-year period from 1993 to 1996.

Further, to once again spend the same proportion of the federal budget as was spent on the Marshall Plan in 1948 (13 percent), the United States would spend a

staggering \$203 billion at 1996 values.

Global problems, global solutions

Today the problems of our globally interconnected world are daunting. Political, economic and scientific leaders increasingly recognize that such a world needs global strategies and solutions. The United Nations is presently the only instrument we have for such solutions, but its shortcomings and limitations are evident.

In her Harvard speech Mrs. Albright drew attention to the continuing tinderbox of ethnic hostility in the Balkans. That area and others such as Rwanda illustrate the dark side of human nature, which is capable of so quickly exploding into unbridled violence. The Middle East, so often in the headlines, is another area in which hostilities simmer close to the surface, never far from explosion and bloodshed. How long before a fragile peace again evaporates into violence?

To many in the West, the goal of bringing the world together in “an international system based on democracy, open markets, law and a commitment to peace,” as Mrs. Albright put it, may sound laudable and desirable. But much of the world is suspicious of America’s intentions and resists the imposition of such values.

Islam’s more militant adherents in particular do not share America’s democratic values and react with horror at its moral shortcomings.

The uniting of Europe along the lines of the American federal model also portends problems. There is a major difference between the various states of America and the hoped-for federal states of a united Europe. Different nationalities within Europe—with their long, separate histories and sense of identity—resist the notion of full integration. Britain in particular has a long-standing antipathy to being integrated within Europe. Religious and national differences exert—and will continue to exert—powerful constraints within such a union.

Elsewhere, Iranian rearmament and resurgence is an issue that also raises increasing concern. In neighboring Iraq, Saddam Hussein still defies the United Nations and refuses to reveal the nature and extent of his weapons programs.

Will Saddam Hussein, perhaps allied

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Excerpts from Madeleine Albright’s Commencement Address

Madeleine Albright, American secretary of state, delivered the Harvard University commencement address June 5, 1997. Her perspective on world events and trends, along with her enunciation of America’s vision and world mission and the obstacles to be overcome, makes compelling reading. Here are excerpts:

“Today we recall another turning point in [our] era. For on this day 50 years ago Secretary of State George Marshall addressed the graduating students of this university . . . The secretary’s words were plain. But his message reached far beyond the audience assembled in this yard to an American people weary of war and wary of new commitments, and to a Europe where life-giving connections between farm and market, enterprise and capital, hope and future had been seared . . .

“Today in the wake of the Cold War it is not enough for us to say that communism has failed. We, too, must heed the lessons of the past, accept responsibility, and lead.



“Because we are entering a century in which there will be many interconnected centers of population, power and wealth, we cannot limit our focus, as Marshall did in his speech, to the devastated battleground of a prior war. Our vision must encompass not one but every continent.

“Unlike Marshall’s generation, we face no single galvanizing threat. The dangers we confront are less visible and more diverse, some as old as ethnic conflict, some as new as letter bombs, some as subtle as climate change and some as deadly as nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands.

“To defend against these threats, we must take advantage of the historic opportunity that now exists to bring the world together in an international system based on democracy, open markets, law and a

commitment to peace . . .

“We can invest the resources needed to keep America strong economically, militarily and diplomatically, recognizing, as did Marshall, that these strengths reinforce each other . . .

“And we can recognize, even as we pay homage to the heroes of history, that we have our own duty to be authors of history. Let every nation acknowledge, today, [that] the opportunity to be part of an international system based on democratic principles is available to all. This was not the case 50 years ago . . . In Europe we are striving to fulfill the vision Marshall proclaimed but the Cold War prevented, the vision of a Europe whole and free . . .

“Where half a century ago American leadership helped lift Western Europe to prosperity and democracy, so today the entire transatlantic community is helping Europe’s free nations fix their economies and cement the rule of law . . .

“The Cold War’s shadow no longer darkens Europe, but one specter from the past does remain. History teaches us that there is no natural geographic or political end point to conflict in the Balkans, where World War I began and where the worst European violence of the past half century occurred in this decade. That is why the peaceful integration of Europe will not be complete until the Dayton peace accords in Bosnia are fulfilled . . .

“We can accept atrocities as inevitable, or we can strive for a higher standard . . . We can heed the most searing lesson of this century, which is that evil—when unopposed—will spawn more evil . . .

“Today the greatest danger to America is not the foreign enemy; it is the possibility that we will fail to heed the example of that generation, that we will allow the momentum towards democracy to stall, take for granted the institutions and principles upon which our own freedom is based and forget what the history of this country reminds us [of], that problems abroad, if left unattended, will all too often come home to America . . .

“There is no certain road map to success, either, for individuals or for generations. Ultimately, it is a matter of judgment, a question of choice . . .

“We have responsibility in our time . . . not to be prisoners of history, but to shape history, a responsibility to fill the role of pathfinder, and to build with others a global network of purpose and law that will protect our citizens, defend our interests, preserve our values and bequeath to future generations a legacy as proud as the one we honor today.

“To that mission, I pledge my own best efforts and summon yours . . .” **GN**

The Old Testament in the New Testament

Do Christians use a book, more than half of which is obsolete and irrelevant? Did God provide humanity with two sets of inspired writings, the Old Testament and the New?

by Scott Ashley

One of the common misconceptions among readers of the Bible is that a large part of it is obsolete—irrelevant for modern life. Sadly, some professing Christians have unwittingly turned a blind eye to much of God’s revelation by rejecting what is known as the Old Testament. They believe that the New Testament—the writings of the apostles—is what really matters; that the Old Testament was valid up until Christ came, but at that time became old and outdated.

Did God, in essence, provide humankind with two Bibles? Did He inspire one set of writings—the Hebrew Scriptures—for the Israelites living from Moses’ time to Christ’s birth, and then provide another set in the first century, with that set intended for everyone else?

Does the Bible itself have anything to say about this idea? Would one part of the Bible reject the other?

Let’s see exactly what the Bible itself has to say about the Old Testament. We will see whether God gave us two different sets of writings—or *one continuous inspired set of teachings and instruction*.

Let’s begin with the terms *Old Testament* and *New Testament*. The general view is that the Old Testament was *old*—and thus obsolete or worn out—and that it has been replaced by the New Testament. Is this view found in the Bible? No, it isn’t. The terms *Old Testament* and *New Testament* are found in a few places in some Bible translations, but the word translated “testament” is actually the word for “covenant.” Those scriptures simply talk about the old and new covenants—not about books of the Bible.

If you had been around to ask the apostles John, Peter or Paul about the “Old Testament” or the “New Testament,” they would have had no idea what you meant. The terms *Old Testament* and *New Testament* were coined by men long after the books of the Bible were written. The first use of the term *New Testament* is found in the writings of the early theologian Tertullian (ca. A.D. 155-220), a century or more after the deaths of the apostles.

Some surprising facts

Let’s consider a few statistics to show how the writers of what is known as the New Testament viewed the Hebrew Bible, called the Old Testament today. These are very revealing.

How many times do the writers of the New Testament quote the Old Testament? An index in the Jewish New Testament catalogs *695 separate quotations* from the books of the Old Testament in the New (Jewish New Testament Publications, Jerusalem, 1989). There are many other passages where the Old Testament is referred to, as in cases where an Old Testament figure is mentioned, but no specific scripture is quoted. Depending on which scholar’s work you examine, the number of quotations and references in the New Testament to the Old may be as high as *4,105* (Roger Nicole, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1979, Vol. I, p. 617).

Compare those figures to the number of times other writers are quoted in the New Testament: *four*. The apostles quoted the Old Testament *695 times*, but other writers *only four times*. Yet some people insist that the teaching of the New Testament is that the Old is obsolete, only valid for a specific people during a limited time in history.

Consider a few more statistics. Of the 26 books and letters forming the New Testament, *20* quote the Old. The only ones that don’t directly quote the Old Testament are the six shortest—Titus, Philemon, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. However, Titus, 1 John, 3 John and Jude allude to Old Testament personalities or passages.

Let’s see exactly what the Bible itself has to say about the Old Testament. We will see whether God gave us two different sets of writings—or one continuous inspired set of teachings and instruction.

Let’s look at it the other way around too. The way modern Bibles are organized, there are 39 books in the Old Testament. Of these 39 books, only nine are not quoted in the New Testament. However, since the Hebrew Bible has long organized these books differently than they appear in modern Bibles, and some of these nine were originally combined with and part of other books, in reality only five of the Old Testament books are *not* quoted in the New Testament.

Some assume that the five books of Moses are obsolete, as they focus so heavily on laws supposedly annulled by Jesus Christ. However, these same five books are

quoted at least *245 times* and referred to many more. Paul, the apostle who some believe taught that the law contained in these five books is done away, quoted from those books between *70 and 110 times*—more than any other New Testament figure. Jesus Christ quoted from these same books about 60 times.

Paul's view of the Hebrew Scriptures

With that background, let's consider some passages in the New Testament that directly discuss the Hebrew Scriptures.

Paul made his view of the Old Testament clear in 2 Timothy, a letter filled with instruction for a younger minister. He wrote that "from childhood you have known *the Holy Scriptures*" (2 Timothy 3:15, emphasis added throughout).

What are the "Holy Scriptures" Paul refers to? At the time this was written, about A.D. 66, there was no "New Testament"—some of what has since then been called the New Testament hadn't even been written at that point. Paul is referring very clearly to *the Old Testament*; those were the Holy Scriptures Timothy had been taught since childhood by his Jewish mother (Acts 16:1-3).

Though it may be surprising to some, Paul clearly states that these same Scriptures "*are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15). Salvation was *available* under the Old Testament Scriptures. And how was it available? "Through faith which is in Christ

is *pneustos*, meaning "breathed." Paul says, as some translations put it, that "all Scripture is *God-breathed*," meaning it came *directly from God*. In other words, the Hebrew Scriptures, said Paul, came *directly* from the very breath and Spirit of God!

Continuing, Paul tells Timothy that Scripture "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (verses 16-17).

Consider another point about this passage. This letter was written about A.D. 66—only about a year before Paul was executed. This is Paul's *last surviving letter* before he died. And in it he tells another minister that the Old Testament Scriptures, rather than being obsolete, are *inspired by God* and "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness," that Christians may be "complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Paul's teaching and practice

How did Paul himself preach and teach? We've already noted that he quoted the five books of Moses more than any other New Testament writer did. But are his letters the only time he quoted from the Old Testament?

Acts 28 describes Paul's arrival in Rome and the conditions of his confinement there while awaiting trial. He could not leave, but he could receive visitors. "So when they had

Peter's closing comments

How did other apostles view the Old Testament?

Peter's second epistle is his last surviving letter, written in prison shortly before his death. He knew he was going to die soon: "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease" (2 Peter 1:15).

What were "these things" that Peter wanted others to remember after his death? This epistle contains his last words to the Church, so we should pay close attention to all of it. But what does he discuss immediately after mentioning he wanted them to remember "these things"?

In the next few verses Peter talks about *the reality of Jesus Christ*. He talks about the transfiguration of Christ when he, James and John saw Christ transfigured in His glory (verses 16-18; Matthew 17:1-9). He said that Christ wasn't a myth, He wasn't a "cunningly devised fable," but He was *real*—real enough for Peter to give his life for Him. Then Peter adds, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (verse 19).

What is this "prophetic word"? He is referring to the return of Jesus Christ, which will happen when "the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." This also ties in with the transfiguration, when Peter saw Jesus Christ in His glorified state as He will appear when He returns.

Peter seems to be saying that the vision he, James and John shared—of the glorified Jesus Christ—is the same kind of experience that the prophets of the Old Testament had when they saw and recorded their visions of the LORD and the coming Messiah. Peter confirms that what the prophets wrote is *true*. They wrote of a Messiah who would bring God's Kingdom. And Peter, James and John saw the same things when they saw Jesus Christ in His majesty.

Then Peter adds, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but *holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (verses 20-21).

What "prophecy" and what "Scripture" is Peter discussing? From the context, we see that he's talking about the prophecies that spoke of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. What is Peter's point? That the

The apostles quoted the Old Testament 695 times, but other writers only four times. Yet some people insist that the teaching of the New Testament is that the Old is obsolete.

Jesus." Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, Daniel, David and others who are promised eternal life elsewhere in the Scriptures received salvation *the same way we do*—through *faith in Jesus Christ*, through faith and belief in a promised Messiah who would redeem them from their sins.

Jesus Christ did not die only for those who have lived *since* His death. He died for all the men, women and children who have ever lived, both *before and after* His physical life on earth.

What else does Paul say about these Holy Scriptures known as the Old Testament?

"*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .*" Paul described Scripture with the term *theopneustos*. The first part of this word, *Theo*, means "God." The second part

appointed him a day, many [of the Jewish leaders in Rome] came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus *from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets*, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23-24).

Here Paul, in about 63, almost 30 years after he had been called and converted, explained and persuaded a group of fellow Jews from "both the Law of Moses and the Prophets"—two of the major divisions of the Old Testament. He did not tell them that they no longer needed to heed the Hebrew Scriptures, but rather taught Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God from them—strange actions if you believe that Paul tried to turn people away from the Old Testament.

prophets of the Old Testament were right. They were “holy men of God” who spoke and wrote *God’s words*. The men who wrote the Old Testament did so *under the inspiration of God’s Spirit*.

Jesus Christ’s teaching

What about Jesus Christ? How did He view the writings forming the Old Testament? Let’s examine what Jesus Christ had to say about its validity.

If ever Jesus Christ wanted to convey the idea that the Old Testament was obsolete, surely He would have done so during His ministry or after His resurrection. But did He?

Luke 24 describes events following His resurrection. On that same day, Jesus met two of His followers, neither of whom recognized Him, and walked with them. They related the astounding events of the last few days, including Christ’s execution and the disappearance of His body from the tomb (verses 13-24).

Notice Christ’s reaction: “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ [the Messiah] to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And *beginning at Moses and all the Prophets*, He expounded to them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself” (verses 25-27).

What did Jesus Christ do immediately after His resurrection? He asked two of His followers, “Why is it so hard for you to believe what the prophets said would happen to the Messiah?” And then, from the five books of Moses and the writings of the prophets, He showed how everything that

Such examples make it clear that one function of the Old Testament Scriptures was to correctly identify the Messiah—the Anointed One—Jesus of Nazareth.

had happened was *prophesied* to happen. He *confirmed* the validity of the Scriptures.

Later He appeared to the 11 disciples and other followers. “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, *that they might comprehend the Scriptures*” (verses 44-45). Christ did not *do away* with “the Scriptures”—the Hebrew Bible—but helped His followers to *better understand* and *comprehend* them.

Similarly, the apostle Paul cited passages from all three sections of the Old Testament—the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms—in describing Christ’s mission (Romans 15:7-13; Psalm 18:49; 117:1; Deuteronomy 32:43; Isaiah 11:1,

10). Why would Paul do this if he thought the Old Testament had become invalid, as some suppose?

Such examples make it clear that one function of the Old Testament Scriptures was to correctly *identify* the Messiah—the Anointed One—Jesus of Nazareth. But later

Paul wrote that these same Old Testament Scriptures were also “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), making us “wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (verse 15). Christ Himself showed us how to use the Hebrew Bible as a very effective spiritual sword in combating the wiles of Satan.

Christ’s consistent approach

Christ’s view of the Scriptures was the same throughout His ministry. In Matthew 4 we see what Jesus Christ said about the Old Testament at the very beginning of His earthly ministry.

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now

Jesus Christ and the Old Testament

What was Christ’s relationship with the Old Testament? To fully understand that, we must first consider who and what Jesus Christ is as presented in the Bible. The New Testament is a collection of historical biographies and accounts that tell the story of Jesus Christ, His life and ministry, His death and resurrection, the men He chose, and the founding of the Church. It is also about the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ, through whom we have salvation, and includes a series of letters to various individuals and groups of believers elaborating on these concepts and their implications for the way we live our lives. The New Testament ends with the book of Revelation, which describes what will happen in the Church and the world until Christ returns and reigns on earth, after which all who have ever lived will be given the opportunity for salvation in God’s eternal Kingdom.

But what is the basis for these books, letters and prophecies? All are based on Jesus *the Christ*. *Christ* means “Anointed One” in Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written—the same as the Hebrew word *Messiah*. Jesus Christ’s followers called Him *Jesus the Messiah*. *Christ* means “Messiah”—the very one prophesied repeatedly in the Old Testament by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Malachi and others. Without the Old Testament, *no one would have been expecting a Messiah*. The dozens of prophecies recorded by the prophets about a Messiah—prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ—are among the strongest

proofs that the Bible is indeed the inspired Word of God.

There are many sacred writings among many different religions claiming to be holy and divinely inspired. But there is one thing that none of them do. *None of them tell the future*, and then, hundreds of years later, *record exactly how those prophecies came to pass*. That is, in essence, the story of the four Gospels—a calling to mind, a record of Old Testament references of how Jesus Christ fulfilled those prophecies of a Messiah who would be born of a virgin, who would be a divine teacher, who would be put to death, who would bring forgiveness of sin, who would rise from the dead, and who would ultimately return as a conquering king. That is the message of the four Gospels—that Jesus Christ was *the Messiah* who had been prophesied throughout the Old Testament.

The Jewish New Testament lists 52 prophecies fulfilled in Christ’s first coming (pages xxv-xxix). Estimates of the total number of prophecies about Christ, including those of His second coming, number *in the hundreds*. Was Jesus of Nazareth indeed the Christ, the promised and prophesied Messiah? If the Old Testament is not valid, *we don’t know*. If the Old Testament is not valid, *we don’t know whether we have a Savior*. The Old Testament is the proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the One who was sent from God and will come again.

—Scott Ashley

when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But [Christ] answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but *by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*"' (verses 1-4).

What was Christ's response to Satan's temptation? He quoted the Old Testament, specifically Deuteronomy 8:3. What words had proceeded out of the mouth of God at that point? The Old Testament. The first book of the New Testament wouldn't be written for another 15 to 20 years. Man is not to live by *either* the Old Testament *or* the New Testament, "but by *every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*"

Satan continued his efforts to tempt Jesus, who responded again by quoting the Old Testament—Deuteronomy 6:16, 6:13 and 10:20. Satan had to recognize the authority of that Scripture and of Jesus Christ Himself, and he slunk away in defeat.

Christ's explicit words

Immediately after this, Jesus began His earthly ministry. The "Sermon on the Mount" is one of the first recorded examples of His teaching, and what does He say? "*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets [the Old Testament]. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill*" (Matthew 5:17).

Despite these clear words, some people still think Christ came to abolish the law revealed in the Old Testament. Christ told His followers *not to think* that He came to destroy the Law or the Prophets—yet many people think that's exactly what He taught.

Jesus said He "did not come to destroy but to fulfill." The word *fulfill* in this verse means simply "to fill up." This same word is used of filling up nets with fish (Matthew 13:48). When you fill up a net with fish, you don't throw the net away and say you don't need it anymore. Yet many distort Christ's words to say this is what He taught.

Jesus Christ fulfilled numerous prophecies of the Old Testament—but there are many more that He didn't fulfill in His first coming. He fulfilled the Law in the sense that He showed its spiritual intent—He showed how we will be living if we truly live by God's law.

Lest anybody get the wrong idea about what He was saying, Jesus clarified His

teaching even more: "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore *breaks one of the least of these commandments*, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever *does and teaches them*, he shall be called *great* in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:18-19).

Whose commandments?

Sadly, some believe that the Old Testament is only of human origin—a collection of good and helpful ideas, but nonetheless humanly devised. Some also apply this thinking to the laws revealed in the Old Testament. Did Jesus Christ have anything to say about this notion?

Matthew 15 records a confrontation between Jesus Christ and a group of scribes and Pharisees. It is easy to read through this and miss a vital point in Christ's words. "Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress *the commandment of God* because of your tradition? For *God commanded*, saying, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death"' (verses 1-4).

Here Jesus quotes the Fifth Commandment, to honor one's parents, and Exodus 21:17, which directed that one who curses his father or mother was to be put to death for his insolence and rebellion. But did you notice how Jesus quoted it? He didn't say, "For *Moses* commanded . . ."—He said "*God* commanded" this. Three times in verses 3 through 6 He says that these are *God's* commandments, not the commandments of any man.

When we examine the words and actions of Jesus Christ and the apostles, we can only conclude with them that the Old Testament is the inspired Word of God, inspired by God Himself and written through human instruments. The writers of the New Testament believed and taught that it was valid in their time and gave no clue that it was abolished or annulled by Jesus Christ. They read the Old Testament Scriptures and applied them as God's divine instruction for all humanity for all time. *GN*

The Importance of the Old Testament

Why was the Old Testament so important to the writers of the New Testament, and why is it important to mankind today? Let's briefly summarize some of the things it reveals to us:

- It reveals God—that there is a Creator, that the world didn't just happen, and that He is in control over everything at all times (Genesis 1; Isaiah 46:9-10).

- It reveals that this God is a God of love who is deeply concerned about every person who has ever lived, and that He wants to share everything with all of humanity (Psalm 8:4-8; 86:5; 100:1-5).

- It reveals that God's love is defined by His laws—by the two great laws of "Love God with all your heart, soul and mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:29-31; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). The Ten Commandments, and the statutes and judgments based on those commandments, show us how to live God's way of love.

- It reveals that sin brings suffering—that when we sin, there is a penalty. And if an entire nation sins, it eventually will reap the results of those sins. On the other hand, if an individual or a nation repents of sin and asks God for forgiveness, He is ready and willing to forgive (Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Psalm 103:8-13).

- It reveals the plan of God—that there would be a Savior who would pay the death penalty for your sins and my sins; that this Savior, the Messiah, would establish the Kingdom of God on earth; and that there would be a resurrection of the dead to eternal life (Isaiah 53; Daniel 2:44; 7:27; 12:2-3; Job 14:14-15; Ezekiel 37).

- It reveals that there would be a new covenant under which God would give people the gift of His Spirit, which would remove our heart of stone and replace it with a heart that would love and obey God (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27).

- It reveals that humanity is created in God's image, created to be like Him and to share rulership with God over the entire universe (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:6, Hebrews 2:6-8).

These are some of the wonderful truths that the Old Testament reveals. It's no wonder that Satan has blinded the minds of people into thinking that it's obsolete, irrelevant or something that God had to discard because He had a better idea. The New Testament is built on the foundation of the Old. Together they form one complete story—the story of God's deep love for mankind and His plan for humanity.

—Scott Ashley

J U S T F O R Y O U T H

I used to live next door to a teenager who was crazy about cricket. He would often play for our village team. One day I asked him what he planned to do when he left school. "I'm going to play cricket for England," he said without a moment's hesitation.

I could not help but smile. There probably wasn't a boy his age in all of England then who didn't want to play cricket for his country!

I had the surprise of my life when, several years later, his father told us that Neil was indeed playing cricket for England; in fact, he was on a world tour at that very moment. Neil Fairbrother went on to win a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*. In May 1990 he made the highest score in cricket by an Englishman this century.

Elsewhere in Britain, 17-year-old David Chaplin was required to get in a week of real-life work experience as part

Success's Secret Ingredient

by Kae Tattersall

CAN WE ALL SUCCEED IN OUR GOALS OF FULFILLING OUR DREAMS? WHAT IS "SUCCESS" ANYWAY? HERE IS THE OVERALL KEY TO KEEP IN MIND THAT WILL BRING US REAL SUCCESS.

of his schooling. He decided to write to NASA in the United States to ask to work on a space shuttle. The result was that they invited him over to spend some time with the scientists, as well as tour the space center.

Oprah Winfrey has risen from being a tragically abused little girl to being one of the richest and most famous women in America. In an interview, she said: "If you're in it to make money, forget it. I am where I am not because money was ever, has ever, will ever be my motivation. If you want to accomplish the goals of your life," she said, "seek what is honorable, what is good."

This principle, "seek what is good," points out the critical factor—paradoxically, one ignored by almost everyone—that should be utmost in any goal-setting program we would follow, regardless of the many other principles we should apply.

To illustrate what can happen without that principle foremost in mind, the following story shows the amazing life of one of the most accomplished individuals who ever lived, and why his life, in spite of great success, actually held great tragedy. His downfall was even more tragic because he was one of the few people who knew to live by the universal principles that guarantee real success.

From the start, this man had it all. The son of the king of a prosperous country, he himself became king after his father died. He subsequently amassed tremendous wealth, making himself possibly the richest ruler of his time. He fulfilled a passion for constructing breathtaking gardens, parks and woodlands, as well as for building fabulous houses, which he stocked with works of art from far and wide, even from collections of the royal families of other countries.

Utilizing his great organizational ability, he instituted a major and spectacular development program for his capital city. His achievements became legendary, as did his understanding not only of the human condition but also of the physical world around him with its abundant animal and

plant life. As his remarkable expertise became internationally known, world leaders would come to consult with him.

When he considered his extraordinary life, however, how did he feel about it? Did he find satisfaction in the fame brought by his wonderful projects and his great reputation? "I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind" was what he concluded. You can read most of the story of his life, and its darker side, as he wrote it himself in the book of Ecclesiastes, 1:12 to 4:8.

This ruler was King Solomon, and in spite of all his costly and varied endeavors, he never found true, fulfilling success. Why? Because he sought pleasure, happiness and success his way: in materialism. He applied the principles that most of those who are considered successful apply.

However, Solomon ultimately went farther and farther into futility and despair because he overlooked one vital principle that can bring true success for all time. That all-important principle is *having constant contact with God*, acknowledging the Creator in all of your endeavors (Proverbs 3:5-6).

When diligently applied, this key principle provides a person with the very foundation of success—a solid base on which to build. To have and truly enjoy all that we aim for in our lives, we should start by being in contact with the One who provides all the things we want and need, and who, after all, is their very Source. We then can know we have the best possible motives for whatever we set our sights on.

Of course, we will pay a price in effort and commitment, but we have the assurance of a lifetime of divine guidance in rich, rewarding journeys toward reaching our goals. It's a lifestyle you can start living today.

Our booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* explains more about how to start on that path. You can write or call the address or phone number on page 2 for your free copy. GN

Reconciliation:

The Only Remedy for Painful Rejection

Someone has already walked before us on the painful path of life and its rejections, to make our walk one of harmony with our fellow man and our Creator.

by John Ross Schroeder

We were created to develop deep, long-lasting relationships with one another. When those bonds are severed we feel incomplete, isolated and without purpose.

But how does one begin the healing process? Human empathy can be very helpful and is often essential to positive progress. However, the one providing the empathy is sometimes limited in his or her capacity to completely understand and identify with the wounded spirit. A proverb says: “The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?” (Proverbs 18:14).

So who is the ultimate comforter and helper? Who can transcend mere human help and lift us out of our despair?

The truest consolation one can receive is to know there is a godly individual willing to help, One who Himself experienced ultimate rejection. Scripture shows He was “rejected by men” and “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” (Isaiah 53:3). He even knew what it was like to face rejection by His own people. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).

Knowledge of this “Man of sorrows”—unique among human beings—and the realization that He suffered the most brutal sort of rejection and successfully overcame it, brings us much closer to the healing we are seeking.

The great reconciliation

How can we reconstruct broken bonds and rebuild right relationships? How can we be reconciled to other men and women—and to our Creator?

Scripture tells us that God desires a relationship with us, “but your iniquities have separated you from your God” (Isaiah 59:2). In order to fulfill His great purpose, and to reconcile human beings to their Creator, the penalty for breaking God’s law had to be paid. Someone had to redeem humankind.

And the Being chosen to bring to pass this magnificent reconciliation experienced what it meant to be rejected—how it struck at the very core of one’s being. Enter Jesus Christ into the world.

Ironically, at perhaps the most dramatic moment

in human history—His crucifixion—Christ cried out to His Father, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46). This occurred at the very time when the gulf between God and man was about to be bridged. But because of what Jesus Christ represented for those few brief moments—the sins of all humanity—His Father had to turn His back on Him. He who did no sin became sin for all of us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Though He was familiar with the rejection of men, to that point He had always been fully at one with the Father. Of course, Christ was completely and totally restored and reconciled to the Father after His resurrection and ascension.

Clearly, the feelings of rejection Christ faced as a human being have been crucial in helping Him understand the rejection we human beings experience from time to time. As Hebrews 4:15 tells us, “We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Sin—biblically defined as “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, King James Version)—is often an intrinsic part of rejection and a major barrier to reconciliation and rebuilding right relationships. God Himself suffered because of our sins. Christ the Creator (Ephesians 3:9) took the sins of humanity on His shoulders. So we have a very merciful advocate in our Savior, “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Hebrews 5:2, KJV).

Reconciliation requires forgiveness. Men and women sin and fail; they despair and lose faith; yet somehow they must repent and be reconciled to their Creator. Only God can absolve this sin and remove our guilt and suffering. And this is possible only through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote that “God was in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Symbols of reconciliation

This forgiveness and reconciliation is depicted for us in Jesus Christ’s final hours with His disci-

In past ages only a tiny minority of human beings have been reconciled to God. Most have rejected Him, have been simply indifferent, or have failed to recognize Him. Even today only a relatively small minority have a true understanding of God’s plan of salvation.

ples, when He observed the Passover with them the night before His death.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The wine symbolized Christ’s blood, “shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). God forgives our sins through that shed blood, cleansing us so we may be reconciled to God (1 John 1:7).

The bread Jesus shared represented a new way of life based on a personal relationship with Him. “I am the bread of life . . . This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die . . . If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (John 6:48-51).

From resentment to reconciliation

But return for a moment to the human level. Although the Bible shows that the first and great commandment is to love God, the second one is to love our neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). Reconciliation to God goes together with reconciliation to other human beings (Matthew 6:15). The two go hand in hand. Yet sometimes we simultaneously bless God and curse men who are made in His likeness (James 3:9-10).

Rejection and resentment must be overcome! But only God through Jesus Christ can help us fully divest ourselves of its unfortunate fruits. That is the only way we can have the true reconciliation to our fellow men and women so essential for our well-being.

Such reconciliation, however, because we are flawed human beings, has a spiritual dimension: “Through Him [Jesus Christ] we . . . have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Ephesians 2:18). God’s Spirit helps heal serious breaches between human beings. It is the Spirit of reassurance and reconciliation. It is the Spirit of tolerance and cooperation. It is the Spirit of mutual acceptance.

Of course, realistically some relationship dilemmas will not be fully resolved in this

age of man. Complete reconciliation—of God to man and man to man—will have to wait until Jesus Christ’s reign on earth. For us now, however, Paul’s instruction is: “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18).

The ministry of reconciliation

In past ages only a tiny minority of human beings have been reconciled to God. Most have rejected Him, have been simply indifferent, or have failed to recognize Him. Even today only a relatively small minority have a true understanding of God’s plan of salvation. In the Bible they are called “the firstfruits.” But ultimately everyone will find the path of reconciliation to God. And most—all who allow themselves to be made willing—will walk down it. But the Creator will never take away our freedom of choice; He will never force salvation on us.

The apostle Paul understood that God is working out His marvelous plan a step at a time. Men and women will gradually become reconciled to God in increasing numbers as the scroll of time unfolds. With this wonderful understanding Paul wrote, “For it pleased the Father . . . to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him [Christ], whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:19-20). So the wonderful phenomenon of reconciliation also takes place on a plane of cosmic proportions.

For instance, Paul tells us that God “has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18, second part). This apostle also calls it “the word of reconciliation” (verse 19), aptly referring to Christians as “ambassadors for Christ” (verse 20).

This magnificent ministry has a strong personal aspect. Recognition, acceptance, encouragement, forgiveness and friendship are all important facets of reconciliation. We must always consider each other’s needs. This is the positive way of thinking that God requires. In such cases, when rejection comes, sometimes as a result of our own flaws and failings, the Christian will try to ease the pain. He or she will try to smooth the way to reconciliation.

The rewards for reconciliation are infinite! No human life is complete without it. Please write for our free booklets, *The Road to Eternal Life*, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. They explain how this reassuring reconciliation of God and man will come about. *GN*

The Ultimate Rejection

God Himself experienced painful rejection almost from the time of man’s creation. He made Adam and Eve in the deepest hope of a happy and successful relationship. They were created in His own image. He ardently wished for their total success. He wanted them to make the right choices that would lead them to the abundant life now—and eventually eternal life in His Kingdom. But they chose another way, as did their descendants.

Roughly 1,700 years after Adam and Eve, the vast majority of mankind had completely jumped the track. The jewel in the crown of God’s creation, the ones with whom He personally identified, those He had lovingly made in His own image, had overwhelmingly turned their back on Him.

How do you think our Creator felt at this critical juncture in human history? “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth and *He was grieved in His heart*” (Genesis 6:6). God felt the deepest of emotions toward His wayward sons and daughters. At the time of the flood He knew what it was like to experience loss and rejection.

Yet God continued to work with mankind. Later He started a great work with one man, Abraham, which continued through his progeny. Eventually these people grew into the nation of Israel. God nurtured Israel in the wilderness after delivering the nation from the cruelty of human bondage in ancient Egypt. But they never wholeheartedly responded.

Some 500 years passed, and little changed in the way of human nature. Humanity still could not seem to see what God wanted them to perceive. Once again He was rejected by His own nation. They wanted a human king instead. In great disappointment God told His prophet Samuel: “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say unto you; for they have not rejected you, *but they have rejected Me*, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7).

Throughout human history the nations have rejected God’s blessings for the empty shell of a way of life that has produced enormous pain and suffering, turning their backs on the One who alone could give them justice and peace.

—John Ross Schroeder

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King Solomon's Reign: Israel's Golden Years

by Mario Seiglie

In earlier issues *The Good News* has discussed various archaeological finds that illuminate and verify the biblical record. In this issue, we focus on the reign of Solomon, successor of David as king of Israel.

Once David had consolidated the Israelite empire, under the guidance of God he chose his son Solomon to be his successor. The reign of this young man became truly legendary. Under Solomon's rule Israel reached the pinnacle of wealth and power. Tragically, the glory of Solomon's kingdom barely outlasted his own lifetime.

What has archaeology revealed about King Solomon's reign in the 10th century B.C.? Remarkably, there is much evidence to corroborate the biblical account.

Unusual period of peace

What does the Bible say about the wider international condition during Solomon's time? God had told David: "Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon [meaning 'peaceful'], for I will give peace

and quietness to Israel in his days" (1 Chronicles 22:9, emphasis added throughout).

Was this a time of peace in Israel? What do the archaeological records show? From contemporary Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions, we find these once-powerful kingdoms afflicted by military weakness.

Assyria was occupied with constant battles against the Arameans. Internal strife over dynastic disputes further weakened the kingdom. "These Assyrian pre-occupations," states Donald Wiseman, professor of Assyriology, "left David and Solomon free to extend their own territory into south Syria. The intruders from the Syrian desert impoverished Assyria under the aged Ashurnasirpal I . . ." (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979, Vol. 1, p. 334). Meanwhile, the Assyrians held the Babylonians in check, blocking any Chaldean intrusion into Israelite territory.

On Israel's southern flank, the Egyptians were also experiencing a general decline. Commenting on the beginning of this long period of weakness, one authority observes: "After the empire [of the previous centuries], Egypt never regained her former dominance in the eastern Mediterranean world . . . In large part this foreign weakness arose from domestic weakness. Egypt kept breaking up into smaller states . . . From the time of Samuel to the fall of the kingdom of Israel, Egypt was normally in a state of divided weakness" (*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1962, Vol. 2, p. 52).

This international backdrop is faithfully reflected in the biblical account. In fact, the weak priestly dynasty ruling Egypt made great concessions to Solomon because of his increasing power and influence.

Opinion among scholars is divided over which pharaoh was Solomon's contemporary. Eugene Merrill believes it was Siamun. ". . . Siamun soon realized that Solomon was to be ruler of a kingdom which would rival or even exceed his own in power and influence. He therefore decided it was to his best advantage to cultivate amicable relations with the

What has archaeology revealed about King Solomon's reign in the 10th century B.C.? Remarkably, there is much evidence to corroborate the biblical account.



This aerial view of excavations at Hazor shows construction from Solomon's time. The same construction methods for the city gate were discovered at Hazor as at Megiddo and Gezer, confirming the account that Solomon constructed fortifications at these three cities (1 Kings 9:15).

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young monarch, even to the extent of recognizing him as an equal. That this is the case is clear from his willingness to provide his own daughter as a wife for Solomon, a concession almost without parallel in Egyptian history since it was a candid admission to the world of Egypt's weakness and conciliation. Normally Egyptian kings took foreign princesses but did not give up their own daughters to foreign kings" (*Kingdom of Priests*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1987, p. 292. Compare to David Rohl, *A Test of Time: The Bible—From Myth to History*, Arrow Books, London, 1996, pp. 173-185).

It is clear from the history of the neighboring countries that an unusual era of peace enveloped Israel, enabling Solomon to greatly develop and enrich his nation through many profitable commercial alliances.

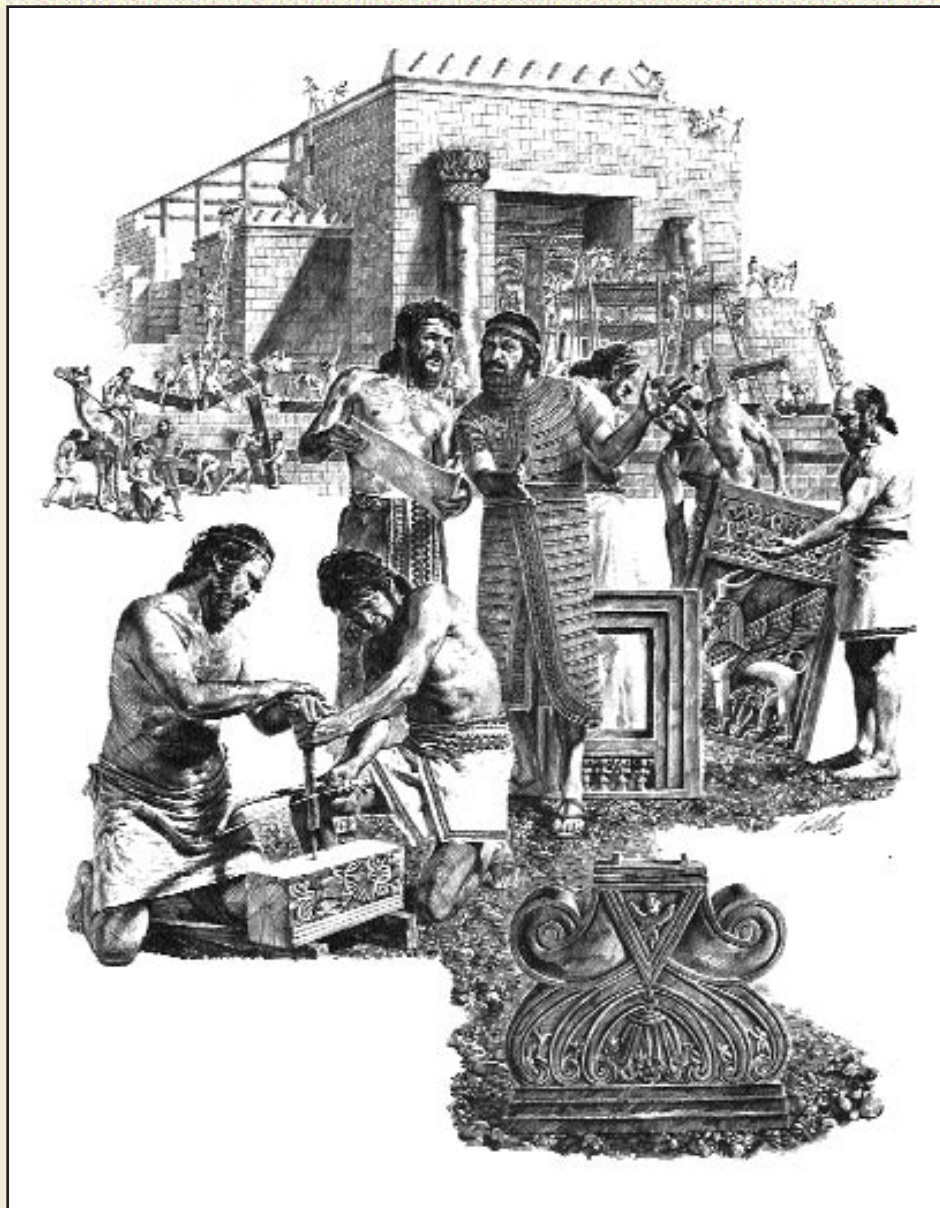
Prosperous alliance with Phoenicia

Not only did Solomon lack foreign enemies, he found a powerful ally in King Hiram, a faithful friend of his father, David.

"Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, because he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always loved David . . . So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty together" (1 Kings 5:1, 12).

Regarding this treaty, a thousand years later the Jewish historian Josephus noted that copies of this alliance could be read in the public archives in Tyre. "The copies of these epistles," writes Josephus, "remain at this day, and are preserved not only in our books, but among the Tyrians also; inasmuch that if any one would know the certainty about them, he may desire of the keepers of the public records of Tyre to shew him them, and he will find what is there set down to agree with what we have said" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book VIII, Chapter II, Section 7).

In Solomon's day, the Israelites were just beginning to clearly define their own culture. To initiate such vast projects as the temple (see G. Ernest Wright, "The Stevens' Reconstruction of the Solomonic Temple," *Biblical Archaeologist*, Vol. 18,



1955, pp. 41-44), fortified towns and maritime trade, Solomon could have found no more enterprising a people to help than the Phoenicians.

One author explains, "Solomon was a thoroughly progressive ruler. He had a flair for exploiting foreign brains and foreign skill and turning them to his own advantage. That was the secret, otherwise scarcely understandable, of how the [nation] . . . developed by leaps and bounds into a first class economic organism. Here also was to be found the secret of his wealth which the Bible emphasises. Solomon imported smelting technicians from Phoenicia. Hiram . . .

a craftsman from Tyre, was entrusted with the casting of the Temple furnishings (1 Kings 7:13, 14). In Ezion-Geber Solomon founded an important enterprise for overseas trade . . . The Phoenicians had behind them practical experience accumulated over many centuries. Solomon therefore sent to Tyre for specialists for his dockyards and sailors for his ships: 'And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea . . .' (1 Kings 9:27)" (Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*, Bantam, New York, 1980, pp. 211-212. On Ezion-Geber, see Gary D. Pratico, "Where Is Ezion-Geber?", *Biblical*

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Archaeology Review, September/October 1986, pp. 24-35; Alexander Flinder, "Is This Solomon's Seaport?", *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1989, pp. 31-42).

Archaeologists who have studied the remains of Solomon's time clearly see the Phoenician influence which the Bible, instead of hiding the facts, candidly admits. "Where the Israelites replaced Canaanite towns, the quality of housing was noticeably poorer," says *The New Bible Dictionary*, "though standards improved rapidly in the days of David and Solomon, partly through Phoenician influence. . . . The

Temple Mount is disputed between Arabs and Jews, no excavations are permitted in the immediate area where Solomon's temple existed. But the Bible mentions three other cities that Solomon expanded and fortified. Does any archaeological evidence support the biblical record?

The first city mentioned is Hazor, a northern Israelite habitation that was lost in time until a century ago. The first extensive excavations were done under the direction of archaeologist Yigael Yadin in the 1950s. He writes about Hazor, "What I'm about to say may sound like something out of a

Megiddo in 1993, archaeologists Israel Finkelstein and David Ussishkin report, "The grandeur of Solomon's Megiddo is clearly evident in the archaeological finds at Megiddo—in large palaces, with fine, smooth-faced ashlar masonry and in elaborate decorative stonework" ("Back to Megiddo," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 1994, p. 36).

Archaeologist Bryant Wood sums up the discoveries: "Probably the most famous of the architectural finds related to the kingdom period are the early tenth-century 'Solomonic gates' at Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer, built by David's son Solomon. . . ." ("Scholars Speak Out," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1995, p. 34). So the biblical account accords nicely with the archaeological evidence.

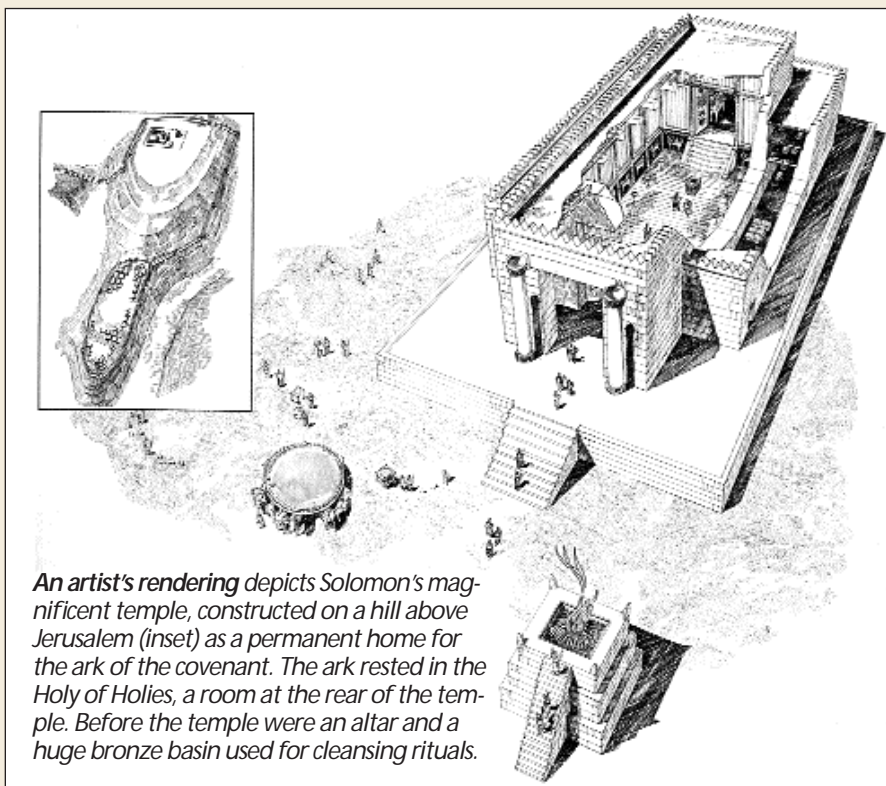
Enter the queen of Sheba

One of the most colorful accounts about Solomon is relegated to myth by some scholars. It concerns the visit of the queen of Sheba.

"Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain it to her. . . .

"Then she said to the king: 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. Happy are your men and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God. . . .' Then she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in great quantity, and precious stones. There never again came such abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon" (1 Kings 10:1-10).

This story has been the inspiration for many paintings and movies, but does it have



An artist's rendering depicts Solomon's magnificent temple, constructed on a hill above Jerusalem (inset) as a permanent home for the ark of the covenant. The ark rested in the Holy of Holies, a room at the rear of the temple. Before the temple were an altar and a huge bronze basin used for cleansing rituals.

commonest-type house. . . . has become known generally as the four-room house, which appears to be an original Israelite concept" (Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1982, p. 490).

Great construction projects

Throughout Israel, Solomon fortified the great cities: "And this is the reason for the labor force which King Solomon raised: to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer" (1 Kings 9:15).

Regarding Jerusalem, as long as the

detective story, but it's true. Our great guide was the Bible. As an archaeologist, I can't imagine anything more exciting than to work with the Bible in one hand and a spade in the other. This was the real secret of our discovery of the Solomonic period" (*Hazor*; Random House, New York, 1975, p. 187).

Yadin found the elaborate and sturdy main gate and part of the wall, which archaeologists now call the Solomonic style of architecture. Eventually, he found the same Solomonic-type gate in all three of the cities mentioned in the Bible.

In the most recent excavation of

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historical backing? Where was the kingdom of Sheba? Until this century, the sands of time very probably covered up much of this great kingdom of the past.

Yet it was well known by some of the classical Greek and Roman writers. "In happy Arabia," wrote Dionysius the Greek in A.D. 90, "you can always smell the sweet perfume of marvelous spices, whether it be incense or wonderful myrrh. Its inhabitants have great flocks of sheep in the meadows, and birds fly in from distant isles bringing leaves of pure cinnamon."

Another Greek historian, Diodorus (100 B.C.), writes: "These people surpass in riches and luxuries not only their Arab neighbors, but also the rest of the world. They drink out of cups made of gold and silver . . . The Sabaeans enjoy this luxury because they are convinced that riches which come from the earth are the favor of the gods and should be shown to others."

The Roman Emperor Augustus actually sent an army of 10,000 men to southern Arabia to plunder this wealth. But the withering desert and frequent plagues decimated the army before they could arrive in the capital. They never fulfilled their mission.

Scholars generally agree that the kingdom of Sheba is located in the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, now called Yemen. The area is quite isolated and desolate now, but this has not always been the case. "The most prominent of the Arab states . . . during the first half of the 1st millennium B.C.," comments *The New Bible Dictionary*, "Sheba was ruled by mukarribs, priest-kings, who supervised both the political affairs and the polytheistic worship of the sun, moon and star gods. Explorations [in 1950-1953] . . . found some outstanding examples of Sabean art and architecture, especially the temple of the moon-god at Marib, the capital, which dates from the 7th century B.C. . . ." (p. 1087).

Until this century, this area of Yemen was largely off-limits to archaeologists. Now, up to 4,000 inscriptions of this ancient kingdom have come to light, confirming that one of the four nations in the area was called Sheba and that the population of at least one of its cities totaled a million.

This part of the world was not always

dry and barren. It once had abundant water which irrigated the precious spice crops. The two most popular spices grown were frankincense (a resin of incense) and myrrh. The fragrant perfume of frankincense was used in temples and homes of the rich to ask favors from the gods. Myrrh was an indispensable oil used as a beauty aid to keep the skin smooth and soft, and was also used to embalm the dead. The Magi gave these two valuable spices to the infant Jesus as gifts fit for a newborn king (Matthew 2:11).

The evidence of abundant water in Sheba comes from the remains of a huge dam found in the area, and explains how it could be called "Happy Arabia" by the ancients.

"A gigantic dam blocked the river Adhanat in Sheba," writes Dr. Keller, "collecting the rainfall from a wide area. The water was then led off in canals for irrigation purposes, which was what gave the land its fertility. Remains of this technical marvel in the shape of walls over 60 feet high still defy the sand-dunes of the desert. Just as Holland is in modern times the Land of Tulips, so Sheba was then the Land of Spices, one vast fairy-like scented garden of the costliest spices in the world. In the midst of it lay the capital, which was called Marib. That was until 542 B.C.—then the dam burst. The importunate desert crept over the fertile lands and destroyed them" (*The Bible As History*, p. 225). This is the present state of most of the country.



Solomon's territories stretched from the Red Sea in the south to the Euphrates River in the north. It encompassed most of modern Israel and parts of present-day Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

It has lost much of its fertility due to lack of water.

There is much to explore in this area of ancient Sheba, and it is still a dangerous place to go, but much scientific progress has been made. Investigations continue up to the present time. What the famed archaeologist W.F. Albright remarked about these excavations in 1953 still holds true: "They are in process of revolutionizing our knowledge of Southern Arabia's cultural history and chronology. Up to now the results to hand demonstrate the political and cultural primacy of Sheba in the first centuries after 1000 B.C." (Keller, p. 227).

As time goes by, more archaeological evidence continues to indicate that Solomon's reign was actually as magnificent as the Bible faithfully records. **GN**



Solomon

by Jerold Aust

"Divide the baby with a sword, and let the matter be settled." As the king's shocking words echoed throughout his chambers, those who heard his decision were stunned.

It was a heartrending scene: Two women stood before King Solomon, each claiming to be the mother of the same baby boy. The first mother told of how she and the second woman had each given birth to a son, three days apart. Her son was born first. The second mother accidentally laid on her son while they slept, and he died. Discovering that her son was dead, the second mother switched the babies, placing her dead son beside the first mother—asleep at the time—and taking the first mother's living son to her bed.

When the first mother arose in the morning to nurse her son, she found the boy dead—but on closer examination discovered it was the other mother's child. She knew her son was in the arms of the second mother. Now, standing anxiously before the king, she hoped that he would somehow perceive she was the one telling the truth so she could be reunited with her baby.

Solomon issued his verdict: "Bring me a sword. Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other" (1 Kings 3:24-25). The two mothers' reactions were worlds apart. The first mother pleaded with the king: "O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!" But the second mother's words

were chilling: "Let him be neither mine nor yours, but divide him" (verse 26).

Their reactions told the king all he needed to know. "Give the first woman the living child," he ordered, "and by no means kill him; she is his mother" (verse 27).

The source of Solomon's wisdom

All Israel heard of Solomon's discernment in this case, a judgment that amply demonstrated his great wisdom. "... And they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice" (verse 28).

The story of how Solomon became so wise and the lessons from his life deserve our undivided attention.

Shortly after he ascended to the throne, Solomon married the daughter of the ruler of Egypt (1 Kings 3:1). Although a politically astute move, this was not a wise decision according to God's standards since He knew full well that foreigners, steeped as they were in their idolatrous ways, could drive a wedge between His chosen nation and Him by causing them to depart from the true religion. This act foreshadowed the greatest singular weakness of the otherwise wise king.

The history of the kings tells the whole story—both good and bad. Remember, much that was said is good. "And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David . . ." (1 Kings 3:3). God was pleased with the new king's attitude, and appeared to him in a dream: "Ask!

What shall I give you?" (verse 5).

Solomon's answer said much about the man: "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (verses 7-9).

Blessings for a new king

God was pleased with Solomon's response—that he had asked for the ability to govern wisely and so to properly serve His people. Just as we would do well to remember Solomon's reply to God, we should also remember God's reply to Solomon:

"Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, *I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days*" (verses 11-13, emphasis added throughout).

These gifts from God required something: Solomon's resolute obedience to Him. "So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen [prolong] your days" (verse 14). God's offer was conditional: Solomon must not turn from His laws.

God kept His part of the covenant. "And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For *he was wiser than all men . . .*; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations . . . And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon" (1 Kings 4:29-31, 34).

Even the queen of Sheba investigated Solomon's wisdom. She came to Jerusalem to test him with difficult questions. "So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain it to her" (1 Kings 10:3).

She ended her scrutiny of him with these remarkable words: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; . . . Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard" (verses 6-7). Other leaders discovered what the queen of Sheba witnessed firsthand: "And all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart" (verse 24).

Solomon's good acts

For many years, Solomon fulfilled his part of the covenant. He walked in God's



The two mothers' reactions were worlds apart. The first mother pleaded with Solomon: "O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!"

ways, and God blessed him greatly.

During Solomon's prosperous days of wisdom and wealth, he determined to build the temple for God which his father David had hoped to build earlier. This was an expansive and expensive undertaking. God gave Solomon peace with King Hiram of Lebanon, and Hiram supplied Solomon with a seemingly endless supply of cedar and cypress logs (1 Kings 5:10).

Further, Solomon sent "seventy thou-

sand [men to Lebanon] who carried burdens, and eighty thousand who quarried stone in the mountains, besides three thousand three hundred from the chiefs of Solomon's deputies, who supervised the people who labored in the work . . . So Solomon's builders, Hiram's builders, and the Gebalites quarried them; and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple" (1 Kings 5:15-18).

The furnishings for the temple were

King Solomon and the Bible

Solomon left us with many proverbs (Proverbs 1-29), the book of Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. Of course, not all of his writings found their way into the Bible. But a careful reading of these preserved books provides the reader with both human and divine wisdom.

For example, the Song of Solomon was written by Solomon himself (Song of Solomon 1:1), as many scholars agree. He is specifically mentioned seven times in the book and is identified as the groom. The internal evidence, including descriptions of royal luxury and rich imported goods (Song of Solomon 3:6-11), indicates that King Solomon was the author.

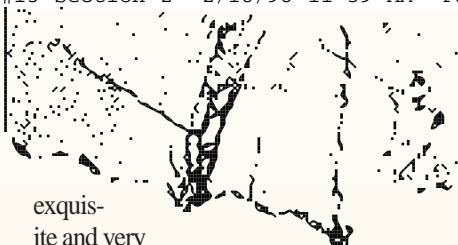
Ecclesiastes was also written by Solomon. The author calls himself "the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Ecclesiastes 1:1, 12). The explorations of pleasure, the impressive accom-

plishments and the unparalleled wealth described in Ecclesiastes 2:1-10 can only be attributed to King Solomon.

Solomon was also responsible for 29 chapters of the book of Proverbs, which constitute both human and divine wisdom. Many men and women have quoted them directly or created variations based on them. Perhaps you have heard the saying, "It is better for a man to keep his mouth shut and have people think he's a fool, than to open it and remove all doubt." This saying has been ascribed to both Abraham Lincoln and Mark Twain. Yet in principle Solomon preceded these words by some 3,000 years when he wrote, "Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive" (Proverbs 17:28).

Solomon's words have been quoted for nearly 3,000 years.

—Jerold Aust



exquisite and very costly (1 Kings 7). Solomon had the priests bring up the ark of God, and “the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:1-11). On the day of dedication, Solomon offered 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep as peace offerings to God (verse 63). God then reiterated the Davidic covenant before King Solomon (1 Kings 9). It was a reminder for Solomon to remain loyal and faithful to God and His laws.

Solomon’s wealth was greatly increased (1 Kings 10). As some Bible resources point out, the 666 talents of gold Solomon received each year (verse 14) was worth well over \$700 million by today’s standards. “Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones” (verses 26-27).

Additionally Solomon took 13 years to build his own palace (1 Kings 7:1). It was a time of unprecedented wealth and unparalleled prosperity for the kingdom of Israel. True to His word, God had blessed Solomon with great abundance because he had honored Him.

But the king eventually showed a weakness that caused him to turn from the great God who blessed him. His wealth became so great, his fame so widespread, that he lost his focus. He became more and more attached to his physical surroundings, more dependent on his wealth, and more attentive to his many wives than he was to God.

Solomon’s heart turned away

King Solomon loved many foreign

women, taking them as his wives. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines, “*and his wives turned away his heart*” (1 Kings 11:3). Sadly, Solomon knew better. God had warned Israel not to intermarry with foreigners, for “surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods” (verse 2). Solomon’s weakness for women would be his downfall. God is no respecter of persons—even kings (Acts 10:34).

Earlier Solomon had disregarded God’s instruction when he had married the Egyptian Pharaoh’s daughter. His small problems were to grow into very large problems that would lead to his downfall.

“For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods” (1 Kings 11:4-8).

God became angry with Solomon for disobeying His commands and “because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded” (verses 9-10).

God declared that He would surely tear the kingdom away from Solomon and give it to one of his servants (verse 11). Solomon’s sins would lead to his kingdom being

divided into the two separate kingdoms of Israel and Judah (verses 26-40).

A ruler’s downfall

God’s Word is honest with its heroes. Solomon left quite a legacy for a man who—in his old age—departed from God. But God didn’t blot out his writings or example, both good and bad. The man who had so much lacked one crucial ingredient: the will and character to *do* what he knew was right. As Jesus Christ said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

God warned that when human beings are blessed, they should not forget who provides such blessings (Deuteronomy 8:11-20). Solomon did. He forgot God’s laws, especially those that dealt with marriage. His many wives turned his heart away from God. Both Solomon and his nation eventually suffered for his backsliding attitude.

However, we may take some solace from the fact that the last book of the Jewish version of the Old Testament, 2 Chronicles, does not repeat the account of Solomon’s serious mistakes toward the end of his life. The two books of Chronicles were written after Samuel and Kings, and they were used by the chronicler both as inspired sources and historical references.

In the nine chapters of 2 Chronicles that cover Solomon’s 40-year rule, hardly a negative word is written about him. The chronicler highlighted the positive aspects of both David’s (1 Chronicles) and Solomon’s governmental administrations as prototypes of the biblical ideal. Nothing was ever done with regard to the writing of the Bible without good reason. We also do well to remember that God is the ultimate Judge of Solomon, not we human beings. *GN*

Lessons From Solomon’s Life

King Solomon and his immensely wealthy kingdom depict God’s perfect wisdom, His blessings, and His incomparably rich, spiritual Kingdom.

Solomon was a great king, but Jesus Christ is the *King of kings*. Solomon’s kingdom was an earthly manifestation of great blessings and prosperity. Christ’s coming Kingdom is the ultimate manifestation of peace and prosperity.

This king wrote the Song of Solomon, depicting the love a man should have for his wife. Jesus Christ gave His overwhelming love and respect for His betrothed wife, the Church (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7, 9).

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon looked back on his life from a philosophical perspective. He portrayed the

physical blessings from God which he learned cannot compare to God’s spiritual treasures. Among other lessons in this book, we see man’s susceptibility to materialism, and a warning that mankind should never forget his Creator (Ecclesiastes 12).

He concluded: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (verses 13-14).

There is one “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42) destined to come again and establish a great kingdom. Through Christ humankind will be able to enjoy and practice the holy wisdom and knowledge of Almighty God (Isaiah 11:9).

—Jerald Aust

Rescue Plan

Continued from page 16

with other Arab nations, again prove a major threat to the peace and security of the free world?

The Asian economic meltdown that began last year also gives increasing cause for concern. How will that crisis, as it continues to gather momentum, affect other nations of the free world?

The risk of nuclear proliferation and such weapons falling into the wrong hands has increased rather than diminished. The environment suffers under the insult of human exploitation. At times it seems as though even nature is striking back with punishing climate changes. Neither should we exclude unforeseen calamities such as earthquakes and volcanic activity, which also play a part in Bible prophecy (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:12-17; 16:18).

The point is that we live in a volatile, fast-moving global community and world economy in which unforeseen developments can quickly arise along a broad front. The crust of civilization and civilized values can be fragile and all-too-easily broken.

What lies ahead: the biblical view

The Marshall Plan was exemplary and successful. It rescued Western Europe from disaster. America's quest to continue and complete Marshall's vision based on peace, prosperity and freedom is also exemplary. Yet, from the perspective of the Bible, a different view emerges. As Mrs. Albright observed, "evil unopposed will spawn more evil."

The Bible reveals that the world will once again be overwhelmed by great evil as it was in Secretary Marshall's generation. However, this time it will be on such a scale that no *human* resources will be able to successfully stand against it. When that time comes, predicts the Bible, a source of good will be there to intervene and deliver mankind.

Matthew 24 outlines the disturbing picture of a world at the brink of disaster in which life teeters on the edge of oblivion. "It will be a time of great distress; there has never been such a time from the beginning of the world until now, and *will never be again*. If that time of troubles were not cut short, *no living thing could survive*; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short" (Matthew 24:21-22, New English Bible, emphasis added).

Only the intervention of the returning Jesus Christ will save humanity from destroying itself. Only under His leadership will the vision of a global community fully at peace and sharing an alliance of enduring values and universal prosperity be fully developed. We can be thankful that *God has a rescue plan* that will pale even George Marshall's remarkable effort into relative insignificance.

A shifting and terrifying world scene

Elsewhere in the Bible, the book of Revelation has much to say about a coming short-lived superpower, a union of church and state whose actions will stagger the

The Bible predicts the eventual outcome of unrestrained human nature goaded by unseen spiritual forces. It describes spiritual problems on a scale no human leadership, government or alliances can control.

world (Revelation 13, 17).

According to this prophesied scenario, war, not peace, will engulf the world. How ironic that the very entity that has served as a cornerstone of American policy for the past 50 years—a politically, economically and militarily powerful Europe—may well play an integral part in this scenario.

As hard as it may be to imagine, this coming time of trouble will be worse than anything ever seen before (Matthew 24:21) and will lead directly to the triumphant return of Jesus Christ to earth (Revelation 17:14).

In fact, more than one of the Bible's major predictions indicates that a violent military confrontation will engulf the world powers (Joel 3:9-11; Revelation 9:15-18; 16:14). This is pictured as occurring at "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Daniel 12:1) and finds its geographical focus in the Middle East (Daniel 11:41-45; Zechariah 14:1-4).

Where do we go from here?

We should not forget the factors that make any nation strong. God tells us that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). God's law, which the Bible details, describes *universal* moral values. They exalt any nation that upholds them. Any *individual* who upholds them will also flourish and be fruitful (Psalm 1:1-3; 92:12; Proverbs 11:28, 30-31; 12:12).

Mrs. Albright concluded her speech by

asking what kind of world will result from the next generation of American leadership. Such a world will be the product of the judgments and choices made. She claimed that no "certain road map to success" exists. Morally speaking, however, such a road map does exist, and it is both authoritative and certain. The Bible guarantees success for individuals and nations who uphold its principles.

As we contemplate the 50th anniversary of a remarkable man's visionary plan that saved a continent, let us be thankful for such people and for the continuing efforts of well-meaning nations and leaders. But let us also contemplate the limits of human

leadership. Let us not delude ourselves with well-meaning rhetoric that fails to address the fundamental spiritual problems that threaten to overwhelm us.

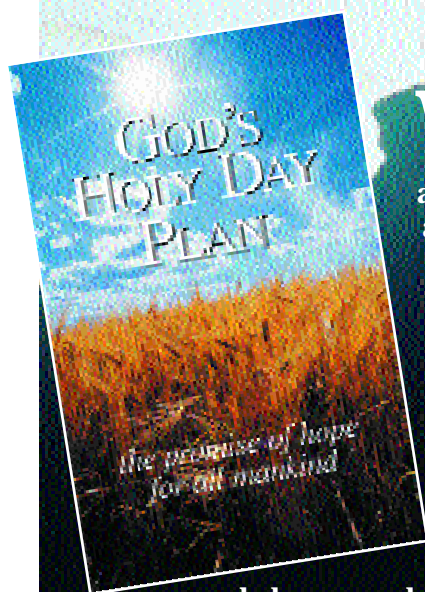
Political action can go only so far. The Bible predicts the eventual outcome of unrestrained human nature goaded by unseen spiritual forces (Revelation 12:9-17). It describes spiritual problems on a scale no human leadership, government or alliances can control. Only the returning Jesus Christ can remove such malign spiritual influence and oversee a new world in which human nature will be permanently changed for the better.

Continue reading future issues of *The Good News*, which will explore contemporary issues from the perspective of God's inspired Word, the Bible. It alone comprises a "certain road map to success" and contains true and reliable principles upon which we may base our lives. *GN*

RECOMMENDED READING

Where is this world headed? Why is it in this condition? Although the answers have been available to man for thousands of years, few have understood them. You can discover the answers for yourself in the free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Just contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 of this issue.

Does God Have a Plan for Humanity?



Why does humanity exist? Is there a purpose for human life, or are we only the result of some evolutionary process, the product of a series of cosmic accidents?

What is the fate of humanity? Are we destined to kill ourselves off through warfare, environmental destruction or epidemics? Or will we see a future utopia of peace and prosperity for all? Is it possible to know what the future holds for us?

The Creator of mankind does have a plan for us, and He reveals it to us through an annual cycle of festivals described in the Scriptures. It is an astounding plan offering an incredible future to every man, woman and child who has ever lived.

God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind will help you understand the incredible truth about what lies ahead for all humanity.

Write for your free copy at the office in your country (or the country nearest you) inside the front cover of this issue.

United Church of God
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Why Should Christians Keep the Passover?

*Do you really know why Jesus had to suffer and die?
What should the Passover mean for Christians today?*

by Allen Stout

Only 3½ years after He began His ministry, Jesus of Nazareth was apprehended by the religious authorities at the time of the Passover feast (Matthew 26:2; Mark 14:1).

After a brief trial—while mocking Him, spitting on Him and beating Him—they took Him before the Roman authorities and accused Him of “perverting the nation, . . . saying that He Himself is Christ, a King” (Luke 23:2; Matthew 26:59-68).

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Jerusalem, after analyzing the charges, declared to the chief priests and the others present: “You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man . . . ; no, neither did Herod . . . I will therefore chastise Him and release Him” (Luke 23:14-16).

But the people would have none of it. They cried out, “Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas [a murderer]” (verse 18).

Pilate found himself in a difficult position. Wanting to release a man he knew to be innocent, he urged Jesus’ captors to reconsider. He was answered with angry shouts of “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” (verse 21).

Pilate tried to reason with the crowd. “Why, what evil has He done?” he asked. But the mob was insistent, demanding that Jesus be put to death. The priests and the crowd prevailed. The Roman governor freed a murderer and sentenced an innocent man to death (verses 19-25).

Jesus was mercilessly beaten and scourged by the Roman soldiers and subjected to a horrible death.

But why? Why did Jesus Christ have to die?

Meaning of the Passover

Many Christians have been taught that the

Passover is an outdated “Jewish” observance done away with at Jesus’ death and replaced by Easter, the commemoration of His resurrection.

But why did Jesus Christ keep the Passover? Is there a connection between the Passover and Christ’s death? What does the Bible teach us about this most important observance kept by Jesus and the apostles?

In ancient Israel the first Passover was a time of deliverance, the rescuing of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The blood of the Passover lamb was smeared on the doorposts of the residences of those Israelites who put their trust in God, and He promised to deliver them from harm (Exodus 12:13, 23). The Israelites were spared while the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain.

God ordained the Passover as a commanded feast: “So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance” (verse 14).

Much later, during the time of Christ, the observance of the New Testament Passover was revealed as the first step toward salvation. It reminds Christians not only of how God delivered ancient Israel out of Egypt, but, more important, of our deliverance out of sin today. “We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be *enslaved to sin*” (Romans 6:6, New Revised Standard Version, emphasis added throughout).

The Passover is the first of the annual festivals commanded by God (Leviticus 23:5). Jesus knew this and kept the Passover with His disciples (Luke 22), showing that this is not a command to be taken lightly.

During His final Passover with His disciples, Jesus Christ introduced new symbols, which

Why did Jesus Christ keep the Passover? Is there a connection between the Passover and Christ’s death? What does the Bible teach us about this most important observance kept by Jesus and the apostles?

In This Section . . .

Why Should Christians Keep the Passover?
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A Lesson for All Time
What should we learn from Christ’s actions the night before He died?

Is God’s Law Bondage?
Did God deliver ancient Israel from slavery only to enslave them again?

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commemorate Him as “our Passover, [who] was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus said, after He had broken the unleavened bread and given it to His disciples, “This is My body which is given for you; *do this in remembrance of Me*” (Luke 22:19).

The Passover is an annual reminder that, through Christ’s sacrifice, we have been set free from slavery to sin so we can serve God in righteousness (Romans 6:1-22).

Sacrifice for sin

But why was Jesus sacrificed for us?

All human beings are in slavery to corruption and death caused by sin (Romans 6:16; 8:21; Hebrews 2:14-15), “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). And the Bible says, “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

What frees us from this bondage to sin? The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God! God the Father willingly gave up His firstborn Son, and Jesus willingly poured out His life’s blood.

Why? Why couldn’t God just forgive our sins without a sacrifice? Why did Jesus Christ have to suffer and die for our sins (Philippians 2:8)?

The truth is that there is *no other way* to save humanity from the consequences of sin!

God will not compromise with His perfect law (Matthew 5:17-20; 19:17; Psalm 19:7). All of God’s commands are summed up in the law of love: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-40).

As the apostle Paul wrote, “Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10). God’s law would, if observed, produce and maintain a peaceful, abundant and joyful society (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 6:1-2; 28:1-14; Galatians 3:21). Tragically, no human (other than Jesus Christ) has kept God’s law perfectly. All have broken it by sinning (1 John 3:4).

The Bible likens sin to leaven: If sin is not removed, it grows and spreads (1 Corinthians 5:6). The whole world suffers the curse of sin. Wars, famine, disease, oppression, crime, poverty, family problems, emotional disturbances and

every type of evil result from sin, the breaking of God’s law (Leviticus 26:14-39; Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

The ultimate result of sin is death. “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), just as God in His love warned the first man, Adam (Genesis 2:17).

Why Christ’s sacrifice was necessary

God’s way of redeeming humanity—all



In ancient Israel the first Passover was a time of deliverance. The blood of the Passover lamb was smeared on the doorposts of the residences of those Israelites who put their trust in God, and He promised to deliver them from harm.

of us—from the death penalty without compromising His perfect law is for the penalty to be paid in our place by the Son of God.

Why? Because “truly, no ransom avails for one’s life, there is no price one can give to God for it. For the ransom of life is costly, and can never suffice that one should live on forever and never see the grave” (Psalm 49:7-9, NRSV). And that applies to us all, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10, 12, 23).

Our partaking of—participating in—Christ’s sacrifice makes possible our reconciliation to God, setting us on the road to eternal life. “. . . God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us . . . When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, . . . through whom we have now received the

reconciliation” (Romans 5:8, 10-11).

Our sins separated us from God, because through sin we lived hostile to God and His ways (Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 3:10-12; 8:7). As sinners we had the death penalty hanging over us. We fell under that penalty for breaking God’s law (Romans 3:9, 19-20).

But, because Jesus Christ’s sacrifice paid the death penalty for our sins, God “passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate . . . His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (verses 24-26).

Except for Jesus Christ, no man or woman has ever lived without sinning. But notice these encouraging words in the Bible: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We read that the wages of sin is death, “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23, King James Version).

What must we do?

Does Jesus Christ’s death, then, save us? Let’s see what the Word of God—the Bible—says.

If Jesus paid the penalty for our sin by His crucifixion, what must we do to receive God’s gift

of eternal life? Notice Acts 2:38: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Though “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8), His sacrifice does not redeem us from the death penalty *until* we have repented of breaking God’s law, turned from sin and accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master. Then what happens?

Notice Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the [lusts of the] flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

We no longer seek to go our own way, but are led by the Spirit of God (verses 2-16; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16), building our relationship with God and Christ through prayer and study of God’s Word

(Ephesians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:15).

When we embark on this new way of life, following Christ's example as shown in the Bible, we are then saved by His life in us (Romans 5:10; Galatians 2:20). Gradually God begins to write His law of love (Romans 13:8-10) in our hearts and minds (Hebrews 10:16). We become transformed by taking on the thoughts of God (Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:5).

With the help of God's Spirit we can obey God's law, submit to Him and overcome sin. Sin is no longer in control over us. We become servants of God rather than the servants of sin (Romans 6:12-16). Keeping the Passover brings these great truths into sharp focus.

Will we follow Jesus' example?

Jesus Christ observed the Passover. The Bible makes this clear in many passages (Matthew 26:2, 17-19; Luke 2:41-42; 22:1, 7-20; John 2:13, 23; 13:1-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). His words and actions at His last Passover provide us profound lessons about our relationships with Him and our fellow human beings.

"Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed" (Luke 22:7). According to God's instructions, a new day begins with the evening (Genesis 1:5), not at midnight.

Jesus Christ and His disciples assembled that evening in a large upper room. "And supper being ended . . . [Jesus] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, and took a towel . . . and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel . . ." (John 13:2, 4-5).

Assuming the role of a servant, Jesus washed His disciples' feet and said to them: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For *I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you* . . . If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:14-15, 17).

Jesus carried out this humble act of service to show His disciples that His true followers must be led by a giving, serving attitude. He tells us all by implication to follow His example (see "A Lesson for All Time," p. E4).

On that same evening Jesus "took

bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is [or 'means,' James Moffatt Translation; i.e., 'represents'] My body which is given for you; *do this in remembrance of Me*'" (Luke 22:19).

He also "took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is [represents] My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission



We are to examine our own hearts before we take the Passover symbols. We are to ask ourselves some searching questions about our intentions toward God and our fellow human beings.

of sins'" (Matthew 26:27-28).

A lasting memorial

The Bible makes it clear that all who will follow Christ should observe this New Testament Passover in remembrance of His love and sacrifice for our sins and as a reminder of our commitment to Him for what God has done in our lives (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; Luke 22:19; 14:21-24).

We are to avoid observing the Passover in an "unworthy" manner, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:26-27).

Many readers of this scripture have not comprehended the significance of Paul's warning. Some, incorrectly feeling they

were not worthy of Christ's sacrifice, have elected not to take the Passover. Others have taken the Passover in attitudes ranging from casual to ritualistic to superstitious. Nothing is magical about the unleavened bread and the wine Jesus used; they were simply symbols to remind us of His sacrifice for our sin.

Self-examination necessary

We are to take the Passover in a worthy manner, but what exactly does that mean?

Paul warned, "But let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

In a later letter, Paul wrote: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5, KJV).

We are to examine our own hearts before we take the Passover symbols of bread and wine. We are to ask ourselves some searching questions about our intentions toward God and our fellow human beings. Do we show humility and service to others? Do we honor God in our everyday lives?

Just what should your attitude be toward the world, toward God and His laws and toward others?

"Do not love the world or the things of the world," the apostle John wrote. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

As long as we live in "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4, KJV), which is under Satan's influence (Ephesians 2:1-3), we will be tempted to break God's law. We are tempted through our own desires (James 1:14) to cheat, lie, boast, swear, gossip, hate, commit adultery and put other things before God (Matthew 5:27-28; Galatians 5:19-21).

Each of us, even though called, repentant and forgiven, will fall down and sin. But, as long as we are genuinely repentant, striving to overcome sin, "we have an

Continued on page E16

A Lesson for All Time

By His powerful example Jesus Christ taught His disciples many vital lessons. Yet the sterling example shown to them less than a day before His death is one of the least understood and most neglected by those who claim to follow Him.

by Scott Ashley

The disciples were puzzled. They had seen and heard much that was unconventional from their Master and Teacher, and on this night His actions seemed even more unusual.

The Passover, one of Israel's great feasts and a time of joyous celebration, was at hand. Yet Jesus was uncharacteristically subdued. That was peculiar in itself, but now, during their meal, He rose, took a pitcher and a large bowl and began going from disciple to disciple washing each one's feet!

What did this mean? Was this another of those puzzling occurrences that the disciples had often witnessed, unable to fully grasp what their Master was trying to teach them? Why, on this night of celebration, was He saying and doing these peculiar things? What did it all mean?

The ordinance of humility

On the night before His death Christ introduced a custom that would teach His disciples a crucially important lesson. The question for us is whether it is still relevant for Christians today. That lesson was taught through the simple act of foot-washing, the humble act of Jesus Christ as He observed the Passover with His disciples during the last night before His death. They did not understand His instruction then, but they later came to see that Christ's actions that evening were to teach them some profound principles.

What are we to learn from the events of this night? What is the significance of Christ's example?

John 13 describes the setting. "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him" (verses 1-5, New International Version throughout).

We see in these verses the motivation for Christ's actions that evening: He "knew that the Father had put

all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God." Because of this, Jesus did what He did as a lesson for His followers for all time. He knew that He would die within 24 hours. He knew these were His last hours in human form with His disciples.

What lesson did He want to be sure they remembered? What did He want to leave them with?

Foot-washing: a menial task

Let's consider the significance of Christ's actions. What was the point He was trying to make? We live under different circumstances today, so it's more difficult for us to relate to those events. Placing ourselves in the culture of that time helps us better understand.

In first-century Judea, people wore open sandals rather than shoes as we usually do. They didn't travel in cars or buses. They walked everywhere, usually on dusty paths and dirt roads. When it rained, they walked through mud. They didn't have concrete or brick walkways like most cities have today; few areas of the cities could afford stone paving. Most people simply didn't take a bath or a shower every day; daily bathing was a luxury for the wealthy and prosperous. Feet became downright dirty under those conditions.

We may not often consider the fact that Jesus Christ and the disciples usually had dirty feet, but they did. If you or I walked everywhere on dirt roads while wearing sandals, our feet would be quite dirty too.

Whenever guests were invited to a home, the lowest household slave or servant was given the basest job—which was bathing the feet of guests. The washing of feet was not an enviable task. It was a demeaning chore, reserved for the servant with the lowest status. The Gospels refer to this custom in John 1:27 and Luke 7:44-46.

On this particular evening, since Jesus was playing host to a private meal, no servants were present to handle the menial task of removing sandals and washing the feet of the guests.

The disciples' attitudes

Although all four Gospels record events of this evening, none records any of the disciples volunteering to do this task. That would have been admitting inferiority to the others. Luke 22:24 adds an interesting detail about that same evening: "Also a dispute arose among [the disciples] as to which of them was

On the night before His death Christ introduced a custom that would teach His disciples a crucially important lesson. The question for us is whether it is still relevant for Christians today.

considered to be greatest.”

Rather than considering how they could best serve each other and make the evening more pleasant for the others, the disciples’ minds were focused on “which of them was considered to be greatest,” to the point that an argument broke out and angry words were exchanged as the men jockeyed for position within the small group.

It isn’t clear exactly when on that night this contention arose. Did their controversy prompt Jesus to quietly rise, pour water and, like a common slave, begin washing their feet one by one? That certainly would have quelled the argument! Or did this quarrel take place after Jesus had already washed their feet—demonstrating just how little the lesson had sunk in?

We don’t know for sure. But what is clear is Jesus’ quiet rebuke: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them . . . But *you are not to be like that*. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules *like the one who serves*” (verses 25-26, emphasis added throughout).

Peter the impetuous

One of the disciples did understand at least some of the lesson Christ was trying to teach them. When Jesus knelt to wash Peter’s feet, Peter blurted out, “Lord, are you going to wash *my* feet?”

Jesus responded, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” He knew the disciples still had much to learn, that they couldn’t at that time understand the deep spiritual lesson He was trying to impress on them.

But that didn’t satisfy Peter. “No, *you* shall never wash *my* feet,” he said (John 13:6-8). Peter realized that Jesus was deliberately degrading Himself by His actions, assuming the role of the basest of slaves. But Peter still didn’t understand the larger lesson, that those who follow Christ have to have the attitude of a servant.

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (verse 8). There is another lesson given here as well—that *we must be washed by Jesus Christ* to have eternal life in God’s Kingdom with Him. We are made clean by Christ’s sacrifice as pictured by the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:12-14), and if we have faith in that sacrifice and allow Him to live again within us (Galatians 2:20), He will share eternal life with us (1 John 5:11-13).

But Peter didn’t grasp any of this. He thought of it strictly in terms of physical washing, so he asked Christ to wash even

more of him. “‘Then, Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!’ Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.’ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean” (John 13:9-11).

Christ simplifies the lesson

Seeing that they still didn’t understand, Jesus said even more to impress the lesson

Whenever guests were invited to a home, the lowest household slave or servant was given the basest job—bathing the feet of guests. It was a demeaning chore, reserved for the servant with the lowest status.

on them. “When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them” (verse 12).

Of course they didn’t understand. Considerable time would pass before they would grasp the importance of Christ’s purpose and teaching and the mission He was giving to them.

“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should *wash one another’s feet*. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (verses 13-15).

Who should be our example, our ultimate role model? We could find none greater than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We are to follow in His steps and walk just as He walked (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6). We are to emulate His example in every way. And His example was one of living to serve others (Matthew 20:28).

Jesus concluded His lesson: “I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:16).

Jesus Christ says that if He was willing to humble Himself and put Himself in the position of being a servant, and to take on the duties of the lowest of slaves, who are we to think we’re too good to humbly serve others?

We are Christ’s servants. Do we ever think we’re too good to humble ourselves as He did? Do we think that some kinds of serving and giving of ourselves and our time are beneath us, that we should let someone else do them instead?

We are also Christ’s messengers, carry-

ing the good news of salvation that He has commissioned His servants to carry. Do we sometimes think that we’re better than the one who has called us and given us this job to carry out?

Although we may not say that by our words, do we say it by our actions? Is there always some reason we can’t help others when there is a need? If we’re always coming up with reasons why we can’t help when we know of a need, aren’t we saying the same thing by our actions? Aren’t we really saying that our time and our wants and our

needs are more important?

Do we understand the lesson?

God well understands the message conveyed by our actions. But do *we* understand? Christ asked His disciples, “Do you understand what I have done for you?” We need to ask ourselves that same question. We need to ask ourselves whether *we* have learned the lesson that Jesus Christ so vividly pointed out to His followers when He assumed the role of the lowest servant to teach His followers the vital lesson of humility, serving and giving.

Jesus gave us the example of foot-washing and said, “I have set you an example that you should *do as I have done for you*.” There are still Christians who faithfully follow His example, instructions and teachings. They recognize the importance of one of the last great lessons Christ gave His followers before His death. They remember that He humbled Himself as a servant to teach *us* the lesson of serving the needs of others.

And they recognize His promise of John 13:17: “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you *do* them.” **GN**

RECOMMENDED READING

The annual foot-washing ceremony is part of the biblical cycle of commanded observances. There is far more to learn about the Holy Days of God and their celebration. Our free booklet *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*, describes what these days depict in much greater detail. For your free copy, please contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you), as listed on page 2.



Is God's Law Bondage?

Some theologians associate God's law with slavery. But the Bible presents it as the missing key to true freedom.

by Noel Hornor

In the annals of human experience, some of the darkest episodes of man's inhumanity to man have involved the treatment of slaves. Even today humans are sometimes subjected to brutality as the property of other human beings.

World Press Review paints a picture of contemporary slavery in one nation: "Men, women and children in shackles and chains hack at sugar canes as the midday sun beats down. Armed guards swing rifle butts into the ribs of workers caught slacking. The prisoners are given only water and grain for food. When darkness falls, the men are dragged to a clearing and chained to trees for the night. Women usually sleep alone or with children in makeshift sheds. At dawn, the men, women and children are kicked awake" (June 1996, p. 44). Then the misery of the former day is repeated.

According to another magazine, "The Geneva-based International Labor Organization reports that tens of millions of people around the globe, including children as young as six, are working in bondage—in dangerous and degrading conditions that often involve 18-hour workdays, beatings and sexual abuse" (*Time*, March 11, 1993, p. 26).

A saga of slavery

Some 2,500 years ago an entire nation was in bondage. When we first encounter Israel as a nation in the Bible, the Israelites had gone from being guests in Egypt, enjoying the bounties of the land side by side with their Egyptian hosts, to being slaves. The Bible says the Egyptians set "taskmasters" over the Israelites "to afflict them with their burdens," forcing them to construct cities such as Pithom and Raamses (Exodus 1:11). The Israelites were cruelly forced to labor at projects designed to honor the proud Egyptian kings. So brutal were these Egyptian masters that they even murdered Israel's newborn male babies (verse 22).

Such suffering of slaves in Egypt is verified by archaeological evidence from the land of the Pharaohs. "... The famous wall painting from the Thebean tomb of Rekhmire ... [depicts] the overseer of the brick-making slaves during the reign of Thutmose III" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1990, Vol. 2, p. 304).

The painting on Rekhmire's tomb shows "overseers armed with heavy whips" (ibid.). Hard labor and beatings were a harsh reality of Israelite life. "Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren" (Exodus 2:11).

The Israelites cried out in their suffering. God said, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people ... and have heard their cry ..." (Exodus 3:7).

Deliverance from slavery

God had pity on His people, and when the time was right He intervened to deliver them from bondage. He appointed Moses as a leader to bring them out of Egypt (verse 10). In a series of dramatic events, God took them out of Egypt and established them as an independent and free nation. Their departure from Egyptian soil climaxed in the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, providing an escape from Pharaoh's pursuing army (Exodus 14:21-31). When the Egyptians attempted to follow, the walls of water collapsed over them (verse 28).

God had chosen Israel to be His own people. Having removed Israel's Egyptian yoke, God's next step was to instruct the people about His law. With Moses leading them, God brought the Israelites to the foot of Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:2). Then, beginning with the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), God gave His law to Israel.

These were the standards by which Israel was to live. They were intended to guide a people no longer in the bonds of slavery. God made it plain to the Israelites that they were to be set apart by obedience to His commandments. He told them not to follow the practices of the land of Egypt, out of which they had come, nor to walk in the practices of the land of Canaan, to which they were going. They were to follow *His* standard (Leviticus 18:1-4).

At this point some people make a quantum theological leap of logic: They believe that God removed the Israelites from captivity to the Egyptians and brought them into another state of slavery—subjugation to a harsh law.

Several other assumptions follow from this view; for example, that this law was only for Israel, and when one accepts Christ he is not subject to the Old Testament law because Christ abolished the law.

But what was Christ's position on the law? Did He take a clear stand on it? In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), He unambiguously shared His view of the Old Testament: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18, emphasis added throughout).

First we must recognize what Jesus meant when He used the terms *Law* and *Prophets*. "... Jesus is taking pains to relate his teaching and place in the history of redemption to the OT [Old Testament]

Scriptures. For that is what 'Law or the Prophets' here means: the Scriptures" (*Expositor's*, Vol. 8, p. 142).

Christ's statements about the law

Christ stated that He did not come to *destroy* the law, but to *fulfill* it. "His purpose is not to change the law, still less to annul it, but to reveal the full depth of meaning that it was intended to hold" (John R.W. Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1978, p. 72).

Elsewhere Jesus emphasized that we must obey the law of God. On one occasion "one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?'" Christ's response was clear: "... If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*" (Matthew 19:16-17). The next two verses make it plain that the commandments Jesus refers to here are the Ten Commandments.

In spite of Christ's plain statement about the Old Testament law, many students of the Bible down through the years have misunderstood His teaching.

Some people make a quantum theological leap of logic: They believe that God removed the Israelites from captivity to the Egyptians and brought them into another state of slavery—subjugation to a harsh law.

"In every generation of the Christian era there have been those who could not accommodate themselves to Christ's attitude to the law . . . for they declare that the very category of law is abolished for the Christian . . . that no law any longer binds Christian people except the law of love . . ." (*The Bible Speaks Today*, p. 72).

Those who believe that the law is no longer binding tend to take the approach that to assert that commandments are to be obeyed is to enact a form of bondage, whereas to be a Christian means to be free.

Is the law contrary to freedom?

Subjection to laws is not of itself a form of bondage. Every nation on earth has laws and statutes. America is a nation whose population has, to a considerable extent, accommodated others who came seeking greater freedom—liberties that are safeguarded by *law*.

"Three quarters of the population . . . are the descendants of immigrants from Asia and Africa and, most of all, from the continent of Europe." Many of them, particularly Jewish immigrants, "saw America as the Land of Canaan" (Alistair

Cooke, *America*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1980, pp. 273, 278).

When these immigrants arrived and became citizens, they took an oath by which they agreed to obey the laws of their newly embraced land. This oath includes these words: "I will give my support to the Constitution and to the laws of the United States. I will obey them."

Many newly naturalized citizens came to America to escape despotism and totalitarianism in their native lands. They did not consider obedience to America's laws to be another form of bondage. They embraced what they considered to be a new life *full of freedom*.

God's law is not bondage

True liberty is not freedom *from* law. True freedom can be found only *within* law. Righteous laws secure and guarantee freedom. "But he who looks into the perfect law of *liberty* and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work," wrote the apostle James, "this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

James called God's commandments the "law of liberty," not a form of slavery. He said one who obeys it is blessed; his life is one of happiness and peace.

The law of God is not a straitjacket; it doesn't restrain freedom. It is a way of life that guarantees the welfare of the individual and of society. "Peace is the reward of those who love thy law; no pitfalls beset their path" (Psalm 119:165, New English Bible).

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He did not deliver them from one form of slavery into another. He liberated them from a society in which they had no protection through law. The Egyptian code of law did not provide freedom for the Israelites. It did not protect them from evil treatment nor guarantee their security. Israel was abused and oppressed.

God delivered His people from these cruelties and gave them a law that would guarantee their safety and protection. "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, *that you may live* . . ." (Deuteronomy 4:1). It was a *perfect* law (Psalm 19:7). Israel "needed no additional rules or

Continued on page E16

Proverbs 31: A Model for Today's Woman

You might be surprised at just how up-to-date the advice of an ancient king can be.

by Linda Elliott

Imagine a busy woman running a household, rushing to work, making business decisions, juggling meal planning and shopping, and volunteering her time for worthwhile causes, while radiating cheer to her children and charm to her husband.

Sounds like today's supermom, doesn't it? Actually, this wife, mother and pillar of the community was described nearly 3,000 years ago in the Bible. Women have been struggling with priorities and time management for millennia. The advice in the 31st chapter of the book of Proverbs, which talks about this supermom of old, is just as relevant today as it was then, because wisdom from God is timeless.

Years ago, when I was a young wife and mother, I read this chapter for the first time and thought: Who is this superwoman? I'm not like that!

I have since come to realize that this passage is not the description of a woman who has had it all together from the start, but of a woman who has grown in character and spiritual maturity through life's experiences. Wisdom is not just timeless; it takes time.

Timeless wisdom comes from God, not from talk shows and trash TV. To achieve happiness, right character and success, women need down-to-earth advice to help them learn concrete lessons; they don't need illusions. Charm and beauty tips abound, but to find real help—to be competent in home, community and business—there is no better place to look than the Word of God.

Applying wisdom

The ideal place to learn wisdom is the home. Whether we work outside the home or not, our home should be our haven, a place where we can practice what we learn in the company of those closest to us. (Of course, women learn wisdom from all aspects of life in and out of the home. Many women may have to manage a full-time career outside the home.)

Home and family have always been the foundation of civilization. Solid, successful, loving families build stable neighborhoods, towns and cities that in turn form strong nations. Yet in

newspapers or television newscasts you will see evidence of the breakdown of society. Something is terribly wrong when divorce, family dysfunction and delinquency are so common that they make boring headlines. So what is the solution? Can government programs solve our problems?

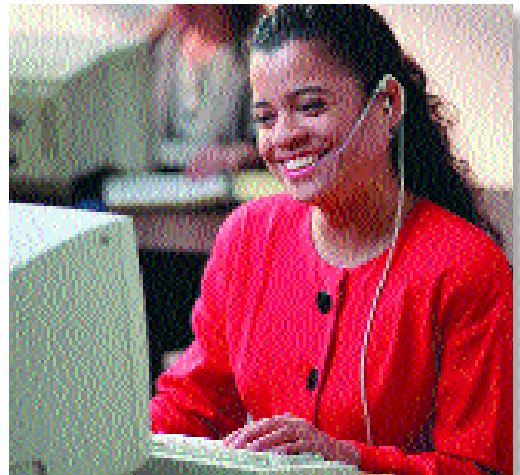
The Bible shows that the answers lie closer to home.

Pick your priorities

We all have 24 hours in each day. But we have



Women have been struggling with priorities and time management for millennia. The advice in the 31st chapter of the book of Proverbs is just as relevant today as it was then.



different talents. Some of our strengths are obvious; others lie hidden. Wisdom applied properly can help us maximize our abilities.

Becoming an effective woman takes focused effort. Proverbs 31 can be a fundamental part of this effort, offering guidance to females who are single or married, have children, careers, or any combination of these.

Proverbs 31 helps the process because it clarifies our priorities for us: God, family and career or community. These priorities may sound simple, but they are not always easy to follow. If we lose sight of them, our lives quickly get out of whack. To exercise wisdom is to make wise and consistent decisions and properly balance sensible priorities.

What should be on our list of priorities? Let's

get specific and see what this chapter of Proverbs tells us.

God, our Designer and Creator, should come first in our lives. Indeed, without His revelation we cannot even understand our purpose for existing.

To fulfill that purpose, first seek to become a woman of conviction, strong in character, who is striving to attain moral excellence. In other words, know and do what is right, even when no one is looking. Put God first and ultimately all else will fall into place. Neglect God's wisdom and things go wrong.

should not be demeaning. Stand by him, remembering that he is standing by you. Sometimes that isn't easy, and the world around us doesn't make it any easier. Instead of "until death do us part," society pushes no-fault divorce. Instead of 100 percent commitment, Hollywood sells the fantasy of temporary bliss and self-satisfaction. But a happy, lifelong marriage is well worth the effort.

Verses 10 to 12, 23 and 28 of Proverbs 31 depict a situation in which a solid marriage leads to success in and outside the home.

Strive to be diligent and hardworking, and

I remember a frigid winter morning when I awoke to find our sewer system had frozen solid and backed up. All the plumbers were busy, so my husband and I tackled the unpleasant job of thawing and flushing the pipes ourselves. What a mess, and what a smell! But the job had to be done. Our family was in trouble, so we had to do it. My husband later told me he gained new respect for me as I worked alongside him during that nasty emergency.

Abundant practical advice

Be a smart shopper. Bargain-hunt.



Remember, knowledge is of little value except as it is put into practice.

Build your family

A marriage is built on trust, loyalty and support, not arguments, nagging and criticism. Strong marriages are based on God's principles of love, respect, cooperation and teamwork. Take the we-are-a-team approach rather than following the 50-50, give-and-take arrangement that keeps rekindling the battle of the sexes.

Serving as an asset to your husband

Working outside the home is a reality for most women. Balancing a career and family makes for stressful living. That is why it is so important to remember our priorities and constantly review them.

don't panic over trivial matters. When you have to burn the midnight oil, pace yourself. Don't burn out; find a routine and level that work for you. Tackle tough situations as they come up, and handle them without complaint or panic. Verses 13, 18 and 21 describe a woman who is motivated, industrious and confident in the face of challenges.

Make ends meet by following a financial plan for the household. Avoid impulse buying, shop with a list, and don't buy groceries when you're hungry. Experiment. Maybe coupon clipping is a good idea, but perhaps a home-shopping channel is not. Principles that apply are discussed in verses 14 and 21.

Use your time wisely. The easiest way to add more time to the day is to rise early (verse 15). Start the day with prayer and Bible study to put things in proper perspective. Plan the day, and make a little time just for yourself. Recharge your batteries with some peace and quiet. Don't let interruptions rule your life. Solicit help from the rest of the family. When Mom is relaxed and in control, the whole family benefits.

Working outside the home is a reality for most women. Balancing a career and family makes for stressful living. That is why it is so important to remember our priorities and constantly review them. Business acumen is vital. A Proverbs 31 woman deserves praise in her own right, for her own value and accomplishments, not merely as an extension of her husband (verses 16, 24, 31).

Another vital key is also mentioned in this chapter: physical fitness (verse 17). It's easy to resist hard work and getting enough exercise, but we need to take care of ourselves. The best way is to fit exercise you enjoy into your routine.

Hobbies are good stress relievers. Be creative. Try out new, enjoyable activities, either with the family or by yourself.

Volunteer as you are able. You'll be surprised at how much you can accomplish with relatively little effort and time. Just as important, teach your children the value of showing concern for others and helping them take care of their needs (verse 20).

Don't be obsessed with clothes, but be neatly and appropriately dressed. Our appearance speaks volumes before we ever say a word (verse 22).

A good sense of humor helps. Life is short; enjoy it and cheerfully take things in stride (verse 25). Avoid idleness; don't be a couch potato (verse 27).

Formal education for all ages is much more widespread than it used to be. So continue educating yourself. Perhaps you need to read more, taking more interest in civic and volunteer activities. Practice helps us to speak with common sense and confidence, avoiding aggression or defensiveness (verse 26).

The next generation

Society influences our children, but it doesn't nurture them. That's our job. No one is a perfect parent, but we can all improve. Books such as James Dobson's *Dare to Discipline* can help us see the big picture and the importance of practical



Home and family have always been the foundation of civilization. Solid, successful, loving families build stable neighborhoods, towns and cities that in turn form strong nations.

child rearing based on biblical principles (verse 28).

Wisdom dictates that we constantly review our priorities. Here's a case in point: I remember an ordinary day years ago when my boys came home from school and asked me to shoot basketball goals with them. I was tired and needed to dust the furniture before dinner guests arrived. Decisions, decisions, I thought. But then I decided: I'll always have dust. I won't always have the boys. So I took 15 minutes to shoot baskets with them.

I won't say that the reason our grown

sons still call to ask our advice is because of that incident. But maybe it had an effect. I've learned one thing for sure: Each decision we make can have far-reaching consequences. Life is full of choices; wisdom helps us choose the better ones. I have constantly reminded the boys that if they don't learn from their mistakes, they are bound to repeat them.

Advantages of God's way

God's wisdom gives us insight many other people do not have. We learn from each other's example, so don't neglect advice from older women. We are known by the company we keep, so we need to surround ourselves with wise women of all ages. Let's share our hard-won gems of insight (verse 29).

It may seem difficult to maintain a high standard, but it's worth the effort. The instruction in this chapter in the Bible is priceless. It's universal, timeless advice that encompasses many of life's circumstances. God wants us to become the best we can be (verse 30).

Sound like a daunting task? Not necessarily, especially when we patiently move forward a step at a time. Proverbs 31 gives an outline of real priorities for becoming a complete, effective and successful woman. You may already have followed quite a few of the above principles; others may require major consideration and reorientation. Plenty of resources are available for in-depth study of this chapter, not to mention the rest of the book of Proverbs, but this brief review can get you started.

Who is the superwoman of Proverbs 31? With time and help from God, it could be you! *GN*

RECOMMENDED READING

Our roles in the family and society take on a much greater dimension when we understand the purpose for human life in God's great plan. Our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *What Is Your Destiny?* describe that plan and the awesome future your Creator has in store for you. For your free copies, please contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you), as listed on page 2.

Why Was Jesus Christ Resurrected?

*What is the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
What does it mean for our future?*

by Jerold Aust

Among the fundamental doctrines of the Bible listed in Hebrews 6:1-2 is the “resurrection of the dead.” What is this resurrection? When will it occur? Who will be brought back to life? Can we be sure it will happen?

The resurrection is central to the life and aspirations of a follower of Jesus Christ and, in the long run, the whole human race. Unless there is a resurrection of the dead, there is no such thing as eternal life. The gift to mankind of the resurrection, a teaching to be found throughout the Bible, is the anchor of our salvation, a foundational doctrine of the true faith.

Scripture tells us that “it is appointed for men to die once” (Hebrews 9:27). But the Bible also shows that, just as all die, “even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). We are all to be resurrected, but all in due time, in a specific order (verse 23). Yet it all begins with Jesus Christ.

Christ’s resurrection foretold

The first and so far only resurrection to eternal life has been that of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The first scriptural intimation of Jesus’ death and resurrection was written some six millennia ago, 4,000 years before the birth of Christ. Here, in the Hebrew Scriptures, God pronounced judgment against Satan, the being who had subtly enticed Adam and Eve to disobey their Creator. God said to Satan, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

The “Seed” of the woman would bruise Satan’s head, or permanently put an end to his influence over mankind, and Satan would “bruise His heel”: instigate Christ’s crucifixion.

But, ironically, Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, coupled with the resurrection, makes our eternal life possible. The apostle Paul wrote of Jesus’ victory over evil: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory [eternal life over physical death] through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). Without Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, humanity could never be saved, never gain eternal life (verse 13).

Christ’s atoning death makes possible the forgiveness of our sins and our reconciliation to God. This is the essential first step in God’s plan to save humanity. Through Jesus Christ’s restoration to eternal life almost 2,000 years ago, we, through our own resurrection, can also receive eternal life.

Symbol of Christ’s resurrection

Jesus Christ’s resurrection was symbolized through a ceremony God gave ancient Israel (Leviticus 23:10-14). During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, God instructed the priest to cut a sheaf of barley grain and wave it before Him to be accepted by Him. Hence it was called the wave-sheaf offering (verse 15). None of the harvest could be eaten until this ceremony had been conducted (verse 14).

The wave-sheaf offering represented “Christ, the firstfruits” (1 Corinthians 15:23), as our coming Savior and the beginner of God’s gathering of members of His family (2 Corinthians 6:18).

Jesus was received by His Father after His resurrection, although not immediately. When He first appeared to Mary Magdalene He said, “Do not cling to Me [‘Touch me not,’ King James Version], for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17).

Just as God commanded that the harvests in ancient Israel could not begin until He had accepted the wave-sheaf offering, so the harvesting of mankind would not

Unless there is a resurrection of the dead, there is no such thing as eternal life. The gift to mankind of the resurrection, a teaching to be found throughout the Bible, is the anchor of our salvation, a foundational doctrine of the true faith.

begin until Jesus Christ was accepted by the Father as “the firstfruits” (1 Corinthians 15:23).

“In due time,” at a time specifically appointed by God, “Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6) so that they could be given salvation in God’s Kingdom. The harvest of humanity for eternal life could begin.

Christ’s resurrection gives us hope

The Christian who understands the power inherent in Christ’s resurrection has great hope. The Bible clearly reveals that certain Old Testament personalities knew of this hope. The patriarch Job knew of God’s plan for man after death. He lived and died knowing he would eventually be resurrected.

“But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he? As water disappears from the sea, and a river becomes parched and dries up, so man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep. Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would *appoint me a set time, and remember me!* If a man dies, *shall he live again?* All the days of my hard service I will wait, *till my change comes*” (Job 14:10-14, emphasis added throughout).

With biblical understanding, Job’s words become clear. He knew the dead don’t immediately rise to heaven. As Ecclesiastes 9:5 tells us, the dead “know nothing”; they lie unconscious in the grave, awaiting their resurrection.

Job knew he would be resurrected. But until then this patriarch would wait in his grave until his “change”—from physical to spirit, from mortal to immortal—occurred (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

This was Job’s hope. This is also our

hope “of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (Titus 1:2).

As Paul told the Roman officials who questioned him about his beliefs, “I have hope in God . . . that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15). This hope is “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Hebrews 6:19).

If Jesus had not been resurrected, we would have no hope of living forever. But we have the assurance that God, through Christ, will resurrect all who have ever died.

Faith in the resurrection

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence [realization or confidence] of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Christians, by definition, believe in Christ’s promises. One of His incredible promises is that we can be resurrected to eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:50-53). Although we can’t know what it will be like to be a spirit being, the Scriptures assure us that this is our destiny (1 John 3:2).

Faith in Christ’s promise to resurrect us is

a powerful antidote for the fear of death and anxiety about the unknown: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through *fear of death* were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Fear of death is a form of captivity, of slavery. Although many people profess belief in some kind of life after death, few seem to want to go anytime soon. Men and women face the prospect of death with understandable apprehension and uncertainty. Without the sure knowledge given in the Scriptures, how could it be otherwise?

But Paul, well aware of God’s revelation, understood that, just as death is sure, so is the *resurrection of the dead*. “For as in Adam *all die*, even so in Christ *all shall be made alive*” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

“And so it is written,” according to Paul, “‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not

The Bible Reveals More Than One Resurrection

Many people are surprised to learn that the Bible reveals more than one resurrection. This is clear from Revelation 20, where the setting is Jesus Christ’s return.

The apostle John wrote of a vision he received from Jesus Christ: “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (verse 4).

Here, then, we see a group of those who have been faithful to Christ given thrones, authority and rulership with Jesus Christ for 1,000 years, the period commonly called the Millennium. These are those described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And *the dead in Christ will rise first.*”

The apostle Paul further describes what will happen to faithful Christians “at the last trumpet” announcing Christ’s return: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Paul counted himself among those who would rise to eternal life in this resurrection.

Continuing in John’s description of events accompanying Christ’s return, he says: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the *first resurrection*. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6, emphasis added throughout).

John calls this “the first resurrection.” If there is the *first resurrection*, then obviously there is *more than one*. Indeed, John goes on to tell us, “But *the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished*” (verse 5).

Another important resurrection

So we see one group of people resurrected at Christ’s return. They reign with Christ over the earth during the Millennium. A second group, “the rest of the dead,” is not resurrected “until the thousand years [are] finished.”

This is the *second resurrection*, a bringing back to *physical* life that will take place at the conclusion of the 1,000-year period. Old Testament Israel will constitute some of “the rest of the dead,” as the prophet Ezekiel reveals: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live . . .” (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

The remainder of this chapter makes it clear that this

first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also *bear the image of the heavenly Man*" (verses 45-49).

Paul confidently spoke of his imminent death as a temporary departure from the company of those of like faith: "... The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Fleeting is death

Over and over the Bible proclaims the truth of the resurrection. As a matter of fact, death and the surety of the resurrection are compared to things we do every day: We go

to sleep, and we wake up. The Bible repeatedly compares being laid to rest in the grave with lying down to sleep. "For now I will lie down in the dust," said Job (Job 7:21).

The prophet Daniel foretold the saints' death and resurrection: "And many of those *who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake*, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

Jesus Himself compared death with sleep. Before the resurrection of one young girl, He comforted those who were grieving by saying, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping" (Luke 8:52). Similarly, He compared the death of Lazarus to sleep before Lazarus was brought to life again (John 11:11-13).

Paul sums up the hope of the resurrection for us: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become *the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Corinthians 15:19-20).

God's plan for human life and our goal is for us eventually to be changed into spirit,

shining forever as the stars (Daniel 12:2-3).

We are destined to be a part of God's family, to be spirit, as He is spirit. "Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

Christ guarantees our resurrection

In God's beautiful plan, the resurrection to eternal life of all those who desire this wonderful gift can come only through a resurrected Jesus Christ. Otherwise the remainder of mankind would never experience everlasting life. Paul explains this in detail:

"Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He

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is a resurrection to temporary, mortal, *physical* life, in contrast to the first resurrection, which is to immortal *spirit* life (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

Jesus Christ reveals some of the locations of those who will be in the second resurrection: "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them" (Revelation 20:13). Billions of people will be judged by the Eternal God over an extended period (just as we are today; 1 Peter 4:17) based on their receiving of God's Spirit and their consequent understanding and practice of His truth. "And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books [the Holy Bible]" (Revelation 20:12).

Jesus Christ described this period of judgment as a time during which people of His day would be resurrected and live alongside resurrected inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, Sodom and Nineveh, who had lived centuries earlier (Matthew 10:14-15; 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Together they would learn God's way of life for the first time. Those from earlier generations would find it remarkable that the people of Jesus' time had rejected Him.

During this time the vast majority of humankind, all those who have never learned of God's truth and His great plan, will gain access to that saving knowledge for the first time. Clearly they have never had an opportunity for salvation. But in this unusual period multiple billions of resurrected people will learn God's truth, repent of their sins and receive forgiveness, God's Spirit and, ultimately, eternal life. God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34).

According to God's plan, all who have ever lived

will receive an opportunity for eternal life.

The fate of the unrepentant

The Bible shows that even the incorrigibly wicked will wake up in a resurrection, but not a resurrection to eternal life. All human beings will ultimately either receive life forever or be destroyed forever. Those who stubbornly refuse to repent will be consumed by fire. This is the 'second death,' the lake of fire, which is the ultimate fate of the willfully unrepentant (Revelation 20:6, 14; 21:8).

If these incorrigibly evil people, who have refused to live peacefully under the loving hand of God, were to be given immortality, they would suffer and cause others to suffer for eternity. So God will mercifully destroy them.

To be sure, their resurrection—apart from the ultimate positive benefit—is a negative one. But, for the Christian with spiritual understanding, it also serves as a sober warning: The fate of the incorrigibly wicked is a reminder that we have entered into a serious covenant with God through Jesus Christ. Once we set our hearts and minds on God, we must never turn back to the wicked ways of "this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4, King James Version).

It is also wise to remember that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11). He would like all to repent and live forever. Paul writes that God "desires all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4), and Peter explains that God is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

—Jerold Aust

Reconciliation: A Vital Part of Christ's Message

*A major theme of Christ's message is reconciliation.
But how does reconciliation fit into God's plan for you and me?*

by Mark Mickelson

Jesus Christ began His public ministry by declaring the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the people in Galilee. What He said and did during His 3½-year ministry was so incredible that it just couldn't be ignored. Jesus called people to repentance and gave them hope. He gave them encouragement and healed their diseases. Even more, He possessed the power to forgive their sins.

Christ's countrymen were astonished that He spoke with such authority, and people excitedly crowded about Him everywhere He went. The popular response to His message was remarkable.

But His teachings weren't always warmly received. Sometimes they clashed with long-held traditions and ideas of men.

Part of His message, after all, was that all of mankind could be reconciled to God. Christ's own disciples were shocked to find Him talking with a Samaritan woman (John 4:27). Jesus had acknowledged to the woman that He was indeed the Messiah and that eternal life was available to *all* through Him (verses 10-14, 25-26). He explained that salvation wasn't offered to the Jews only; it was extended to gentiles as well.

Some accepted this as great news, but others felt threatened by it. Some had fallen into exclusivism in their worship of God and were not about to share what they viewed as their God-given right with just anyone, and especially not with gentiles.

Some who heard Jesus preach the gospel in the synagogue in Nazareth became so angry when He brought up the subject of God's dealings with gentiles that they even tried to kill Him (Luke 4:24-29).

It was a tumultuous time as Christ continued His public ministry to prepare for establishing His Church. That God would offer salvation to all, Jew and gentile alike, eventually sank into the disciples' understanding and grew evident in their teaching after Christ's death. Then, as their range of influence expanded, so spread hostility

and opposition to this part of their message.

Separation of Jews and gentiles

The apostle Paul addressed the breach between the Jews and gentiles in Ephesians 2. The Jews had gone so far as to erect a wall in the courtyard of the temple to keep the gentiles away from them while they worshiped.

Paul wrote of this wall of separation: "For He Himself [Christ] is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation . . . so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross . . ." (verses 14-16).

A gentile who ventured to pass through the gates in that wall would have been put to death. But Christ was busy reconciling Jew and gentile to God, and no such barrier was to exist in the Church.

The laws that kept Jew and gentile apart at the temple (verse 15) were not the laws of God. They were the rules and regulations of men. Paul went on to say: "And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both [Jew and gentile alike] have access by one Spirit to the Father" (verses 17-18).

God, through the supreme sacrifice of His Son, is not only reconciling us to Himself; He is reconciling us to each other as well. The two processes are inseparable. "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you," Jesus said, "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

First be reconciled to God

Part of the message of the gospel that Jesus brought was that we can *all* be reconciled to God. It is important to understand how that process takes place and what it is that separates us in the first place.

The message of the gospel that Jesus brought was that we can all be reconciled to God. It is important to understand how that process takes place and what it is that separates us in the first place.

Through the prophet Isaiah God explains what is at the heart and core of separation from God: “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But *your iniquities have separated you from your God*; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2, emphasis added throughout).

Man’s separation from God is not God’s fault. Our own sins stand between us and God, and we are powerless to remove the penalty that sin brings. The only solution is a divine act of grace. Christ lived His life without committing even one sin and then was sacrificed in our place so we could be reconciled to God. John explains how this can be: “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world . . . to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

The word *propitiation* here conveys sin being covered and remitted (*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985, “Propitiation”). Some translations appropriately use the word *atonement* instead. The New English Bible words it simply that God sent His Son “as the remedy for the defilement of our sins.”

Christ’s sacrifice is the remedy for our sins, but we have our part as well. We must be responsive to God’s call to repentance for the process of forgiveness and reconciliation to take place. Only when we have submitted ourselves to God, as symbolized by baptism, will our sins be blotted out. At that point in the process we are justified (made right) by the blood of Jesus Christ and reconciled to God so we can be saved (Romans 5:1, 6-11).

Reconciling with others

Still, we must bear in mind that our relationship with God should affect our relationships with other people as well. “Beloved,” wrote John, “if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). Reconciling with each other becomes nothing less than a necessary part of our calling.

Paul referred to it as our *ministry or service*. We serve as representatives of the Kingdom of God. “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us *the ministry of reconciliation*, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to

Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are *ambassadors* for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be *reconciled to God*” (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

As Christ’s ambassadors, said Paul, we must set an example to show others that they, too, can be reconciled to God and reconciled to man.

Healing the breaches

If reconciliation to God doesn’t appear to have worked for us as representatives of Jesus Christ, then how much of a positive impact can our example possibly make? We *must* be reconciled with our fellowman if we are to prove to others that God’s way

Christ’s sacrifice is the remedy for our sins, but we have our part as well. We must be responsive to God’s call to repentance for the process of forgiveness and reconciliation to take place.

really does work. Husbands and wives must reconcile. Parents and children need to reconcile. We must bridge the generation gap in our own families.

God is committed to helping us heal our breaches, but we need to commit to healing them as well. This requires that we perpetuate an intimate relationship with God; this is necessary if we are truly to draw on His power.

Fasting is one of the ways God shows us to help us stay close to Him. Going without food and drink teaches a lesson in itself, but our resulting attitude of humility is what is really important to God. (If you have never fasted before, we suggest that you begin by omitting only a few meals—perhaps not eating for a day or even less. If you have a serious health condition, it is best to seek medical advice first.)

Fasting should draw us closer to God and each other. God describes the result of fasting with a proper attitude and approach:

“Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you

shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (Isaiah 58:9-11).

God clearly links our relationship with Him to our responsiveness to each other. We should be at peace with other people (Romans 12:18). Sometimes we simply need to be more diplomatic. The book of Proverbs is of inestimable help in this regard.

Reconciliation brings peace. Breaches need to be healed, and we need to forgive. But this isn’t a process that we carry out on our own. God intercedes for us and participates with us to help us fulfill His will. He restores us to a right relationship with Himself and with each other. He prepares us for an eternity with Him and with each other in His family.

Ultimately, that’s what the Kingdom of God is about: being reconciled to God and man. In the Kingdom every human being will at last come to a right relationship with God—a relationship that had been prevented by our sins. As everyone learns to live according to God’s law of love (Romans 13:8-10), proper relationships among human beings will develop and grow.

This is a vital part of the message Jesus Christ preached to the people of Galilee, and then to Judea, and that’s the message the disciples began to spread throughout the world.

It’s as timeless a message now as it was then: *We need reconciliation*. We can be thankful that God allows us not only to experience it, but to share it with others as He proceeds with His plan to offer salvation to all of mankind. *GN*

RECOMMENDED READING

How can we be reconciled to God? How can we fulfill His purpose for us? How can we know where to start? *The Road to Eternal Life* details what the Bible tells us about building a right relationship with our Creator. And *What Is Your Destiny?* describes the awesome future He wants to share with you. Your free copies are available when you contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you), as listed on page 2.

Passover

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Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

And, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God forgives and accepts us, applying Jesus’ sacrifice, as long as we allow God to lead us (Ephesians 2:8).

No one is worthy of Christ’s sacrifice on his own merit. But that is not what Paul is discussing. Not taking the Passover is choosing to disregard Christ’s instructions and example. Taking the Passover in an *unworthy manner* is choosing to take it with little or no respect for Christ’s sacrifice, showing indifference to the importance of His death as payment for our sins.

“For he who eats and drinks in an *unworthy manner* eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:29-32).

If we take the Passover while reverently respecting and appreciating the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we not only won’t be condemned, but we will be on our way to salvation.

Observing the Passover in its New Testament context, and obeying God’s Word in respect to His Holy Days, gives understanding of God’s great plan for humanity. We are to strive to obey God in all things (Matthew 4:4), a truth that is summed up in the two great commandments—love toward God and love toward our neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). *GN*

RECOMMENDED READING

The Passover is one of seven annual festivals God reveals in the Bible. Why did God command them? Should Christians keep them? What do they teach us about God’s plan for humanity? You’ll find the answers to these questions and more in *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Request your free copy by contacting us at the phone number or address of our office in your country (or the country nearest you), as listed on page 2.

Bondage

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directives, and none of those given were superfluous . . .” (*Expositor’s*, Vol. 3, p. 42).

God’s law and the Christian

God calls Christians to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior. We are also called to a life of obedience to God’s commandments. Law-keeping does not earn a person salvation, which is a gift from God (Romans 6:23); the keeping of His laws is our grateful response to God (1 John 5:2-3; John 14:15, 21).

When called to repentance, people invariably find themselves living in some degree of disobedience to the commandments of God. God calls us to repent of this former way of living. “You had time enough in the past to do all the things that men want to do in the pagan world. Then you lived in license and debauchery, drunkenness, revelry and tippling, and the forbidden worship of idols” (1 Peter 4:3, NEB).

The law stands as our guide to repentance. It identifies our sin and shows us how we should live. As Paul put it, “Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law” (Romans 7:7, New International Version).

Our new life is a life of *freedom*. Far from being a blueprint for slavery, the commandments of God illuminate the pathway of a free life—a life free from the debilitating and destructive consequences of sin.

Real freedom is found only in obedience to God. Lawlessness, or disobedience to God, is sin (1 John 3:4), and it is a form of bondage. Jesus said that “whoever commits sin is a *slave of sin* . . . Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:34, 36).

This true freedom is found through Jesus Christ. We receive forgiveness of sins through His sacrifice. Both the law and Christ’s personal instruction and example tell us, for instance, that a Christian should observe the Passover as a reminder of the wonderful freedom gained through His sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:23-28).

We are also told to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread as a reminder that we are to live a sinless (unleavened) life, forsaking the transgressions of former days (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

This is not bondage. It is true freedom. It is the path to happiness and joy and the way to eternal life. *GN*

Resurrection

Continued from page E13

raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.

“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep [died] in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man [Adam] came death, by Man [Jesus] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:12-23).

So our resurrection to eternal life is firmly based on a resurrected Jesus Christ. As He lives (even after His death), so we will live. “Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope [our resurrection] set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever . . .” (Hebrews 6:17-20).

Jesus Christ was resurrected so we and eventually all of mankind could someday be resurrected to eternal life. This is the Christian hope! *GN*

RECOMMENDED READING

Since the Bible teaches the doctrine of the resurrection, how does this teaching fit with the commonly held ideas about heaven and hell? What occurs when we die? What happens to people who never understood the truth of the Bible or heard the name of Jesus Christ, the only name by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12)? You can find answers to these and many more questions in *What Happens After Death?* This booklet is yours free for the asking. Please contact the office in your country or the country nearest you. (See page 2 of this issue.)