

# *The* Good News

September/October 1998

## *When Will Mankind Find Peace?*



Staying Alert in a Dangerous World • Just What Is the Kingdom of God?  
Evolution or Creation: A Critical Choice • Collapse of an Ancient Kingdom

## Bad News and Good News

We live in a dangerous time in a dangerous world. One perilous century is drawing to a close. It appears that another equally menacing one is about to begin.

Just as the world seemed to be settling into an uneasy calm after the collapse of the former Soviet superpower, world leaders shook off their complacency when India recently successfully tested several nuclear weapons. They were further shocked when Pakistan followed suit with its own nuclear tests and announcement that it, too, had the bomb and wouldn't hesitate to use it if threatened.

Some militant Muslims in other countries rejoiced at the news that Pakistan, a largely Muslim nation, had armed itself with nuclear weapons. At last, they said, there was an "Islamic bomb" and the mostly Muslim Arab countries could soon again be a match for upstart Israel, long thought to have its own nuclear arsenal.

Around the same time that the news hit from India and Pakistan, a stream of other disturbing facts came to light. United Nations inspectors reported that traces of highly lethal nerve gas had been found on Iraqi missile fragments, showing that the Iraqis apparently have such weapons armed and ready for use when conflict again breaks out in the Middle East. Meanwhile the cat-and-mouse inspection game continues in the hunt for further evidence of Iraq's biological- and nuclear-weapons programs.

Other news leaked out that China, long a nuclear power, had made quantum leaps in its missile programs. With technology acquired mostly from U.S. companies—for supposedly peaceful purposes—the Chinese military had greatly increased the accuracy of its nuclear-tipped missiles. For the first time, the Chinese could mount multiple warheads, each with its own separate target, on their rockets.

North Korea, in desperate straits thanks to its collapsed economy and prolonged drought and famine, asserted its right to share its missile technology (non-nuclear at this point) with other countries to bring in desperately needed cash. At the same time, the North Koreans continue their own nuclear-weapons research.

It's frightening to realize that, over time, man has eventually used every weapon he has developed. The discovery of gunpowder led to machine guns, artillery and bombs that could kill humans ever more efficiently. Discoveries in chemistry brought us chemical weapons and nerve gas. Man's ability to split the atom gave us nuclear weapons. Other fields of research have given us biological weapons and such seemingly science-fiction weapons as lasers, particle-beam weapons and neutron bombs. If history is any indication, the next century will likely see us use such weapons against our fellow human beings.

No wonder some have said we don't know what weapons will be used in World War III, but the war after that will probably be fought with stones and clubs.

Can we know where the world is headed? A source for knowledge about our future is available—the Bible. It contains many detailed prophecies about the destiny of mankind. Briefly, it tells us that both *bad news* and *good news* lie ahead.

The bad news is that world conditions will grow worse. Jesus Christ described a dangerous world in which mankind will be threatened with extinction: "It will be a time of great distress, such as there has never been before . . . and will never be again. If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive . . ." (Matthew 24:21-22, Revised English Bible, emphasis added).

The good news? The world will not end in a horrendous holocaust. "For the sake of God's chosen [that time] will be cut short," Jesus continued (verse 22). God will intervene to put an end to man's misrule and save us from ourselves. Jesus Christ will establish the Kingdom of God on earth. He will be king of that kingdom, and "of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end . . ." (Isaiah 9:7). Divine rule will prevail upon the face of the earth (Isaiah 11:9; 2:1-4).

*The Good News* magazine is dedicated to sharing that message, the same gospel—good news—that Jesus Christ brought. This issue focuses on how that godly kingdom will come.

—Scott Ashley

## Good News

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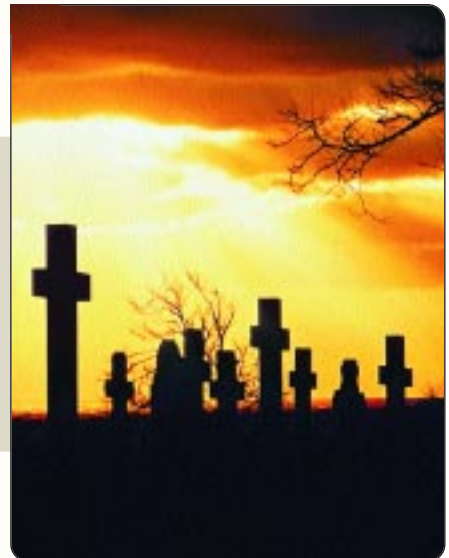
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by Joel Meeker

*When Will Mankind Find*  
**Peace?**

**H**is name was Ferdinand. He was 97 years old when I met him in the war-battered underground fortress of Vaux in northeastern France.

He was slowly and carefully signing books in the shop of a fortress museum that commemorated some of the great battles of the First World War fought on this site—battles in which he had participated. Ferdinand willingly spoke to the visitors who, like me, came to see the battle sites firsthand.

It's hard to imagine the violence of the battle that took place on the fertile plains of Lorraine during what the French call the '14-'18 War. Here, around Verdun, one of the oldest cities in France, French and German troops clashed in a series of horrendously bloody battles running through the spring and summer of 1916. In successive seesaw attacks, hills, forts and strong points were taken, lost and retaken many times by both sides.

Many of the battles centered on the underground fortresses at Douaumont and Vaux. These giant reinforced-concrete bunkers had huge metal turrets that could rise above ground level to fire 155-mm. and 75-mm. cannons, then drop back underground for the protection of gun crews. Hundreds of men could be housed underground to service the huge cannons, armored machine-gun nests and observation bells that made the forts so formidable.

On a nearby hill stands the sobering Douaumont national war cemetery, in which 15,000 French soldiers are buried in neatly aligned rows. In all, 43 French military cemeteries lie in the region of Verdun alone, containing more than 80,000 graves. Nearly 55,000 German soldiers are buried in 29 German war cemeteries.

The combined number of dead in the



*Some 80 years removed from the horror of his youth, an old soldier turns his thoughts to peaceful pursuits. His story echoes an unrealized hope for mankind.*

Verdun sector alone is estimated to be as high as *one million*. Of these, fewer than a quarter have been identified and buried in marked graves.

So many dead were lost and left unburied in the no man's land between the lines of battle that, after the war, huge piles of unidentifiable remains were gathered and interred in a large monument called the Ossuaire (from the French word *os*, "bone"). Through small portals at the base of the monument, visitors can look into the burial chambers and recognize heaps of human bones representing some 130,000 soldiers.

If the numbers of those killed in this small area defy imagination, it is because World War I marked the first time many modern weapons were used on a mass scale. The newly developed machine gun made frontal charges little less than suicidal. But, since neither side could find any more successful tactics, both continued sending waves of young men forward to the scythe to gain a few meters of ground.

Artillery shells containing poisonous gases brought blindness, respiratory failure and gruesome chemical burns to thousands. High-explosive artillery shells carried greater destructive power than ever before. Several villages in the area around Verdun—such as Fleury, Douaumont and Vaux—were destroyed so completely that not even the foundations of buildings could be found. Not one stone was left upon another. Even the grass and trees disappeared.

#### Monument to futility

Near the Ossuaire another monument testifies to the murderous power of the big guns. It is called *la tranchée des baïonnettes*: the bayonet trench. In this trench on June 12, 1916, the 137th French infantry regiment was in place, bayonets fixed to the soldiers' rifles, ready to defend the line against the German advance. German observers called in an artillery barrage and gas attack against the French position. The shelling was so violent and powerful that those not killed outright were buried alive by the dirt thrown from the explosions.

After the battle all that was left to identify the site of the trench were the points of bayonets and gun barrels sticking up through the dirt. A monument now stands over the trench; visitors can still see the gun barrels and bayonets.



*Reminders of a devastating war are scattered around the World War I battleground of Verdun. The haunting bayonet trench, above, now protected from the elements by a sheltering monu-*



*ment, is the final resting place of a French infantry regiment gassed and then entombed by a horrific artillery barrage. At right a cannon looks out over silent killing fields where so many died.*

The fighting in and around the fortress of Vaux, where I met Ferdinand, was intense during the first week of June 1916. German troops had already occupied the covering fort of Douaumont, making it much more difficult to defend Vaux. Under Comdr. Raynal a small garrison of 250 men defended the fort against heavy, repeated assaults.

On June 2 German forces occupied the superstructure installations and began attacking the interior of the fort room by room. Hand-to-hand fighting progressed slowly through smoke- and gas-filled corridors. The combatants used flame throwers, grenades and small arms until thirst finally rendered untenable the defenders' resistance. The heroic opposition ceased June 7, and the French garrison had to surrender.

During the rest of the war, the fortresses of Vaux and Douaumont were taken and

was more interested in talking about his garden. Though he came to Vaux every year to commemorate the battles in which he had fought and the friends who had died in them, he always worried about whether the neighbors in his village in the south of France were taking proper care of his tomatoes, green beans and other garden plants.

They needed lots of water and care in the hot, dry climate of his region, he explained to me earnestly. Although he didn't want our collective memory to fade about what he and his comrades had gone through or how many had died so horribly, he was more interested in growing things. He didn't wish to discuss the horror and death of his youth. His thoughts turned to the life he could nourish and bring from the soil. He enjoyed providing the fruits of his garden to friends and neighbors.

assimilated Syria and Israel, Judah's neighbors to the north. Isaiah 36:1 says succinctly that "Sennacherib the king of Assyria came up against the walled cities of Judah and took them." Underlying these few words are long periods of agonizing and bloody siege warfare; weeks and months of fighting in places such as Lachish, the fall of which is graphically depicted in Assyrian carvings now on display in the British Museum in London. Sennacherib boasted of having taken 46 such walled cities and more than 200,000 captives. His armies killed and maimed countless thousands of others.

Ancient monuments, along with archaeological digs on the sites, allow us to reconstruct how ancient forces fought these battles. Armies surrounded fortified cities one after the other, closing them off from any external food or water supplies. Clouds of arrows swept over the walls as the besiegers built giant ramps up to the defensive fortifications.

A few years ago I had walked through the archaeological site at Lachish, where excavations show that the defenders desperately tried to build their walls higher on the inside to prevent the enemy ramp from reaching the top of the wall and breaching their defenses. Ramp and makeshift defenses alike could be clearly recognized once excavated.

As soldiers and engineers on both sides of the walls raced to complete their constructions, the town's defenders shot arrows and hurled spears, rocks and anything else they could find to slow the attackers, but to no avail.

One by one the cities fell. No doubt many friends, acquaintances and perhaps relatives of Isaiah were killed or captured. The smoke from some of the nearby battered and burning cities, perhaps even Lachish, would have been visible to Isaiah in Jerusalem.

Though God ultimately delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians by miraculous intervention, the thrill of deliverance must have been tempered by a great deal of mourning, sorrow and personal loss. Friends, acquaintances and family members had been killed or taken into captivity, never to be seen again.

### Promises of peace

Yet, through it all, Isaiah could be encouraged by the divine promises of world peace that God had inspired



*A sobering reminder of the enormous and tragic cost of war, the Ossuaire is an enormous crypt containing the bones of some 130,000 soldiers who perished at Verdun.*

retaken. Soldiers were sometimes cut off from supplies and could not go outside the masonry structure because of the artillery attacks. At times hundreds of dead soldiers could be buried only by being placed in the end sections of tunnels and walled in.

### A survivor reminisces

Ferdinand Viviès was the youngest man in Comdr. Raynal's unit and the last survivor. I met him when I noticed him signing books there in the fortress museum. I asked him to sign one I had bought. I looked at him curiously, this survivor of another, apocalyptic, age.

He responded to my questions about his recollections of the war. But the longer we conversed the more it became clear that he

I admit I was surprised by this turn in our conversation. I'm not sure what I expected, but for some reason it surprised me that this aged war hero should be so interested in something as simple and peaceful as gardening. This brought to my mind the life and experiences of the prophet Isaiah.

### An prophet experiences war

Isaiah, although of noble birth according to Jewish tradition, was acquainted firsthand with the horrors of war. Living in the kingdom of Judah seven centuries before the time of Christ, he witnessed the great Assyrian army of King Sennacherib sweeping through the Holy Land.

Sennacherib had already conquered and

through him. Though the prophet did not see these astounding prophecies come to pass in his time, he knew they would someday come true.

Isaiah no doubt longed for the time when God would accomplish what He had inspired to be recorded for us in Isaiah 2:4: “He [God] shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Isaiah knew of the promised King to come, “the Prince of Peace,” who would bring a final end to war: “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7).

Under the divine rule of Jesus Christ as King of the earth, peace will break out all over the world. “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; *nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*” (Micah 4:3, emphasis added throughout).

The next words of this Hebrew prophet bring to mind Ferdinand Viviès’ love for his garden: “*But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid*; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken” (verse 4).

These divine promises had not come to pass before the time Ferdinand Viviès and his comrades fought and bled at Verdun. They still haven’t come to pass. During the time it takes you to read this article, men, women and children will die either directly in or indirectly as a result of wars and other conflicts around the world. But God will keep His promises: “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

The Bible assures us a time will come when “*they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*” (Isaiah 11:9). This is a promise of peace, not only for the land of Israel, but for Europe, Asia, South America—the whole world.

This world will finally see peace, but not through human efforts and intentions. Divine intervention will bring an ultimate

end to war: “LORD, *you will establish peace for us*,” Isaiah said confidently (Isaiah 26:12).

### Enemies united as allies

Isaiah was even allowed to see how the traditional enemies Israel, Assyria and Egypt would become peaceful neighbors, all worshipping the one true God: “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria—a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, ‘Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance’” (Isaiah 19:23-25).

This prediction may have seemed hard to believe for Isaiah and those of his generation who had suffered so much at the hands of the Assyrians. Their memories bore the scars of the cruelty and suffering they had seen at the hands of these invaders. It may have seemed impossible that those hated enemies could one day be appreciated, friendly neighbors. But this was what God promised.

These are truly words of hope when we consider the seemingly insoluble political and ethnic conflicts of our 20th-century world. A solution will become apparent for the tensions between Serbs and Bosnians, between Hutus and Tutsis, between the warring political factions in Asia and South America and even for the complicated situation in the Middle East. One day the violence *will* end.

### War’s victims to live again

Not only will war cease to exist, but the millions of people who have suffered and died in wars through the centuries will get *another chance at life*—not a life cut short by hate and bloodlust, but an existence marked by peace and fulfillment: “*Your dead shall live*; together with my dead body *they shall arise*. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19).

God said through the prophet Ezekiel of this momentous event: ““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, and I will place you in your own land.

Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the LORD” (Ezekiel 37:13-14).

Hundreds of years after Isaiah lived, the apostle Paul spoke of this time of promised peace, showing it would be so not only for Israel and Judah, but for everybody: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ *all shall be made alive* . . . The last enemy that will be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:22, 26).

Those who fought and died in the walled cities of ancient Judah, in the fortresses and trenches of Verdun during the 1914-1918 war and in the hills and cities of present-day Bosnia and Rwanda, and those who will yet die in future wars, will experience a better way. The promises God transmitted through Isaiah allow us to look beyond this violent world to the time of ultimate peace.

### A soldier at rest

Ferdinand Viviès died a few years after I met him. But he, like all those of his brothers in arms who died at Verdun and all of his fellow human beings who have died violently down through the ages, will one day awake to a marvelous time of peace.

It is wonderfully comforting to know that someday all mankind will turn from war to positive, uplifting and constructive pursuits. Just as Ferdinand Viviès wanted to turn his thoughts from the sufferings of war to the peaceful cultivating and caring for his garden, so the promises God gave through Isaiah show that one day humanity will forever forsake the ways of war and live peacefully and in harmony.

The painful, bad news of today will be forever swallowed up by the good news of the world tomorrow. *GN*

### RECOMMENDED READING

A bright future for mankind lies beyond today’s headlines of horror and suffering. To discover how it will come about, request your copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. It’s yours free for the asking from the office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2 of this issue. To learn more about the biblical promise of the resurrection, be sure to request *What Happens After Death?* It’s also yours free. Discover this wonderful good news for yourself!

# Staying Alert in a Dangerous World: India & Pakistan in Perspective

by John Ross Schroeder

“Despite long-standing intelligence monitoring, India’s five nuclear tests on land . . . took the world by surprise.” So stated the June issue of the magazine *Strategic Comments*. So much for stability in an uncertain age.

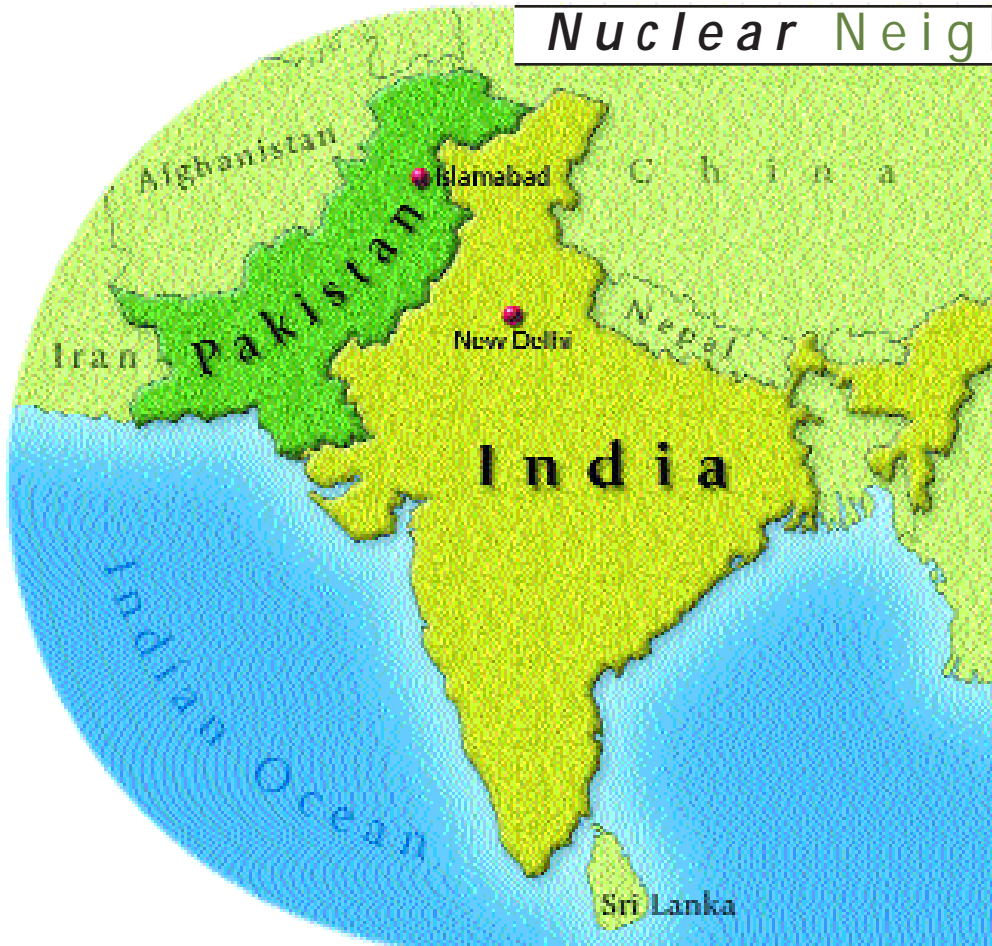
Two neighboring Eastern nations—India and Pakistan—rattled the relative peace and well-being of the world with their recent successful nuclear-weapons tests and saber-rattling directed at each other. The threat is made more ominous by a potential war that would be partially moti-

vated by deep-seated religious differences.

Not many years ago the Berlin Wall fell, and the communist Soviet empire virtually collapsed. In those—from the Western point of view—heady days, some observers thought it possible that the world was adopting a new order, one that would usher in an unprecedented age of international cooperation. One hundred fifty nations soon signed a fairly comprehensive treaty to ban nuclear tests.

Recent events show that no end to the nuclear threat is in sight. If more countries develop or

## Nuclear Neighbors



### The India-Pakistani War Threat

“Despite Western intelligence services’ uncertainty about details, both New Delhi and Islamabad have clearly demonstrated the capability to deploy nuclear weapons on attack aircraft and ballistic missiles, and are likely to do this in future. Neither country’s leadership is aiming at nuclear war, but their poor intelligence services, relatively inefficient military communications and deeply ingrained mutual paranoia mean that the possibility of catastrophic mistakes is very real” (*Strategic Comments*, June 1998)



India and Pakistan have gone to war before.

gain access to these nightmarish weapons, the world will become an even more dangerous place. The Western nations have solid reasons for wanting to contain the nuclear spread. Yet Libya, Iran, Iraq and possibly North Korea are seen as nations with the disconcerting capacity to gain nuclear arsenals in the not-too-distant future.

### A sobering press briefing

This writer recently attended a press briefing at the Foreign Press Association in London at which Gerald Segal, director of studies at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, analyzed recent India-Pakistan developments in the light of the nuclear threat.

Dr. Segal lamented the harm done to the discernible progress that previously had been made in limiting the nuclear threat. He noted that nations such as the United States, Russia and Britain had already made drastic cuts in such weaponry and that South Africa and Brazil had apparently pulled out of the atomic race.

**It's supremely important for you to keep your finger on the pulse of our age—especially when we analyze the latest nuclear developments menacing our vulnerable planet.**

Dr. Segal described the recent tests as “a wake-up call to us all” and reminded his listeners that bad decisions now will increase the threat to human survival.

The director of strategic studies shocked some in the audience when he declared that China is the main reason India possesses and develops nuclear weaponry. Particularly in the long term, India is far more afraid of China than Pakistan, he said. Many analysts and observers have already labeled China as the next superpower.

National prestige affects Indian thinking. According to *Strategic Comments*, “India wants to be seen to have a hydrogen bomb both because these devices are vastly more destructive than fission bombs (as used in Hiroshima in 1945) and for reasons of national prestige.

“The possession of such weapons would clearly raise India above Pakistan, and—so Indians think—place them in the club of the five recognised nuclear-weapons states [America, Russia,

Britain, France and China]. These countries are also permanent members of the UN Security Council, to which India believes it has a right to belong.”

### A growing fraternity

The number of nuclear powers is growing. Experts recognize the existence of five such nations, but, according to Dr. Segal, in reality there are “five plus two” now that India and Pakistan have joined the nuclear club. He, along with some other analysts, believes that other countries, including Israel, also possess nuclear arms.

As nuclear weaponry expands, other nations feel it crucial to develop and add nuclear devices to their defense arsenals. To them it is a matter of common sense and survival. This situation considerably weakens world-community control over the nuclear-arms race.

Economic pressures in Pakistan are adding to the fear that she will share her nuclear secrets with nations such as Iraq and Iran—for a hefty price, of course. Western sanctions that could greatly

increase Pakistani economic hardship might drive her into making sales to dangerous and unstable regimes.

It's a catch-22 conundrum. The West feels sanctions are an important deterrence to further nuclear activity, but if overly applied they could easily backfire. It's a delicate balancing act.

No one wants to be faced with such dilemmas. Somewhere we have gone wrong. Is there a source that tells us the significance of these and other world-altering events and where we can expect to be 10, 20 and 50 years from now?

### The largely ignored biblical perspective

The nuclear threat is not divorced from the Bible. Though 2,000 years old and more, the Scriptures are quite up to date and applicable to our world. They specifically warn us that an unprecedented time of universal distress will descend on planet earth. Several biblical authors describe an era of earth-jarring

developments and events.

Consider these words from the book of Daniel (ca. 535 B.C.), written by a prophet of God: “At that time Michael [an archangel] shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and *there shall be a time of trouble*, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time” (Daniel 12:1, emphasis added throughout).

Even earlier the prophet Jeremiah wrote similar words of warning: “Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labour, every face turned deathly pale? *How awful that day will be!* None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it” (Jeremiah 30:6-7, New International Version).

Until the mid-20th century mankind could not have grasped the horrendous portent of these words. Yet they are rendered more ominous by the later warnings of Jesus Christ Himself: “*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).

### Therefore, watch

Ours is a world fraught with unexpected dangers. Our future is in jeopardy. We need to make sure we are spiritually on our guard. Jesus Himself warns: “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

Our biggest problem is that we have lost sight of God and His way of life. That is why the United Church of God publishes booklets on many topics relevant to the Bible and our world. We announce these new titles to our readers in the pages of *The Good News* magazine as soon as they are prepared and printed.

In the meantime, why not request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. It provides the background vital to understanding much of the prophetic portions of the Bible. **GN**

# An Overview of Conditions

## The high cost of nuclear weapons

How much has the United States spent on nuclear weapons? According to a study issued by the Brookings Institution, some *\$5.8 trillion*.



The Washington think tank's report, described as the first comprehensive study of the costs of producing the nation's nuclear arsenal, factored in costs for handling nuclear wastes, personnel, environmental damage, weapon construction and dismantling, maintenance, bases and "delivery systems": bombers, submarines and missiles armed with nuclear weapons.

Highlights from the report:

- Building the nuclear arsenal has been relatively cheap, at \$409.4 billion. Deployment costs, in contrast, amounted to \$3.2 trillion, almost eight times the cost of making the weapons.
- Defending against other nations' nuclear weapons cost American taxpayers an estimated \$937.2 billion.
- The nuclear program's costs were the third-largest expense in the federal budget since 1940. The only larger programs were total defense spending (\$13.2 billion) and

*The \$5.8 trillion cost of nuclear-weapons programs is roughly equal to the entire U.S. national debt—or the nation's gross annual economic output from only a few years ago.*

social security (\$7.9 trillion). The next-highest budget items were welfare payments (\$5.3 trillion) and national-debt interest (\$4.7 trillion).

- The \$5.8 trillion cost of nuclear-weapons programs is roughly equal to the entire U.S. national debt—or the nation's gross annual economic output from only a few years ago.

- Nuclear-weapons programs amounted to 29 percent of defense spending since 1940 and 11 percent of all U.S. government spending—including total costs of World War II.

- Overall, nations have conducted 2,056 atmospheric and underground nuclear-weapons tests. The United States accounted for about half of the total, with 1,030; the Soviet Union conducted 715 tests; Britain, France and China tested another 300; and India and Pakistan recently joined the nuclear club with 11 tests.

- The United States produced some 70,000 warheads between 1945 and 1990. The nuclear arsenal peaked at 32,000 warheads in the 1960s; it now stands at about 10,500.

Previous research had not included many of the costs factored into this study, and as a result military planners and

government agencies have viewed the weapons as relatively inexpensive. "As large as they are," concluded the study, "the U.S. government has no clear idea of these overall costs, past or present, because it has never attempted to track them over time." (Sources: *The Washington Post*, Gannett News Service.)

## Pope reminds the wayward about Sunday

People, especially in the West, live in an increasingly secular world in which the church is generally far from the center. Attendance in mainstream churches is declining, and the Roman Catholic Church is no exception. In Italy only 28 percent of Catholics attend Sunday mass. About a third of the 60 million U.S. Catholics attend weekly.

These and other factors prompted Pope John Paul II to issue a 95-page "apostolic letter" urging his flock to set aside Sunday as a day of attending mass, resting and reflecting, as well as doing good works. He made it clear that the church still considers it a sin for a Catholic not to attend weekly mass without good reason.

In his decree the pope said Catholics "are obligated in conscience to arrange their Sunday rest in a way which allows them to take part in the Eucharist, refraining from work and activities which are incompatible with the sanctification of the Lord's day."

Unfortunately, he continued, "when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely a part of a weekend, it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that it can no longer see the heavens." Any rabbi could say the same about the seventh-day Sabbath.

The Bible does say that Christians are not to neglect assembling together (Hebrews 10:25), but shouldn't we be sure on which day God wants us to assemble? You might write for our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest* to come to greater understanding of the biblical Sabbath. (Sources: *The New York Times*, *The Sunday Times* [London], *The Independent on Sunday* [London], *The Washington Post*.)

## AIDS: good news and bad

The 12th World AIDS Conference produced both good and bad news in the fight against AIDS.

Among the good news, health authorities reported they are ready to initiate a program that could reduce the number of child cases of AIDS in poorer countries, possibly saving the lives of up to 5,000 children in the first year alone. The program involves giving anti-AIDS drugs to women in the late stages of pregnancy and appears to drastically reduce transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) from mothers to infants.

Such good news, however, was offset by a number of disturbing reports such as:

- Some 16,000 people contract AIDS every day. Of these, 1,600 are infants infected with the virus during childbirth.
- More than 29 million adults were infected with HIV at the end of 1997. Total infections number almost 34 million.
- An estimated 5.6 million people were newly infected with HIV in 1997, while 2.3 million died of AIDS.



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• Only 4 percent of those infected with HIV live in Western Europe, the United States or other affluent countries where expensive AIDS medicines are often able to keep the virus in check. For the overwhelming majority of those infected in other countries, such medications are hopelessly out of reach.

• In some African countries, more than 25 percent of the adult population is infected with HIV. In 13 countries more

*AIDS rivals the most deadly epidemics in history—the black death, which killed some 20 million people during the Middle Ages, and the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918-19, which took 20 million lives.*

than 10 percent of the adults carry the AIDS virus. In some cities more than a third of adults are infected, along with up to 70 percent of women tested at prenatal clinics.

• Because testing is not widely available, officials estimate that 90 percent of Africans with HIV likely do not know they are infected and consequently spread the virus to unsuspecting sex partners.

• AIDS rivals the most deadly epidemics in history—the black death, which killed some 20 million people during the Middle Ages, and the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918-19, which took 20 million lives. (Sources: Associated Press, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*.)

## Update on church unity

The Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches have edged much closer to resolving a nearly 500-year-old dispute about the doctrine of justification. Catholics have generally maintained that good works contribute to salvation. In 1545 the Vatican proclaimed at the Council of Trent: "If anyone affirms that the sinner is justified by faith alone, let him be anathema." But Lutheran founder Martin Luther clearly stated his contrary view that salvation was by faith alone. (For biblical insights on the question of salvation, please request our free booklet *The Road to Eternal Life*.)

Nonetheless, Catholics and Lutherans drew up a joint declaration and sent it to the 124-member churches of the Lutheran World Federation. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America endorsed the document last year. Cardinal Edward Cassidy, Australian prelate and chairman of the Pontifical Council, said the accord was a milestone in ecumenical efforts toward ending differences with 66 million Lutherans and represents hope for progress in the quest for unity between Catholics and Protestants.

Recently Dr. George Carey, archbishop of Canterbury, publicly urged the Roman church to abandon its general ruling that forbids non-Catholics from receiving communion in Catholic congregations. However, a significant stumbling block to this huge step toward Anglo-Catholic unity is the Church of England's decision to ordain women. Recently an

1896 proclamation by Pope Leo XIII that decreed that "Anglican ordinations are null and void" surfaced as a point of contention. (Sources: *Los Angeles Times*, *The Times* [London], *The Guardian* [London].)

## British debate age of consent for homosexual acts

Recent decades have seen periodic calls to greatly restrict the influence and power of the upper house of the British Parliament, the House of Lords. But supporters of the upper house say that the wisdom and experience of age are needed to prevent younger legislators from making serious mistakes.

A case in point is the recent decision by the House of Commons to lower the age of consent for private homosexual relations from 18 to 16. *The Times* recently reported that "a coalition of [Lords] peers is preparing for a campaign to overturn the decision by [members of Parliament] to reduce the age of homosexual consent to 16." Critics of the decision pointed out that immature teenagers can easily be misled into something that they could greatly regret later in life.

The House of Commons vote was lopsided, 336-129, and occurred only four years after the lower house had decided to reduce the age of consent from 21 to 18. Homosexual acts between consenting adults in private were legalized in the mid-1960s.

Church leaders' protests that the action undermined government's responsibility to offer "a vision of what is good" fell on deaf ears. In spite of a warning from the archbishop of Canterbury, the prime minister and his cabinet voted for this recent measure.

About sleaze in general, the prime minister issued an edict to his ministers, officials and political aides maintaining that "we must be purer than pure." Apparently this declaration does not extend to all areas of morality.

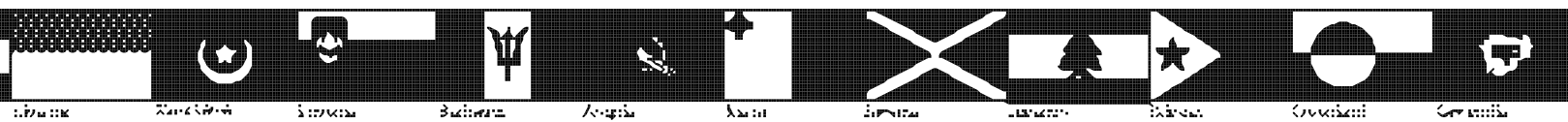
The consequences will prove tragic for British life and culture. According to a *Daily Mail* report: "Channel 4 is planning to screen a drama series about homosexual men." This

*Scripture firmly warns of the consequences of permitting a sexually loose society and includes commandments against all illicit relationships outside of marriage.*

eight-part series will highlight relationships between two 29-year-old men "and a 15-year-old" (emphasis ours). Already heard are less-than-subtle hints that even age 16 is not quite low enough.

Of course, the Bible forbids homosexual acts at any age (Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Scripture firmly warns of the consequences of permitting a sexually loose society and includes commandments against all illicit relationships outside of marriage as well. (Sources: The Associated Press, *The Daily Mail* [London], *Evening Standard* [London], *The Daily Telegraph* [London].)

—John Ross Schroeder and Scott Ashley





*Why People  
Don't Understand*

# the Kingdom of God

by Noel Hornor

About one billion people profess Christianity. Christianity traces its origin and its beliefs to the teachings of Jesus Christ, who lived almost 2,000 years ago.

Yet it is a paradox that many of the adherents to Christianity are not aware of Jesus' central teaching. As a result, it is rarely proclaimed.

The heart and core of Jesus Christ's message was that the Kingdom of God would be established on earth. This theme is found throughout the four Gospels. As historian Michael Grant puts it, "every thought and saying of Jesus was directed and subordinated to one single thing . . . , the realization of the Kingdom of God upon the earth," and "this one phrase [Kingdom of God] sums up his whole ministry and his whole life's work" (*Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels*, 1995, pp. 10-11).

Yet, as Grant puts it, modern Christianity "prefers to dwell on quite different aspects of his career and instruction" (*ibid.*, p. 29).

## The disciples proclaimed the Kingdom

So why do we hear so little about the Kingdom of God—as proclaimed in the Bible—in modern Christianity?

The disciples of Jesus obviously understood His message. References to the Kingdom of God—or the Kingdom of Heaven, as the Gospel of Matthew usually refers to it—appear many times in their writings. Matthew alone contains 37 references. Together the four Gospels specifically mention God's Kingdom 86 times in addition to other, oblique, references to it. The remainder of the New Testament, from Acts through Revelation, mentions God's Kingdom many times.

The disciples recognized with crystal clarity that, when Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, He spoke in terms of *a real government*—a structured, organized entity with the very authority of God behind it. Certain rulers who heard Christ's message recognized the political implications and viewed His words as a threat to their own power. This became a factor in Christ's eventual crucifixion (Luke 23:2; John 19:12).

To Jesus and His disciples, the term *Kingdom of God* meant a government that would be established on earth. They anticipated that its arrival would amount to nothing less than *a sweeping, overwhelming change in the world order*.

In teaching the message of the Kingdom, Jesus was simply extending the central theme of the Old Testament. The Hebrew prophets had earlier stressed the reality of the Kingdom. Referring to the Bible, John Bright wrote: "Had we to give that book a title, we might with justice call it 'The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God.' That is, indeed, its central theme everywhere. Old Testament and New Testament thus stand together as the two acts of a single drama" (*The Kingdom of God*, 1981, p. 197).

### The Millennium

Over time, historians began referring to this kingdom to come as *the Millennium*. This is because in Revelation 20 the apostle John wrote that the saints would reign with Christ for 1,000 years: "And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them . . . And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

The word *millennium* is a derivation of the Latin words *mille* for "thousand" and *annum* for "year." Most reference works address the Kingdom of God teaching under the category of "Millennium."

Be aware, however, that the Millennium and the Kingdom of God aren't synonymous, although they overlap. According to the Bible, the millennial reign of Christ will *initiate* God's rule on earth, but His Kingdom will *extend past the Millennium* into eternity (Daniel 7:13-14).

Belief in a literal Millennium continued for several centuries after the apostles. "This view was widely held in the Early Church and was expounded by the Church fathers Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian" (*Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1993, "Millennium").

However, later church leaders put a different interpretation on the Bible's millennial teachings. They differed from the teachings of Jesus and His apostles in that they said it should not be understood literally, that the concept was only an allegory. The third-century theologian Origen was the first person on record to promote the allegorical explanation.

A later theologian, Augustine (354-430), who originally believed in a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ, altered the teaching even more. He "identified the Church with the Kingdom of God and maintained that the millennial age had already come" (ibid.). He "advanced the theory that the millennium had actually begun with

Christ's nativity" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, "Millenarianism").

Since Christianity by then was accepted as the religion of the Roman Empire, Augustine taught that *the church* in this present world is the Kingdom of God, and "the thousand years stand for all the years of the Christian era." Augustine stated this idea in *The City of God*, Book 20, Chapter 7. The church then "officially adopted Augustine's view that the biblical descriptions of the millennium were allegorical" (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1998, "Millennium").

This teaching, however, cannot be reconciled with the many Bible prophecies of the Kingdom of God. The Bible shows that when the Kingdom comes the returning Christ will take His place as *divine ruler*

## **The Kingdom of God was a central part of Jesus Christ's message and thus a major theme of the Bible. So why is it so rarely understood and so rarely taught today?**

*of the earth* (Revelation 11:15).

Jesus said He would come "in His glory" and "sit on the throne of His glory." He said He would then judge the nations according to their treatment of their fellowman (Matthew 25:31-46). Obviously this *has not happened yet*.

The Hebrew prophets showed that the arrival of God's Kingdom on earth would bring worldwide peace, physical abundance and divine righteousness (Isaiah 2:4; Amos 9:13). In contrast, history shows that the "Christian era" Augustine equated with God's Kingdom is usually a time of violence, war, starvation and widespread lawlessness.

A hallmark of the age of the church is its persecution and slaughter of professing Christians by others who also claimed Christianity. As historian William Manchester described it: "No one has calculated how many sixteenth-century Christians slaughtered other Christians in the name of Christ, but the gore began to thicken early" (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 1992, p. 178).

### A literal monarchy?

Disputes over the Kingdom of God concept have enlivened religious discussions

for centuries. The issue has not been whether the Kingdom is discussed in the Bible; scholars and theologians readily acknowledge that. The issue has been what does the Bible *mean* when it speaks of the Kingdom. The majority of theologians have lost faith in the Bible as it is written.

How should we view the prophesied millennial rule of Christ and the saints? Should we take it literally or allegorically? Even some who disagree with a literal Millennium admit that the Bible describes a literal kingdom: "The figurative interpretation . . . cannot be made exegetically good even in its most plausible applications . . . This remarkable paragraph in John's Apocalypse [Revelation] speaks of a real millennial reign of Christ on earth together with certain of His saints . . ." (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, 1986, "Millennium").

The return of Christ to reign over the earth in a *literal kingdom* is a plain teaching of the Bible. Generally speaking, those who hold a strong belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible believe that Jesus Christ will literally return and reign on earth. The Scriptures also teach that Christians experience a foretaste of the world to come (Hebrews 6:5) and are the advance emissaries of the Kingdom of God. They are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

### A later concept

Over the last few centuries a new definition of the Kingdom of God has surfaced. This idea does not deny the teaching outright but applies to it a twist of reasoning. This new view began in Europe. "In the 1700s, European intellectuals revamped the millennium-old system for discerning truth: instead of grounding all knowledge in biblical revelation, they tried to build on the foundation of human reason" (*Christian History*, issue No. 55, p. 20).

Theologians who adopted this approach became known as the liberal school. What did they conclude about the Kingdom of God? They came to believe that "Western civilization was establishing Christ's earthly rule" (ibid., p. 24).

This secular kind of theology is rooted in the idea that human nature is *improving*. This view, however, is contradicted by both the Bible and secular history. Man's many wars and atrocities—especially those in this bloodstained 20th century—challenge this view.

Further, the Bible offers not the slightest

hint that human power and ingenuity could ever establish a righteous world. On the contrary, it shows that man's *misrule* will bring the human race *to the verge of extinction* (Matthew 24:21-22).

Even though its members learned that they should set good examples of Christian living, the New Testament Church received no commission whatsoever to politically reform the present world's society. Abuses in the Roman Empire of that day were many. Yet "the early church had no hope of reforming the state or of bringing it into conformity to the Kingdom of God" (Bright, p. 235). Instead, Church members heard from their leaders that they should hope and pray for God's Kingdom to come. The New Testament closes with a plea for this very thing: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

### Why did mankind stop believing?

The early Church believed that Christ would return to rule over the nations. Christians proclaimed this message faithfully. They believed it completely. They prayed for it fervently. It was on their minds always. At one point during Christ's ministry, the apostles asked Him, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3).

After Christ's death and resurrection, and just before His ascension to heaven, they again wanted to know, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Jesus told them it was not God's intent that they should know exactly when this would happen. He told them they should concern themselves with proclaiming His message to the world (verses 7-8).

Their response from that day was to preach the message of His Kingdom. They crisscrossed the Roman Empire in the process. As they did so, they held firmly to the belief that Christ would return soon to establish God's Kingdom. Late in his life the apostle Peter believed the end was imminent. He wrote that "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). And John wrote, "Little children, it is the last hour . . ." (1 John 2:18). Paul's early letters (1 and 2 Thessalonians) show that he also believed that God's Kingdom would arrive during his lifetime.

The belief and hope that the return of Christ is near has intrigued Bible readers

from the apostles' time to our own. "The church in every age has always lived with the expectancy of the consummation of all things in its day" (Alan Johnson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12, 1981, p. 417).

Through the ages, when their anticipation of the imminent arrival of Jesus Christ did not materialize, men and women have been forced to retrench mentally.

### Do not grow weary

With many people through the centuries anticipating the early arrival of their Lord, some lost heart when it didn't occur when they expected. Some gave up in disappointment. The epistle to the Hebrews, written several decades after Christ's ascension to heaven, exhorts Christians to continue to believe and not lose confidence in Christ's return (Hebrews 10:35). It reminds them of a statement from the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry" (verse 37; Habakkuk 2:3).

The epistle to the Hebrews did not promise that Christ would return by a particular time. It does, however, assure Christians that He will surely come, and they must continue to believe. The quote from Habakkuk is most appropriate. The prophet Habakkuk lived in the nation of Judah six centuries before the Christian era, in a time of societal disintegration. Because of the sins of the nation, God was about to allow the people of Judah to be overrun by the mighty empire of Babylon.

Habakkuk despaired at the thought of this. He knew that God had chosen his nation centuries earlier to accomplish a special mission. He didn't understand, in light of this, why God would allow catastrophe to occur to Judah. God assured Habakkuk that He would accomplish His purpose with Judah but that it would be at a later time. God also told the prophet that he must wait for the time of God's choosing to bring it to pass. God reminded Habakkuk that "the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

Hebrews 10:38 quotes from Habakkuk 2:4. The lesson is that *God's timetable may differ from man's*. God does not allow man to foresee the chronological details of His plan of salvation, but the outcome is certain. God will do what He has promised. This was the crucial lesson

for Christians in the early decades of the Church, and it remains an essential lesson for the people of God in every age. We must retain our faith in the Kingdom of God. God will do what He has promised. He *will* send Jesus Christ, who will return to earth in triumph.

### The eternal kingdom

The prophets of the Old Testament, under God's inspiration, envisioned His *everlasting* kingdom (Isaiah 9:7; Psalm 145:13; Daniel 7:27). Jesus Christ confirmed its longevity, adding that "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Peter, who had expected to see God's Kingdom while he lived, wrote before he died that "an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the *everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

Though Peter did not live to see God's Kingdom, he did not lose heart. Christians must continue to believe in the sure promise of the Kingdom. We must faithfully serve God while we wait for it.

Life brings many disappointments and trials, testing our faith in God's promises. In the parable of the sower, in Matthew 13, Jesus identified three areas of temptation His people would encounter: the work of the devil, the temptation to covet material possessions, and personal trials.

A Christian confronts all of these at times. All tempt us and distract us from what should be our primary focus in life—to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

The apostle Paul exhorted converts of his time saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Those who remain faithful will look beyond their distresses and put their confidence in God. These are they who will inherit God's Kingdom. *GN*

### RECOMMENDED READING

Exactly what is the Kingdom of God? What is the gospel—the good news—that Jesus Christ brought and taught? Is the Kingdom of God already here? You need to understand more about this fundamental biblical truth. Be sure to request *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. This booklet is free for the asking when you write to the office nearest you listed on page 2.



# How is the Work of God Accomplished Today?

*Jesus Christ gave His Church a mission. How is that mission being carried out today?*

by Roger Foster

**D**id you know that Jesus personally began a special *work* that has endured for almost 2,000 years? He immersed His physical life in firmly establishing that work. Once, because He had been too busy to eat, He told His disciples, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish *His work*” (John 4:34, emphasis added throughout). Later He established His Church to continue that sacred mission.

What is that “work,” and how is it *sustained* in today’s chaotic world?

The *work of the Church* has two primary aspects. First, the Church is commissioned to announce to humanity the *incredible significance of Jesus Christ’s second coming*. Most people can see that our world is filled with problems that defy human solutions. But few people understand how the returning Jesus Christ will *solve* these dilemmas of mankind. He has commissioned His Church *to make that knowledge available* to a confused world.

## The world’s best news

Just before He ascended to heaven, Jesus told His apostles, “Go into all the world and preach the *good news* [His gospel] to all creation” (Mark 16:15, New International Version). Earlier He had told them that “this *gospel of the kingdom* will be *preached in all the world* . . . and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Do you realize why this *good news*—the gospel of the Kingdom of God—is so wonderful? You need to know! Otherwise

it will be impossible for you to understand the primary message of the Bible.

This gospel—the good news announcing the coming Kingdom of God—was the focus of Christ’s ministry (Mark 1:14-15). It is an *incredibly positive message* filled with hope and purpose for humanity. It also explains why confusion and heartaches permeate the world.

At His return Jesus Christ will begin to fulfill the *wonderful promises* we read about in biblical prophecies—promises to solve the horrible human problems we face. Peter tells us that “the Lord is not slack concerning His promise . . . but is longsuffering toward us, *not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). That is what the work of the Church is all about—teaching human beings the truth of God to make true repentance possible, and to share the hope of a brighter future.

Jesus Christ will return to earth and teach the nations God’s ways (Micah 4:1-2). Then “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (verse 3). Peace and security will finally blanket the entire earth.

No event in the history of mankind is more important to its well-being than the second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Church is to explain to the world just how *essential* His second coming is.

The Church, however, is also commissioned to thoroughly *teach* the ways of God to those who will heed the call to repentance. Jesus told His apostles to

“make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you* . . .” (Matthew 28:19-20).

It is not enough just to tell humanity that this wonderful time is coming. Work in preparation for His Kingdom must be accomplished now. Some will be nurtured and trained to aid Christ when He returns.

Notice how Jesus plans to use those who have been thoroughly taught and trained in the ways of God. “To him who *overcomes* I will grant to *sit with Me on My throne* . . .” (Revelation 3:21).

John says, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection . . . *They shall be priests of God* and of Christ, and *shall reign with Him a thousand years*” (Revelation 20:6). As Christ’s assistants, they will instruct the world in the ways of God. “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3). As a result, “*the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD* as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

That is why the *work* of the Church is so important today. Not only is it proclaiming a message of hope that Christ will bring world peace in His Kingdom, but it is also *preparing* those who will assist Christ in bringing righteousness to the earth!

## A mission based on giving

*Gospel* means simply “good news.” That is why this magazine is named *The Good News*. Through it we bring

our readers information that contrasts the ways of “*this present evil age*” (Galatians 1:4) with the wonderful promise of “*the world to come*” (Hebrews 2:5).

Have you ever wondered how we are able to offer this magazine free?

Our approach was laid out by Jesus long ago. He said, “*Freely you have received, freely give*” (Matthew 10:8). Paul said, “I preached the gospel of God to you *free of charge*” (2 Corinthians 11:7). How was this possible? Paul had expenses. His travels cost money. Yet he never charged for his work in preaching the gospel.

The key lies in yet another responsibility that God gives to His people. Long ago, God called Abraham and promised him, “In you all the families of the earth shall be *blessed*” (Genesis 12:3). God gave Abraham blessings so He could *use him in blessing others*. That is the way God works, and that is what has allowed His servants to freely disseminate His truth *free of charge* to those who will receive it.

God has always made sure that those who surrender their lives to Him, as Abraham did, would be able to bear the cost of carrying out the work they do on His behalf. Paul put it this way: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for *every good work*” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

God, by His very nature, gives. Those who are converted and become *like Him* also become a *giving* people. They want to serve others and *participate* in the work Christ has given to His Church. They take that commission to the Church seriously.

Abraham practiced a principle that God later included in His law when He entered into a covenant with ancient Israel. When Abraham met with Melchizedek, the “priest of God Most High,” Abraham “*gave him a tenth of everything*” (Genesis 14:18, 20, NIV).

Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, continued this practice. “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me . . . of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You’” (Genesis 28:20-22).

These men of God practiced the principle of *tithing*—giving God a *tenth* of their income. Later, when Jacob’s descendants became the nation of Israel, God used tithing to finance the service of the priests, the nation’s spiritual leaders. He told Israel, “A *tithe* of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from

the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD” (Leviticus 27:30, NIV).

### Jesus supports tithing

In the time of Jesus Christ, He commended the Pharisees’ obedience to the law concerning their practice of tithing. But their failure to apply the law’s instruction to be considerate of others made them hypocrites. Jesus said, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin” (Matthew 23:23, NIV). In this they were careful to obey.

Continuing in the same verse: “But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.” Here they were careless. “You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former.” Jesus taught that tithing should not be neglected by obedient servants of God. He tells us clearly that tithing is a practice we should keep.

Today those who support the work given to the Church *live by faith* just as did the patriarchs of old. In fact, Paul speaks of the true disciples of Christ as “those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16).

That is why they have the courage to support this work today. They believe in God’s Word. They practice tithing because they have faith that God will supply their needs. They believe Jesus when He said, “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:31-33). They know *God will provide* for their own needs if they become partners with Him in doing His work.

### How the work of the Church expands

After preaching for 3½ years Jesus was left with only a few who remained loyal after His crucifixion (Acts 1:15). But He had already explained how they could expand their effectiveness. He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore *pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Jesus made it clear to His disciples that sending laborers into the harvest is God’s work. Only God the Father can *draw* new laborers to repentance and give them the faith to become part of the work Jesus began. At the same time, Jesus assured

them that God would *do that very thing*.

When Peter preached a powerful sermon showing that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 2:2-4, 14, 22-36), “those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). In one day the labor force of the Church was dramatically expanded. After that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (verse 47).

### Coworkers in the mission of the Church

Not every laborer was formally ordained. Paul speaks of many who helped in various ways, including two women who struggled beside him “*in the work of the gospel*, together with Clement and *the rest of my co-workers*, whose names are in the book of life” (Philippians 4:3, New Revised Standard Version).

These people supported Paul’s efforts in many ways. For instance, Paul commends the Philippians for their generosity in supporting his work in other areas. He wrote: “For even when I was in Thessalonica, *you sent me aid again and again when I was in need* . . . I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus *the gifts* you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs” (Philippians 4:16-19, NIV).

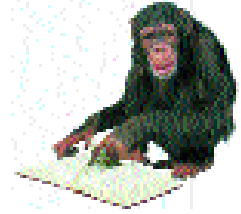
The *offerings* of these Christians *supported the work of God* that was being done through the apostle Paul.

So it is today. The United Church of God proclaims the truth of God through the spoken word as well as written media such as *The Good News* magazine. Church members actively participate by several means, including their heartfelt prayers and contributions to meet the expenses of this vitally important mission.

It is the commitment of these and other laborers in the Church of God that allows the mission of the Church to continue almost 2,000 years after Jesus started it. It is because of this kind of commitment that others can receive *The Good News* and other literature *free of charge*.

As Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). His true disciples are convinced that He meant it when He said, “*Freely you have received, freely give*.” Christ is using the combined efforts of dedicated coworkers to keep the mission He gave to His Church alive and functioning today. *GN*

# Evolution: *Fact or Fiction?*



How solid is the evidence supporting natural selection and evolution?  
Can these theories be proven? Are you being given all the facts?  
*The Good News* continues its examination of creation and evolution.

by Mario Seiglie

How did the theory of evolution gain such wide acceptance? Is the evidence for it all that sound? What has science discovered to back up the theory? Is there consensus among many scientists in support of this theory?

Almost 140 years have passed since Charles Darwin's treatise on evolution, *On the Origin of Species*, appeared in 1859. Science has advanced greatly since those horse-and-buggy days. A vast amount of additional information is readily available.

Surprisingly enough, as we near the end of the 20th century, the controversy about evolution is increasing. Remarkably, much of this debate is taking place among scientists.

## Heated discussion on evolution

Francis Hitching, a member of the Royal Archaeological Institute, gives a general view of the debate to date: "In April 1882, Charles Darwin died peacefully of a heart attack at his family home in Kent, England. His great theory, the basis of all modern biology teaching, had come to be accepted with a fervor close to reverence . . . Yet as 1982 approached, and with the centenary of his passing, change was in the wind. Feuds concerning the theory of evolution exploded rancorously in otherwise staid and decorous scientific journals.

"Entrenched positions, for and against, were established in high places, and insults lobbed like mortar bombs from either side. Meanwhile the doctrine of Divine creation, assumed by most scientists to have been relegated long ago to the pulpits of obscure fundamentalist sects, swept back into the classrooms of American schools. Darwinism is under assault on many fronts" (*The Neck of the Giraffe*, 1982, p. 7).

Why the confusion and contention? Simply put, the increasing scientific evidence doesn't fit the Darwinist model, and many evolutionists find themselves on the defensive.

How has this come about? It has happened mainly because the three primary supposed proofs of the theory have not held up to further discovery and scrutiny.

## Darwinism not the same as evolution

A word of caution on the use of the term *evolution*: It can mean different things to different people. The dictionary first defines evolution as a process of change from lower to a higher state and, sec-



## Is the theory of evolution obsolete?

"Darwin, I suggest, is in the process of being discarded . . . But perhaps in deference to the venerable old gentleman . . . it is being done as discreetly and gently as possible, with a minimum of publicity."

ond, as the theory Darwin advocated. But they are not the same. *Evolution* literally means simply the successive appearances of perfectly formed life without regard to how they got there. It does not have to refer to Darwinism, which is the doctrine that gradual change led to one species becoming another through the process of natural selection and random mutation.

A species is generally defined as a living thing that can reproduce only after its own kind. So, although most scientists mean Darwinism when they use the term *evolution*, the two definitions of the term are not synonymous and should be carefully defined by the context.

“Why is it,” asks physicist Alan Hayward, “that the terms ‘Darwinism’ and ‘evolution’ are so often used (wrongly) as if they meant the same thing? Simply because it was Darwin who put the old idea of evolution on its

Darwin ultimately attributed this lack of evidence to “the extreme imperfection” of the fossil record as it was known in his time. He was confident that geologists and paleontologists would eventually find such transitional fossils and confirm his theory.

feet. Before Darwin, evolution was regarded by most people as a wild, unbelievable notion. After Darwin, evolution seemed such a reasonable idea that the general public soon took it for granted.

“Many people since Darwin’s day have tried to find an alternative explanation of evolution, but none has succeeded. Just as when he first proposed it, Darwin’s appears the only conceivable method of evolution. It still seems that Darwinism and evolution must stand or fall together” (*Creation and Evolution*, 1985, p. 5).

This is a reason many Darwinists are so adamant about their theory. They know the implications if they fail: The alternative explanation of life on earth is a Creator God. Professor L.T. More has candidly admitted in his book *The Dogma of Evolution*: “Our faith in the doctrine of Evolution depends upon our reluctance to accept the antagonistic doctrine of special creation [creation by God]” (quoted by Francis Hitching, *The Neck of the Giraffe*, p. 109).

### Three supposed proofs for evolution

Darwinism is built on a foundation of three supposed proofs. If these are shown to be in error, the theory collapses.

The first and foremost supposed proof is the fossil record. Darwin and other proponents of his theory were sure they would find

the transformation of species clearly demonstrated in the fossil strata.

Darwin was well aware of the importance of the fossil record to sustain his theory even though he was perplexed with the evidence discovered to date during his lifetime. He admitted the inadequate fossil evidence. “The number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed on the earth, must be truly enormous. Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory” (*On the Origin of Species*, 1909, pp. 319-320).

Darwin ultimately attributed this lack of evidence to “the extreme imperfection” of the fossil record as it was known in his time. He was confident that geologists and paleon-

tologists would eventually find such transitional fossils and confirm his theory. Thomas Huxley, one of the great proponents of Darwinist theory, considered the fossil record to be the only direct proof of evolution. From its findings, he said, the theory would stand or fall.

The second supposed proof offered by Darwinists is natural selection, which they hoped biologists would confirm. “Just as the breeders selected those individuals best suited to the breeder’s needs to be the parents of the next generation,” explained British philosopher Tom Bethell, “so, Darwin argued, nature selected those organisms that were best fitted to survive the struggle for existence. In that way evolution would inevitably occur. And so there it was: a sort of improving machine inevitably at work in nature, ‘daily and hourly scrutinizing,’ Darwin wrote, ‘silently and insensibly working . . . at the improvement of each organic being.’ In this way, Darwin thought, one type of organism could be transformed into another—for instance, he suggested, bears into whales. So that was how we came to have horses and tigers and things—by natural selection” (Tom Bethell, “Darwin’s Mistake,” *The Craft of Prose*, 1977, p. 309).

Finally, the third supposed proof of the theory, which others added after Darwin’s death, is random mutation. Toward the end of his life, Darwin grew increasingly doubtful

that natural selection alone could explain evolution. Yet, at the turn of the century, the laws of inheritance were discovered, and scientists viewed random mutation, combined with natural selection, as the means by which different species could arise. This theory was to be called neo-Darwinism.

These are still the three major proofs scientists offer in support of Darwinism. How have they held up? Let’s examine the facts.

### The fossil evidence

With the passing of almost 140 years since the introduction of Darwin’s theory, what have the experts found in the fossil record? Certainly not the gradual links Darwin had predicted. After an immense worldwide search by geologists and paleontologists, the “missing links” Darwin predicted would be found to bolster his theory are still missing.

Says *Newsweek* magazine: “In 1972 [paleontologists Stephen Jay] Gould and Niles Eldredge collaborated on a paper intended at the time merely to resolve a professional embarrassment for paleontologist: their inability to find the fossils of transitional forms between species, the so-called ‘missing links.’ Darwin, and most of those whose followed him, believed that the work of evolution was slow, gradual and continuous and that a complete lineage of ancestors, shading imperceptibly one into the next, could in theory be reconstructed for all living animals . . . But a century of digging since then has only made their absence more glaring . . . It was Eldredge and Gould’s notion to call off the search and accept the evidence of the fossil record on its own terms” (“Enigmas of Evolution,” March 29, 1982, p. 39).

If the fossil record does not show clear evidence in support of Darwin’s theory, what does it show? It shows in the most primitive fossil strata, the Cambrian layer, a host of perfectly created sea creatures including octopi, starfish, sea urchins and trilobites. Below this strata the fossil record is virtually blank, with only a few traces of plant algae in evidence. Where are the primitive ancestors of these numerous and complex sea creatures? The fossil record, in a major blow to Darwin’s theory, offers no answers.

As we examine higher fossil layers, we find the same pattern repeated. The remains go from invertebrates directly into fish, then to amphibians, later to reptiles and finally to mammals. All these creatures, great and small, are perfectly formed without a fossil

record of one species somehow evolving into another. The record also shows that many species, including insects, are the same throughout the entire geologic column.

### Gaps rather than transitions

Hitching states about the fossil record: "The curious thing is that there is a consistency about the fossil gaps: *the fossils go missing in all the important places*. When you look for links between major groups of animals, they simply aren't there . . . Fish jump into the fossil record seemingly from nowhere: mysteriously, suddenly, fully formed, and in a most un-Darwinian way. And before them are *maddening, illogical gaps where their ancestors should be*" (*The Neck of the Giraffe*, pp. 19-20, emphasis added).

Evolutionists have desperately tried to find at least one such species in transition among the many millions of species discovered in the fossil record. They finally came up with one ostensible example: *archaeopteryx*, claimed to be a half-species between reptile and bird. However, further study has shown this not to be a transitional species at all but a bird with fully formed feathers and capable of flight.

The Darwinists' view of the fossil record is intellectual sleight of hand. They point to the fossil record and its progression of species, citing it as proof of evolutionary change between species. The first point is true—there is a progression—but the second (evolutionary change) is an unfounded supposition. The fossil record shows a progression of perfectly formed species from simpler to more complex. But the second premise, which makes assumptions regarding how they evolved or gradually changed, is not demonstrated in the fossil strata.

### Other theories proposed

To explain a fossil record that doesn't match the theory of evolution, some evolutionists have had to come up with alternative explanations. Some, like Gould and Eldredge, have proposed a "punctuated equilibrium" theory. They propose that evolution took place in short spurts, with long periods of inactivity in between.

This, they say, explains the sudden appearance of new species with no earlier transitional forms. But they have failed to show how this is biologically possible. "For all the excitement it has generated," observes *Newsweek*, "punctuated equilibrium still smacks of heresy to many scientists. It does

## The Miracle of the Human Eye

Charles Darwin described the eye as one of the greatest challenges to his theory. How could he explain it? The eye, after all, is simply incompatible with evolution. "To suppose," he admitted, "that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances . . . could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree" (*On the Origin of Species*, 1909, p. 190).

Jesus Christ said that "the eye is the lamp of the body" (Matthew 6:22). Jacob Bronowski wrote that, "if you compare a human being with even the most sharp-eyed of the great apes, say with a chimpanzee, our vision is incredibly more delicate . . . Their ability to discriminate fine detail (which can be tested in a very simple way) is not comparable with that of human beings" (*The Origins of Knowledge and Imagination*, 1978, pp. 12-13).

The human eye possesses 130 million light-sensitive rods and cones that convert light into chemical impulses. These signals travel at a rate of a billion per second to the brain.

The essential problem for Darwinists is how so many intricate components could have independently evolved to work together perfectly when, if a single component didn't function perfectly, nothing would work at all.

"Now it is quite evident," says scientist Francis Hitching, "that if the slightest thing goes wrong *en route*—if the cornea is fuzzy, or the pupil fails to dilate, or the lens becomes opaque, or the focusing goes wrong—then a recognizable image is not formed. The eye either functions as a whole, or not at all.

"So how did it come to evolve by slow, steady, infinitesimally small Darwinian improvements? Is it really possible that thousands upon thousands of lucky chance mutations happened coincidentally so that the lens and the retina, which cannot work without each other,

not explain what many regard as the crucial point: how and why a new species springs up" ("Enigmas of Evolution," March 29, 1982, p. 39).

Those who admit the lack of transitional fossils are at a loss to explain how the newer forms of life appear. "Orthodox Darwinism," comments Hayward, "offers a plausible biological explanation for what might have happened, but is in conflict with the evidence of geology. And the alternative theory accepts the geological record, but cannot explain how species could arise so suddenly" (*Creation*

evolved in synchrony? What survival value can there be in an eye that doesn't see?

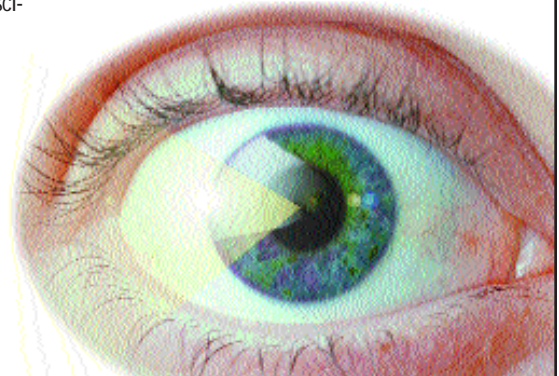
"Small wonder that it troubled Darwin. 'To this day the eye makes me shudder,' [Darwin] wrote to his botanist friend Asa Gray in February, 1860" (*The Neck of the Giraffe*, 1982, p. 86).

Charles Darwin should have considered two passages in the Bible. "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both," wrote King Solomon (Proverbs 20:12). Psalm 94:9 asks: "He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see?"

The same can be said of the brain, nose, palate and dozens of other complex and highly developed organs in any human or animal. It would take a quantum leap of faith to think all this just evolved. Yet that is commonly taught and accepted.

After reviewing the improbability of such organs arising in nature from an evolutionary process, Professor H.S. Lipson, a member of the British Institute of Physics, wrote in 1980: "We must go further than this and admit that the only acceptable alternative is creation. I know that this is anathema to physicists, as indeed it is to me, but we must not reject a theory that we do not like if the experimental evidence supports it" (*Physics Bulletin*, Vol. 30, p. 140).

—Mario Seiglie



The Human Eye

Is it a complex piece of creation or a stroke of evolutionary blind luck?

and Evolution, p. 19).

Avoiding any acknowledgment of God, these scientists do not take into account the obvious conclusion the fossil record shows—that these creatures appeared as perfectly formed organisms in a progressive manner and without previous ancestors of the same kind. After surveying the fossil record, Hayward describes the situation bluntly: "In other words, Darwin has been let down by the rocks . . . Evolutionists rule out the obvious solution, of a great burst of activity by the Creator at the start of the Cambrian period.

But they have no alternative explanation. The astonishing lack of Precambrian fossils is a major weakness in Darwinism” (pp. 42-43).

Of the fossil record of plants, botanist and evolutionist E.J. Corner of Cambridge admits, “I still think that, to the unprejudiced, *the fossil record of plants is in favor of special creation* [creation by God]” (*Evolution*, Royal Botanical Society, 1961, p. 97, emphasis added).

Rather than supporting Darwinism, the fossil record undermines the theory at every turn.

### What about natural selection?

What about natural selection as a supposed proof of Darwin’s theory? How has this second major pillar of evolutionary the-

Embarrassingly for evolutionists, mutation is also not the answer. If anything, the self-correcting system to eliminate mutations shows that a great intelligence was at work when the overall genetic system was designed.

ory fared? In truth, it has been quietly discarded by an increasing number of theorists among the scientific community.

Charles Darwin’s idea that the survival of the fittest would explain how species evolved has been relegated to a redundant, self-evident statement. Geneticist C.H. Waddington defines the fundamental problem of advocating natural selection as a proof of Darwinism: “Natural selection . . . turns out on closer inspection to be a tautology, a statement of an inevitable although previously unrecognized relation. It states that the fittest individuals in a population will leave more offspring” (Bethell, p. 310).

In other words, what are the fittest? Why, those that survive, of course. And what survives? Why, naturally, the fittest. The problem is that this observation is circular reasoning and is not an independent criterion to evaluate results.

Darwin cited an example of the way natural selection was supposed to work: A wolf that had inherited the ability to run especially fast was better equipped to survive. His advantage in outrunning others in the pack when food was scarce meant he could eat better and thus survive longer.

Yet, the very changes that enabled that wolf to run faster could easily become a hindrance if other modifications of the body did not accompany the increased speed. For example, the additional exertion required to run faster would naturally place an added strain on the animal’s heart, and eventually it

could drop from a heart attack. The survival of the fittest would require that any biological or anatomical alterations would have to be in harmony and synchronized with other bodily modifications, or the changes would be of no benefit.

### Natural selection doesn’t change species

Natural selection, scientists have found, deals only with the *number* of species, not the *change* of the species. It has to do with the *survival* and not the *arrival* of the species. “Natural selection,” said Conrad Waddington of Edinburgh University, “is that some things leave more offspring than others; and you ask, which leave more offspring than others? And it is those that leave

more offspring; and there is nothing more to it than that. The whole guts of evolution—which is, how do you come to have horses and tigers and things—is outside the mathematical theory [of neo-Darwinism]” (Wistar Symposium, Moorehead and Kaplan, 1967, p. 14).

Tom Bethell gets to the heart of the problem with natural selection as the foundation of evolution: “This was no good at all. As T. H. Morgan [1933 Nobel Prize winner in medicine for his experiments with the *Drosophila* fruit fly] had remarked, with great clarity: ‘Selection, then, has not produced anything *new*, but only *more* of certain kinds of individual. Evolution, however, means *producing new things*, not *more of what already exists*.’”

Bethell concludes: “Darwin’s theory, I believe, is on the verge of collapse. In his famous book, *Origin of Species*, Darwin made a mistake sufficiently serious to undermine his theory. And that mistake has only recently been recognized as such.

I have not been surprised to read . . . that in some of the latest evolutionary theories ‘natural selection plays no role at all.’ *Darwin, I suggest, is in the process of being discarded* . . . But perhaps in deference to the venerable old gentleman . . . *it is being done as discreetly and gently as possible, with a minimum of publicity*” (Tom Bethell, “Darwin’s Mistake,” *The Craft of Prose*, pp. 311, 314, emphasis added).

Sadly, the critical examination of natural

selection has been undertaken so discreetly that most people are unaware of it, so the inexcusable deception that began nearly 140 years ago continues.

### A look at random mutation

If natural selection is not the answer, what about the third supposed proof: the reliance evolutionists place on random mutation as a cornerstone of evolution?

Curiously enough, Darwin himself was one of the first to discount beneficial effects from rare changes he noted in the species, to the point that he did not include them in his theory. “He did not consider them important,” says Maurice Caullery in his book *Genetics and Heredity*, “because *they nearly always represented an obvious disadvantage* from the point of view of the struggle for existence; consequently they would most likely be rapidly eliminated in the wild state by the operation of natural selection” (1964, p. 10, emphasis added).

Yet in Darwin’s lifetime the principles of genetics were not clearly understood. By the beginning of the 20th century these laws were finally decoded, first by Gregor Mendel, then by Hugo De Vries. Evolutionists quickly seized on these discoveries to support evolution. Sir Julian Huxley, one of the principal spokesmen for evolutionary theory in this century, commented on the unpredictability of mutations: “Mutation . . . provides the raw material of evolution; it is a random affair and takes place in all directions” (*Evolution in Action*, 1953, p. 38).

So, “shortly after the turn of the century, Darwin’s theory suddenly seemed plausible again,” writes Hitching. It was found that once in a while, absolutely at random (about once in ten million times during cell division, we now know) the genes make a copying mistake. These mistakes are known as mutations, and *are mostly harmful*. They lead to a *weakened plant, or a sick or deformed creature*. They do not persist within the species, because they are eliminated by natural selection . . .

“However, followers of Darwin have come to believe that it is the occasional beneficial mutation, rarely though it happens, which is what counts in evolution. They say these favorable mutations, together with sexual mixing, are sufficient to explain how the whole bewildering variety of life on Earth today originated from a common genetic source” (Hitching, p. 49, emphasis added).

### Mutations: liability, not benefit

What has almost a century of research discovered? That mutations are *pathological mistakes* and *not helpful changes* in the genetic code. C.P. Martin of McGill University in Montreal wrote, "Mutation is a pathological process which has had little or nothing to do with evolution" ("A Non-Geneticist Looks at Evolution," *American Scientist*, January 1953, p. 100). Professor Martin's investigations revealed mutations are *overwhelmingly negative* and never creative. He observed that an apparently beneficial mutation was likely only a correction of a previously deleterious one, similar to punching a man with a dislocated shoulder and inadvertently putting it back into place.

We can be thankful that mutations are extremely rare. An average of one mistake per 10 million correct copies occurs in the genetic code. Whoever or whatever types 10 million letters with only one mistake would easily be the world's best typist and probably would not be human. Yet this is the astounding accuracy of our supposedly blind genetic code when it replicates itself.

If, however, these copying errors were to accumulate, a species, instead of improving, would eventually degenerate and perish. But geneticists have discovered a self-correcting system.

"The genetic code in each living thing has its own built-in limitations," says Hitching. "It seems designed to stop a plant or creature stepping too far away from the average . . . Every series of breeding experiments that has ever taken place has established a finite limit to breeding possibilities. Genes are a strong influence for conservatism, and allow only modest change. Left to their own devices, artificially bred species usually die out (because they are sterile or less robust) or quickly revert to the norm (Hitching, pp. 54-55).

Many scientists reluctantly concede that mutations do not explain Darwin's proposed transition from one species to the next. Writing about eminent zoologist Pierre-Paul Grassé, Hayward says, "In 1973 he published a major book on evolution . . . First and foremost, the book aims to expose Darwinism as a theory that does not work, because it clashes with so many experimental findings.

"As Grassé says in his introduction: 'Today our duty is to destroy the myth of evolution . . . Some people, owing to their sectarianism, purposely overlook reality and refuse to acknowledge the inadequacies and the falsity of their beliefs' . . .

"Take mutation first. Grassé has studied this extensively, both inside his laboratory and in nature. In all sorts of living things, from bacteria to plants and animals, he has observed that mutations do not take succeeding generations further and further from their starting point. Instead, the changes are like the flight of a butterfly in a green house, which travels for miles without moving more than a few feet from its starting point. There are invisible but firmly fixed boundaries that mutations can never cross . . . He insists that mutations are only trivial changes; they are merely the result of slightly altered genes, whereas 'creative evolution . . . demands the genesis of new ones'" (Hayward, p. 25).

Embarrassingly for evolutionists, mutation is also not the answer. If anything, the self-correcting system to eliminate mutations shows that a great intelligence was at work when the overall genetic system was designed so that random mutations would not destroy the beneficial genes. Ironically, mutation shows the *opposite* of what evolutionism teaches: In real life random mutation is the villain and not the hero.

This takes us to one last point on mutations: the inability of evolution to explain the appearance of simple life and intricate organs.

### The wondrous cell

Cells are marvelous and incredibly complicated living things. They are self-sufficient and function like miniature chemical factories. The closer we look at cells, the more we realize just how incredibly complex they are.

Cells are marvelous and incredibly complicated living things. They are self-sufficient and function like miniature chemical factories. The closer we look at cells, the more we realize just how incredibly complex they are.

For example, the cell wall is a wonder in itself. If it were too porous, harmful solutions would enter and cause the cell to burst. On the other hand, if the wall were too impervious, no nourishment could come in or waste products go out, and the cell would quickly die.

Biochemist Michael Behe, associate professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University, summarizes one of the fundamental flaws of evolution as an explanation for any form of life. "Darwin's theory encounters its greatest difficulties when it comes to explaining the development of the cell. Many cellular systems are what I term 'irreducibly complex.' That means the system needs several compo-

nents before it can work properly.

"An everyday example of irreducible complexity is a mousetrap, built of several pieces (platform, hammer, spring and so on). Such a system probably cannot be put together in a Darwinian manner, gradually improving its function. You can't catch a mouse with just the platform and then catch a few more by adding the spring. All the pieces have to be in place before you catch any mice."

What Behe is saying is that a cell missing a tenth of its parts doesn't function only one tenth less as well as a complete cell; it doesn't function *at all*. He concludes: "The bottom line is that the cell—the very basis of life—is staggeringly complex. But doesn't science already have answers, or partial answers, for how these systems originated? No" ("Darwin Under the Microscope," *The New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1996, p. A25).

Sir James Gray, a Cambridge professor of zoology, stated: "Bacteria [are] far more complex than any inanimate system known to man. There is not a laboratory in the world which can compete with the biochemical activity of the smallest living organism" (Marshall and Sandra Hall, *The Truth: God or Evolution?*, 1974, p. 89).

Just how complex are the tiniest living things? Even the simplest cells must possess a staggering amount of genetic information to function. For instance, the bacterium *R.*

*coli* is one of the tiniest unicellular creatures in nature. Scientists calculate it has some 2,000 genes, each with around 1,000 enzymes. An enzyme is made up of some one billion nucleotides, which amount to a letter in the chemical alphabet, comparable to a byte in computer language. These enzymes instruct the organism how to function and reproduce. The DNA information in just this single tiny cell is "the approximate equivalent of 100 million pages of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*" (John Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*, 1972, p. 79).

What are the odds that the enzymes needed to produce the simplest living creature—with each enzyme performing a specific chemical function—could come together by chance? Mathematician and astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle calculated the odds at one chance in  $10^{40,000}$  (that is, 10 to the

*Continued on page 31*



# The Scientific Evidence: *A Critical Choice*

by Cecil Maranville

Consider the powerful words of the apostle Paul: “Ever since the creation of the world [God’s] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made” (Romans 1:20, New Revised Standard Version throughout this article).

Paul’s words remind us that we can look at the miracles of the world around us and see compelling evidence of God’s handiwork, understanding not only that He is the Creator but glimpsing some of His nature and character.

Let’s take a glimpse at a particular flower, an orchid with the scientific name of *Coryanthes*. Although the scientist’s language is a little technical, it’s important that you read the account in the author’s own words as he describes his findings and those of another scientist, a Dr. Cruger. The incredible story is worth reading.

## A built-in bee-bath bucket

According to a famous writer and observer of the

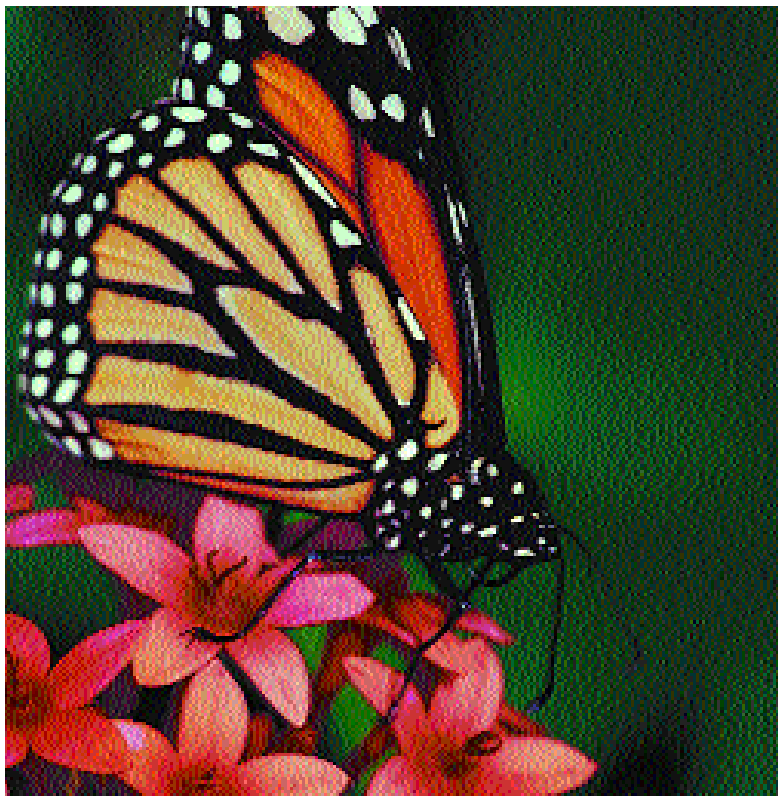
wonders of nature: “This orchid has part of its labellum or lower lip hollowed out into a great bucket, into which drops of almost pure water continually fall from two secreting horns which stand above it; and when the bucket is half full, the water overflows by a spout on one side. The basal part of the labellum stands over the bucket, and is itself hollowed out into a sort of chamber with two lateral entrances; within this chamber there are curious fleshy ridges. The most ingenious man, if he had not witnessed what takes place, could never have imagined what *purpose* all these parts serve (emphasis added throughout).

“But Dr. Cruger saw crowds of large humble-bees [bumblebees] visiting the gigantic flowers of this orchid, not in order to suck nectar, but to gnaw off the ridges within the chamber above the bucket; in doing this they frequently pushed each other into the bucket, and their wings being thus wetted they could not fly away, but were compelled to crawl out through the passage formed by the spout or overflow.

Darwin is not the only scientist in his time who interpreted what he studied in creation as evidence of life without a creator. There were many others who concluded that God was not involved.

“Dr. Cruger saw a ‘continual procession’ of bees thus crawling out of their involuntary bath. The passage is narrow, and is roofed over by the column, so that a bee, forcing its way out, first rubs its back against the viscid stigma and then against the viscid glands of the pollen-masses. The pollen-masses are thus glued to the back of the bee which first happens to crawl out through the passage of the lately expanded flower, and are thus carried away . . .

“When the bee, thus provided, flies to another flower, or to the same flower a second time, and is pushed by its comrades in to the bucket and then crawls out by the passage, the pollen-mass necessarily comes first into contact with the viscid stigma, and adheres to it, and the flower is fertilised. Now at last we see the full use of every part of the flower, of the water-secreting horns, of the bucket half full of water, which prevents the bees from flying away, and forces them to crawl out through the spout, and rub against the prop-



erly placed viscid pollen-masses and the viscid stigma.”

### Design reveals the designer

These fascinating design details show us the complexity, variety and even a touch of humor in the world around us. Several scriptures confirm that we can learn of God through His creation.

One such passage is in Acts 14. The apostles Paul and Barnabas made quite a stir in the city of Lystra by healing a man who had been crippled, unable to walk, since birth. Idolatry was rampant in Lystra, and the instinctive reaction by the citizens of the city to this miracle was to worship Paul and Barnabas!

What was their reaction? Notice what they told the people: “Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy” (Acts 14:15-17).

God’s servants deflected these misguided intentions and directed the people to the Creator God.

### An orchid that shoots straight

Here’s another remarkable example of carefully planned design in the natural world from the same author cited above:

“The construction of the flower in another closely allied orchid, namely the *Catasetum*, is widely different, though serving the same end; and is equally curious. Bees visit these flowers, like those of the *Coryanthes*, in order to gnaw the labellum; in doing this they inevitably touch a long, tapering, sensitive projection, or, as I have called it, the antenna.

“This antenna, when touched, transmits a sensation or vibration to a certain membrane which is instantly ruptured; this sets free a spring by which the pollen-mass is shot forth, like an arrow, in the right direction, and adheres by its viscid extremity to the back of the bee. The pollen-mass of the male plant (for the sexes are separate in this orchid) is thus carried to the flower of the female plant where it is brought into contact with the stigma, which is viscid enough to break certain elastic threads, and retain-

ing the pollen, fertilisation is effected.”

Here we see another marvelous illustration of God’s handiwork. Yet not everyone sees the evidence of creation in the same way. The scientist who penned these observations of the wonders of the world around him was none other than Charles Darwin, and the quotations are from his book *The Origin of the Species* (The Modern Library, Random House, New York, pp. 142-143).

Does this surprise you? It should. Darwin used these examples to show the ability of plants to adapt and to vary rather than to show the variety in God’s design. Why?

### Different views of evidence

Why don’t we all see evidence the same way?

Charles Darwin is not the only scientist in his time who interpreted what he studied in creation as evidence of life without a creator. There were many others who examined what we see as inspiring, incontrovertible evidence of God’s handiwork and concluded that God was not involved.

But why did they come to such different conclusions, and why do others still come to those same conclusions? Let’s examine an important passage in the first chapter of Romans:

“Ever since the creation of the world his [God’s] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made,” says verse 20

Paul says that the creation is a portal through which we can see the Creator. Although everyone sees the same evidence, each makes a choice as to how to view it. Some early philosophers made a conscious choice to reject God. They chose to interpret their studies in a way that would exclude God. Scholars in various fields have since followed in their wake.

“So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles” (verses 20-23).

We all have an important choice to make about the evidence for a Creator God. We must choose whether we will believe it. Our choice will have a profound effect on our lives.

If we see God in what He has made, then we have a constant reminder of His ability, care and concern, humor and purpose. But, if we do not see God, then there is neither hint nor reminder of His purpose for our existence. Consequently we may imperil the normal workings of our conscience, given by God so that we would question our thoughts and actions.

### Belief and behavior

In the remainder of the chapter, Paul bluntly makes it clear that serious consequences come from failing to recognize God in His creation. Reasoning becomes the substitute for God’s Spirit and His Word. Eventually people’s reasoning can lead them to justify almost any kind of behavior.

Psalm 14 confirms this: “Fools say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good” (verse 1). As in Romans 1, this verse implies that people who choose not to believe in God see no real need to abide by a divine code of conduct.

However, as the next verse tells us, “The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God” (verse 2).

God can guide and bless those who wisely choose to believe in and obey Him. Let’s make the right choice. *GN*



# The Later Kings of Israel: A Kingdom's Downfall

by Mario Seiglie

**T**he July-August issue of *The Good News* presented archaeological evidence that confirms and clarifies the biblical record of the early kings of the northern 10 tribes of Israel after the death of Solomon. We continue the story with the later kings and downfall of the kingdom.

We come to the final stages of the northern kingdom (Israel) as a nation. Jehu's downfall came at the halfway mark of Israel's 19 kings and, tragically, the kings who followed him would all refuse to repent and turn to the true God. Meanwhile, Judah remained more faithful to God and continued for more than a century after the fall of the northern 10 tribes of Israel. Much archaeological evidence validates the account of Israel's final years.

## Another King Jeroboam

Jehu's great-grandson, Jeroboam II, although evil, was an able military leader. Eugene Merrill explains that through his political leadership "Jeroboam was able not only to recover the territories of Israel proper which had fallen over the years to Damascus, but to bring all of south Aram and the Transjordan back under Israelite hegemony (2 Kings 14:25-28)" (*A Kingdom of Priests*, 1987, p. 374).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the German Oriental Society mounted an

extensive archaeological dig of Megiddo, the site of an important northern-kingdom stronghold. The excavations produced a beautiful agate seal depicting a roaring lion. The Hebrew inscription read, "Belonging to Shema, servant of Jeroboam." From the dating of the city level, certain archaeologists proposed the king referred to was Jeroboam II (791-751 B.C.).

It is not uncommon for seals to appear in excavations in the Middle East. Bible commentator William Barclay explains: "It was not the signature [as we use today], but the seal that authenticated. In commercial and political documents it was the seal, imprinted with the signet ring, which made the document valid; it was the seal which authenticated a will; it was the seal on the mouth of a sack or a crate that guaranteed the contents. Seals were made of pottery, metal or jewels. In the British Museum there are seals of most of the Assyrian kings. The seal was fixed on clay and the clay attached to the document" (*Daily Study Bible Commentary*, Bible Explorer, Epiphany Software, San Jose, Calif.).

Since seals were durable and vital for political and commercial transactions, they were produced in abundance for the upper classes of society. As we see in this series, several seals have been found that include the names of monarchs mentioned in the Bible.

## Collapse of a dynasty

Meanwhile, true to God's prediction, Jehu's dynasty lasted only "to the fourth generation" (2 Kings 10:30). Jeroboam II was of Jehu's third generation. His son, Zechariah, the fourth successor, was assassinated during his first year as king. From then on, because of ever-increasing evils on a national scale, Israel could no longer count on God's protection. The nation plunged headlong into a free fall of lawlessness and disregard for God.

"In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of



*King Tiglath-Pileser strengthened the Assyrian empire, making it an early superpower. After ascending the throne, he expanded his empire by attacking and invading smaller nearby kingdoms—including Israel.*



*The conqueror of Israel, King Sargon of Assyria, receives a report from Tartan, his commander in chief. The Assyrians recorded their conquests in exquisite carved reliefs such as this, excavated at an ancient Assyrian capital city.*

Nebat, who had made Israel sin. Then Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck and killed him in front of the people; and he reigned in his place . . . This was the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, ‘Your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation. And so it was’ (2 Kings 15:8-12).

So, after almost 90 years, Jehu’s dynasty came to a violent end. From then on, assassinations and political instability would be the rule until the final collapse of the northern kingdom. This military and political weakness would make the Israelites in the north an easy prey for the resurgent Assyrian Empire.

It is sad to reflect on how this once-mighty kingdom, which had halted the Assyrian war machine a century earlier, could muster hardly any resistance (except during the reign of Jeroboam II). According to an Assyrian inscription, King Ahab had contributed “two thousand chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers” to form a successful military coalition to stop the Assyrian

advance. A century later, when the Assyrian menace appeared again, the northern Israelite armies were reduced to “fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers; for the king of Syria had destroyed them” (2 Kings 13:7).

Shallum, the assassin of King Azariah, lasted only a month on the throne before he, too, was murdered. “Shallum the son of Jabesh became king . . . and he reigned a full month in Samaria. For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, came to Samaria, and struck Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him; and he reigned in his place” (2 Kings 15:13-15).

### Assyria gains control

Menahem reigned for 10 years but could not resist the advancing Assyrian army. To avoid outright conquest,

he began paying the Assyrians tribute. “And he did evil in the sight of the LORD . . . Pul [Tiglath-pileser] king of Assyria came against the land; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his control . . . So the king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land” (2 Kings 15:18-20).

The Assyrians, who meticulously

recorded their kings’ triumphs, mentioned the tribute money given by King Menahem. The annals show the amazing accuracy of the biblical account. “The outstanding event of Menahem’s reign,” notes *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, “was the supremacy of Assyrian power in the West. This is confirmed in detail from Assyrian sources . . . When Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria took the throne of Babylon in 729, he assumed the name Pulu [Pul in the Bible] . . . In his annals Tiglath-pileser records the receiving of tribute from various nations of the West—Menahem of Samaria, Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, etc. A fragmentary text adds further details about Menahem. ‘He was overwhelmed like a snowstorm and fled like a bird, alone, and bowed to the feet of his conqueror, who returned him to his place and imposed tribute upon him’” (Vol. III, 1962, p. 348).

Menahem’s son, Pekahiah, ruled for only two years before he was murdered by Pekah. Once on the throne, Pekah rebelled against the Assyrians and refused to pay tribute money. “With Pekahiah out of the way,” Eugene Merrill writes, “Pekah proclaimed himself king and immediately broke the treaty with Assyria which Menahem had made. He no doubt felt safe in doing so because Tiglath-pileser was still detained elsewhere with matters of imperial



*The Assyrians were a terrifying force as they attacked nearby kingdoms. In this Assyrian carving depicting the capture of a walled city, an archer at right shoots arrows while protected by a shield-bearer. In front of them a wheeled battering ram gouges holes in the city walls. Above the ram are three defenders who have been impaled. At left, Assyrian infantry storm the walls using scaling ladders.*

responsibility . . . Whatever Pekah's objective, he was doomed to disappointment for within six years (by 734) Tiglath-pileser returned to the west and quickly began to annex vast areas of Syria and Palestine, especially in Galilee and the Transjordan" (Merrill, p. 396).

### Tiglath-pileser's invasion

The Bible records the story of the invasion of Tiglath-pileser in 2 Kings 15:29-30: "In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon . . . Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. Then Hoshea the son of Elah led a conspiracy against Pekah . . . and killed him; so he reigned in his place . . ."

The biblical account is corroborated in an Assyrian victory stela, or inscribed, commemorative stone (also spelled "stele"), of Pulu (Tiglath-pileser). The Assyrian king boasts, "The House of Omri [Israel] . . . all of its inhabitants and goods, I took to Assyria. They overthrew their king Pekah and I installed Hoshea as their king. I received from them ten talents of gold, a thousand talents of silver as tribute and I deported them to Assyria" (*Archaeological Bible Commentary*, 1984, p. 133).

This began a 15-year period during which the northern Israelites were forcibly deported from their homeland to Assyrian territory. Few would remain in the land when the Assyrians were through.

Amos, one of the prophets of that time, revealed what God would allow to happen

to the northern tribes. "Thus says the LORD: 'As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria'" (Amos 3:12).

### The conquest of Samaria

The Assyrian records again confirm the biblical account, although they show a bias that is absent in Scripture. We see a marked contrast between the boisterous claims of the Assyrian kings—who never admitted to losing any battles—and the biblical narrative, which is frank and honest about their kings' moral lapses and sins and their resulting defeats.

Writing for *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Erika Bleibtreu observes: "According to the narrative representation on these reliefs, the Assyrians never lost a battle. Indeed, no Assyrian soldier is ever shown wounded or killed. The benevolence of the gods is always bestowed on the Assyrian king and his troops. Like the official written records, the scenes and figures are selected and arranged to record the king's heroic deeds and to describe him as 'beloved of the gods'" (January-February 1991, p. 57).

What a stark contrast with the biblical account of the defeat and downfall of Israel, also known as Samaria. "Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of

Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God . . . and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel . . ." (2 Kings 17:5-8).

The Assyrian records also mention the conquest of Samaria by King Shalmaneser V, Tiglath-pileser's son. But this king died unexpectedly during the siege of Samaria, and his son, Sargon II, completed the job.

In 1843 Paul Emil Botta uncovered the ruins of Sargon's palace, where a wall relief called "The Display Inscription" records Sargon's victory over Samaria. In it Sargon boasted: "At the beginning of my rule, in my first year of reign, I besieged and conquered Samaria . . . I led away into captivity 27,290 people who lived there . . . I caused others to take their portion. People of the lands, prisoners my hand had captured, I settled there. My officials I placed over them as governors."

### Reasons for Israel's downfall

The Bible states some of the reasons for the Israelites' removal: They "caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil . . . Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone" (2 Kings 17:17-18).

Years later, after Judah likewise fell into

*Continued on page 31*



*The sad fate of peoples conquered by Assyria is graphically shown in these carvings. In the panel above, scribes (upper center) record the plunder as livestock are driven away. The town's surviving inhabitants are carried away in ox-carts to an unknown*



*land and uncertain future. Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser boasted of such conquests, "All the people and their goods I carried off to Assyria." In the panel at right, the battle rages around another town as its defeated defenders begin the long walk into exile.*



# Elijah

## Cleansing Evil From the Land

by Jerold Aust

**A**ncient Israel was sliding ever more swiftly into abject paganism. Weak King Ahab and his cruel wife, Jezebel, were burying their kingdom under a suffocating mantle of evil. God sent Elijah to reverse this disastrous descent into heathenism.

One day, as Elijah confronted the king, Ahab asked sarcastically: "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" Elijah coolly responded to Ahab's insult: "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals [false gods]."

Courageous Elijah followed with a direct challenge to the king: "Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table" (1 Kings 18:17-20). Ahab did as Elijah asked and gathered the false prophets on Mount Carmel.

It is remarkable that Ahab responded in this manner to Elijah's challenge. As the events unfold, we see the prophets of Baal behaving like sheep being led to slaughter.

### Israel's immorality

In Elijah's day Israel had willingly fallen into a vortex of evil. The nation had turned to idol worship. God's people had forgotten the one true God who, generations earlier, had repeatedly delivered them

from their troubles. Much of their attitude was attributable to Israel's morally weak king, Ahab, and his overbearing pagan queen, Jezebel.

Elijah the Tishbite, a faithful prophet of the true God, had early in his life learned the fear of God. His calling was to fight against idolatry and injustice, protesting a corrupt society. His sudden, direct pronouncements and his abrupt appearances and disappearances created an air of mystery.

Ahab had cemented a political alliance between Israel and Phoenicia by marrying

Elijah, a faithful prophet of the true God, had early in his life learned the fear of God. His calling was to fight against idolatry and injustice, protesting a corrupt society.

Jezebel, daughter of the Phoenician king. The consequences for Israel were to prove disastrous.

Ahab appears to have honored God early in his reign, as the names of his sons show: Ahaziah ("God possesses") and Jehoram ("God is high"). Brave in battle but morally weak, he acquiesced to the degrading influence of Jezebel, a fanatical Tyrian devotee of her false religion.

To please her, Ahab erected a temple to Baal at Israel's capital, Samaria (1 Kings 16:32). He allowed Jezebel to support hundreds of foreign priests (1 Kings 18:19). and permitted her to execute

prophets of the true God (verses 4, 13). The Israelites tragically followed the lead of their king and queen as they degenerated into idolatry. Jezebel's religious customs became the court religion and were rapidly being adopted throughout the nation. God called Elijah to staunch the spread of the cancer eating away at the fabric of Israelitish society.

### Elijah confronts Ahab and Jezebel's prophets

The saga of Ahab and Jezebel is a stark warning to succeeding generations. The

Scriptures say that Ahab "did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:30).

"And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did

more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all





the kings of Israel who were before him” (1 Kings 16:31-33).

After Ahab’s flagrantly evil acts, God sent Elijah to confront the monarch and pronounce a curse on Israel: “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word” (1 Kings 17:1).

God punished backsliding Israel for its idolatry, sending a crippling drought. It took some time for the effects of the drought to be felt. Knowing the murderous

When all the participants had gathered on the mountain, Elijah set the stage to reveal the existence and power of the one true God. “How long will you falter between two opinions?,” he called out to the Israelites gathered to watch.

inclinations of Jezebel, God sent Elijah to the east, to hide near the Brook Cherith, which joined the Jordan River. There Elijah would have ample water; there God would send birds to feed him (verses 3-5). Elijah could eat while the rest of the nation withered from the drought.

Eventually, with no rain to replenish it, the brook dried up. Elijah’s life was again apparently in danger.

### The widow’s mite and God’s might

God instructed Elijah: “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you” (verse 9). Parched but obedient, Elijah entered the city and noticed a widow gathering sticks. He asked her to bring him a little water to drink. As she went fetch the water, he called to her and asked her to bring him a scrap of bread (verses 10-11).

The biblical account describes the woman’s crestfallen response. She dejectedly explained that she had no more bread, only a handful of flour in a bin and a little oil in a jar. She was picking up sticks so she could prepare a meal from the last of her food. After that food was gone, she had resigned herself to the certainty of death from starvation for her and her son.

Elijah told her that God would not allow her and her son to perish. The bin of flour would not be used up, nor would the jar of oil run dry, until God sent rain to

The widow honored Elijah’s request and prepared bread for him. Elijah’s word was good: Her flour and oil, enough for only one last meal, miraculously fed the woman, her son and Elijah for many days.

But the woman’s trials were not over. She was shocked when her son fell sick and died. In her grief she blamed Elijah for her son’s death.

Moved by her anguish, Elijah prayed fervently for her son: “O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son? . . . I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him” (verses 20-21).

God heard Elijah’s prayer and brought the boy back to life. Elijah presented him alive to his mother. This miracle convinced the widow: “Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth” (verse 24).

But it would take more than miracle for Israel to learn that Elijah was God’s prophet—and even more to convince Ahab and his pagan queen, Jezebel.

### Capricious Ahab, murderous Jezebel

After the third year of drought, God instructed Elijah to visit Ahab and tell him that the drought would soon be over (1 Kings 18:1). Meanwhile, Ahab had charged Obadiah, the overseer of his household and a God-fearing man, to search for grass to feed his mules and horses.

During Obadiah’s search, he met Elijah. Elijah instructed Obadiah to return to the king and tell him he would visit him.

But Obadiah was afraid. If he relayed Elijah’s message to the king but Elijah failed to appear as he said he would, Ahab might kill him. So Obadiah prevailed on Elijah not to endanger his life. It was he, after all, who had helped save 100 prophets of God, hiding them in caves and sustaining them with bread and water.

Jezebel had massacred the prophets of God whom Obadiah could not hide, but he had risked his life for those he had hidden. Elijah appreciated Obadiah’s fearful concern. He reassured Obadiah that he would

indeed appear before Ahab, that he need not worry.

Elijah kept his word. When he came to the king, Ahab chided Elijah, “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” (verse 17). Elijah pointedly responded that Ahab himself was responsible for Israel’s troubles and the prolonged drought that was ravaging his nation.

To settle the matter, Elijah put forth a challenge: “Now therefore, send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table” (verse 19).

Amazingly, Ahab complied. Was he deluded by his own arrogance into thinking he could meet Elijah’s challenge? We don’t know. Perhaps he thought he could humiliate Elijah, thereby diminishing his influence on Israel. Whatever Ahab’s thoughts may have been, it must have seemed a risk worth taking: hundreds of Baal’s prophets against only one Elijah.

### Showdown on Mount Carmel

When all the participants had gathered on the mountain, Elijah set the stage to reveal the existence and power of the one true God. “How long will you falter between two opinions?,” he called out to the Israelites gathered to watch. “If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him” (verse 21). Nobody spoke. Fascinated though unconvinced, they watched his every move, hung on his every word.

Elijah’s plan was simple. It required the offering of two sacrifices, one from the prophets of Baal and one from Elijah. Baal’s prophets could choose among the bullocks and sacrifice first. Elijah’s instructions were straightforward: “Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God” (verse 24). Everyone agreed to the arrangement. Everyone would see and know who was God.

The prophets of Baal hastily prepared their offering. They cut up the animal, then placed an abundance of dry wood under the offering. Then they called on their gods. In an exhausting, long-winded effort, they cried out to Baal from morning until noon. “O Baal, hear us!” they begged (verse 26).

The prophets of Baal called, but there was no answer. The pagan priests even



leaped around the altar to motivate their gods to respond. Still no answer.

About noon Elijah began to mock his rivals: "Call louder, for he is a god. It may be he is deep in thought, or engaged, or on a journey; or he may have gone to sleep and must be woken up" (verse 27, Revised English Bible).

Elijah's words provoked them into frenzied desperation: "They cried still louder and, as was their custom, gashed themselves with swords and spears until the blood flowed" (verse 28, REB). Bloody and weakened, Jezebel's prophets continued their crazed pleas to their gods until evening. Still they were met with silence.

Then came Elijah's turn. He asked the people to move in closer while he picked up a dozen stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel, and reconstructed the broken-down altar.

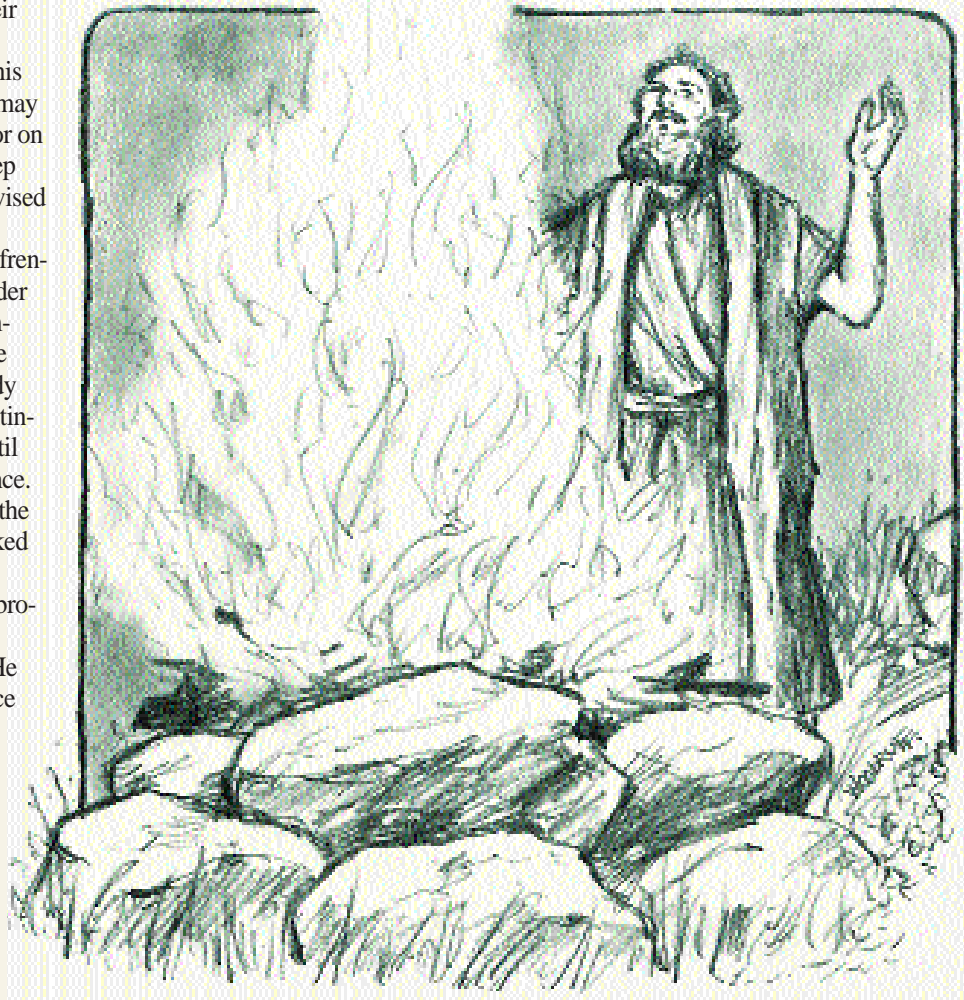
Around the altar he dug a trench. He arranged the wood and cut the sacrifice in pieces and laid it on the altar. He instructed others to drench the sacrifice and wood with water. Elijah asked them to repeat the drenching with water a second and third time, soaking everything so thoroughly that the trench overflowed. There would be no allowance for error or trickery.

Elijah asked God to reveal Himself to Israel as the one true God. His prayer was brief but telling: "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again" (1 Kings 18:36-37, emphasis added throughout).

Then the all-consuming "fire of the Lord" suddenly fell on the altar and burned up the sacrifice. Even the water in the trench around the altar disappeared in the flames (verse 36-38).

It was an awesome, frightening sight! The stunned bystanders fell on their faces and cried out: "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" (verse 39).

Elijah seized the moment. He ordered the Israelites to seize the prophets of Baal. "Do not let one of them escape!" (verse 40). On Elijah's instruction, they brought the pagan priests to the Brook Kishon, where Elijah executed them.



The all-consuming "fire of the Lord" suddenly fell on the altar and burned up the sacrifice. It was an awesome, frightening sight!

Jezebel had murdered God's prophets. Now God had Jezebel's degenerate pagan prophets killed. The spread of idolatry was stopped in its tracks.

#### The miracle of rain

God had revealed Himself to His chosen people, Israel. Their sincere and faithful response would soon bring blessings. "Then Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain'" (verse 41).

Seven times Elijah sent his servant to check for rain clouds. During his last trip, he saw a small cloud rise from the sea. Rain was on its way.

Elijah immediately told Ahab, "Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you" (verse 44). Ahab rode down the mountain to Jezreel. Miraculously, Elijah outran the king's chariot! (verse 46). God again showed His power

through this superhuman feat.

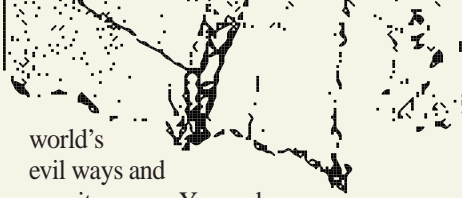
Israel's long trial had come to an end. God was vindicated, restored to His rightful place in the eyes of His people.

The New Testament mentions this particular incident as an encouraging example of faith and answered prayer (James 5:17-18). In fact Elijah is portrayed as one of the great men of God of all time. Centuries after his time, John the Baptist (whose ministry preceded Christ's), is said to have come in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17).

#### 'The LORD is God!'

Elijah's name demands attention. It means "The LORD is God!"—spoken vehemently and emphatically. It means, in essence, "That One, and no other, is the only true God!"

Without knowledge and conviction of the one true God, people follow the



world's evil ways and reap its curses. You and I have lived this way (Ephesians 2:1-3). God is calling everyone, everywhere to repent, to turn from their false gods (2 Corinthians 4:4) and return to the one and only true God (Acts 17:30-31).

Mankind does not know the true God. But the prophet Isaiah predicted that all will someday be able to learn God's truth (Isaiah 11:9). That has not yet happened. It *will happen*, after Christ's second coming.

There will be no televangelists in that day, pleading with their viewers to "know the Lord" (Hebrews 8:11). Jesus Christ will rule supreme on earth, uncontested and uncontestable in his righteous reign. Satan will be bound for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:3).

There will be only one religion, one faith. No one will need ask, "Do you know the Lord?" God's ways will be taught to all mankind. "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Hebrews 8:11).

However, before Christ's second coming will come times of hunger, pain, destruction and widespread death. God will send Jesus Christ to rescue mankind from self-extermination—from the consequences of our own greed, selfishness, anger and arrogance that will bring us to the brink of human annihilation (Matthew 24:21-22).

Beyond that horrendous time lies a marvelous age—1,000 years of peace and prosperity. In that wonderful world of tomorrow, when *everyone* will know the true God, reverently honoring and obeying Him, God's peace and prosperity will cover the earth as the waters cover the seas!

You, too, can know the one true God, the God of Elijah. You don't have to wait until mankind has to learn the hard way to acknowledge the true God. You can rejoice with those ancient Israelites, "The LORD is God, the LORD is God!"

Be sure to request our free booklets *The Gospel of the Kingdom, What Is Your Destiny?* and *The Road to Eternal Life*. They're free for the asking when you contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you)

on page 2 of this issue. GN

# Archaeology

*Continued from page 9*

captivity, God gave through the prophet Ezekiel additional reasons for the destruction and exile of both nations. "Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them" (Ezekiel 22:26).

The prophecy compares the priests to wild beasts: "Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain. Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the LORD GOD,' when the LORD had not spoken" (verse 28).

"The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD" (verses 29-31).

## Epilogue: Where did Israel go?

What happened to the Israelites after they were deported into Assyria? Most people think the 10 northern tribes of Israel have disappeared forever. They are often referred to as "the lost 10 tribes." The scholarly consensus is that these people were either assimilated by gentile nations or simply died out altogether.

But what does God's Word have to say about their fate? Through the prophets, God depicts them as wandering until His will and plan could be brought to completion. The prophet Amos said: "Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says the LORD. For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground" (Amos 9:8-9, emphasis added throughout).

According to Amos's prophecy, the

descendants of these Israelites were fated to wander among the nations until they fulfilled their destiny. God would know exactly where they would be found, for they would not disappear as a people, and He promised not to forget them.

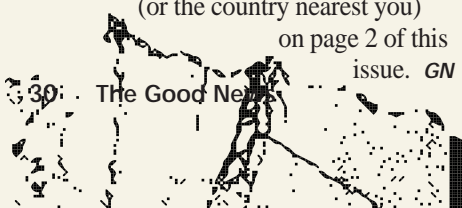
God also prophesied: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.' Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be *gathered together*, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land. For great will be the day of Jezreel [at the time of Christ's coming]!" (Hosea 1:10-11).

God's plans include the "lost 10 tribes" of Israel as well as Judah, the descendants of the southern kingdom of Judah who include modern-day Jews. After Christ returns to earth, say many biblical prophecies, He will gather their descendants and bring them back to their ancestral homeland.

Isaiah prophesied of a second exodus of these peoples from the house of Israel and the house of Judah: "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse [Jesus Christ], who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious. It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the *second time* to recover the remnant of His people . . . and will *assemble the outcasts* of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah . . . There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt" (Isaiah 11:10-16).

Many other Bible prophecies describe God's plan for these 10 tribes of Israel. The United Church of God, an International Association, is preparing a booklet on the modern-day identity of their descendants. If you would like to be placed on a mailing list to receive this booklet when it is completed, be sure to write to the office in your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 of this issue. Also, be sure to request the booklets *Is the Bible True?* and *How to Understand the Bible*.

In the next installment, we will examine what archaeology tells us about the nation of Judah, which outlived the kingdom of Israel by more than a century. GN



# Evolution

Continued from page 21

40,000th power: mathematical shorthand for a 10 followed by 40,000 zeros—a number long enough to fill about seven pages of this magazine). Note that a probability of less than 1 in  $10^{50}$  is considered by mathematicians to be a complete impossibility (Hayward, p. 35-37).

By comparison, Sir Arthur Eddington, another mathematician, estimates there are no more than  $10^{80}$  atoms in the universe! (Hitching, p. 70). It is clear evolutionists simply don't have a real answer to how the first cells were formed. This is just one of their many problems in trying to explain a wondrous creation that they think came together by random chance.

## Blood clotting

One relatively simple process necessary for animal life is the ability for blood to clot to seal a wound and prevent an injured animal (or human) from bleeding to death. Yet the only way this intricate system works is when many complicated chemical substances interact. If only one ingredient is missing or doesn't function in the right way, the process fails, and death results.

How can these complex substances appear at just the right time in the right proportions and mix properly to clot blood and prevent death? Either they function flawlessly or clotting doesn't work at all.

At the same time, medical science is aware of clotting at the wrong time. Blood clots that cut off the flow of oxygen to the brain are a leading cause of strokes and often result in paralysis or death. With blood clotting, either everything works perfectly or the likely outcome is death.

For evolution to have led to this astounding ability, multiple mutations of just the right kind had to converge simultaneously or the mutations would be useless. Evolutionists can offer no realistic explanation how this is possible.

The apostle Paul's comments about the philosophers of his day could also be said about Darwinists of our time:

"For all that can be known of God lies plain before their eyes; indeed God himself has disclosed it to them. Ever since the world began his invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been visible to the eye of reason, in the things he has made. Their conduct, therefore, is indefensible; knowing God, they have refused to

honour him as God, or to render his thanks. Hence all their thinking has ended in futility, and their *misguided minds are plunged in darkness*. They boast of their wisdom, but they have made fools of themselves, exchanging the glory of the immortal God for an image shaped like mortal man, even for images like birds, beasts, and reptiles.

"For this reason God has *given them up to their own vile desires*, and the consequent degradation of their bodies. They have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and have offered reverence and worship to created things instead of to the Creator . . ." (Romans 1:19-25, Revised English Bible, emphasis added).

Rampant unbelief and immorality have a great deal to do with denying and refusing to obey a Creator God. The third supposed proof supporting evolution also fails.

## A search for alternatives to creation

"It is obvious that Darwin's theory no longer has the standing it had a few years ago," adds Dr. Hayward. "A small but significant minority of biologists have rejected it entirely, and are looking for a better theory to put in its place. So far, though, they have failed to find one . . . On the other hand, the case *for the existence of the Creator* is stronger today than it has ever been. In every branch of science there is a growing body of evidence that the universe and its contents have been designed—that things just could not be the way they are as the result of chance.

"This evidence has so much weight that even some eminent scientists who are unbelievers have had the courage to face it . . . The most reasonable answer to the question: Creation? is surely: Yes—creation of some sort" (Hayward, p. 65, emphasis added).

Not surprisingly, conclusions such as these have not received much publicity. Most people are unaware of Darwinism's many flaws and scientific findings and conclusions that undermine evolutionary theory.

## Social Darwinism

The consequences of accepting Darwinist theory have been profound. Enormous moral and social damage has been done in classrooms and to society. The theory that led Darwin to discard the Bible and reject the existence of God has had a similar effect on millions of other people.

It is no coincidence that Karl Marx, the father of communism, asked Darwin if he could dedicate *Das Kapital*, his landmark

book on communism, to his honor, or if he could write its introduction. After all, Marx believed Darwin had provided the scientific basis for communism. Darwin discreetly declined the offer.

Later, Adolf Hitler applied the Darwinist concept of the "survival of the fittest" to the human race and during World War II began systematically exterminating people whom he considered to be inferior. The Nazis justified their atrocities by explaining that they were actually doing mankind a service with "genetic cleansing" to improve the races.

As long as evolution—with its implications of amorality and the survival-of-the-fittest mentality among "superior" and "inferior" races—is still accepted and believed, genocide, as the recent ethnic cleansings in Bosnia and Rwanda show, will have a scientific justification, even though most believers in Darwinist theory would object to this conclusion.

The Bible prophesies that, before Jesus Christ's return, a worldwide commerce of human beings will be in place. This Babylonian system will include the trading of "bodies and souls of men" (Revelation 18:13). Could this be possible? One only has to remember the Nazi holocaust. Hundreds of thousands were pressed into slave labor. Those too weak, ill, young or old to work faced a merciless death.

Remember, such events happened barely 50 years ago in what were considered to be the most advanced and enlightened nations. Clearly it could happen again, especially in a world in which so many have adopted a belief in moral relativism and a survival-of-the-fittest outlook.

But, if the theory of evolution does not provide the answers to the existence of the abundance and variety of life, can the Bible explain the fossil record, an ancient earth and a divine creation at the same time? Our next article will deal with this intriguing question. **GN**

## RECOMMENDED READING

Can you really believe the Bible? Can you prove whether the Bible is truly the Word of God? These are crucial questions. Request your free copy of *Is the Bible True?* to discover the answers for yourself. Also request *How to Understand the Bible*. Both are free for the asking. Just contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you) on page 2 of this issue.

# What's the *Best News* This World Can Hear?

**T**oday's headlines are filled with bad news—war, famine, natural disasters, new and baffling diseases, environmental catastrophes and governmental scandals and corruption. The litany of tragedies and bad news is relentless. In this century, more than 150 million people have been killed in war alone. Well over 100 million more have died from diseases, epidemics and natural disasters. With all this bad news, what kind of future can we look forward to?

Almost 2,000 years ago, a prophet came bringing a message of hope for this world. That prophet was Jesus Christ, and His message was “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14).

The word *gospel* means *good news*. But what was the good news Jesus Christ brought? And what is the kingdom of which He spoke? Is it the church? Is it something to be set up in the hearts of men? Is it the collective good of all humanity?

Churches do not agree on either what the gospel is or what the Kingdom of God is. Yet the Bible is clear on this most important of subjects. And the message Jesus Christ brought truly is *good news*. It is the best news the world can hear!

In *The Gospel of the Kingdom* you can discover the surprising message Jesus Christ brought. This booklet shows you, from the pages of your Bible, exactly what that message is—and what it means for you. For your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, write or call us at our office in

your country or the country nearest you at the address on page 2. Discover this wonderful good news for yourself!

**United Church of God**  
an International Association



# How Will the World's Problems Be Solved?

*Man has been unable to solve his problems because he doesn't understand the underlying causes. The solutions will finally come—from an unexpected source.*

by Roger Foster

**I**f you had the power to solve the world's worst problems, where would you begin? Would you know how to eliminate poverty, put an end to war, stop violence and halt the production of military weapons? Would you find the wisdom to rid the world of disease, feed its starving peoples, resolve its territorial disputes, abolish its racial conflicts and persuade its political leaders always to be truthful, honest and fair?

You can immediately see that you would need more knowledge and wisdom than any head of state has ever had and more power than any human ruler has ever held and exercise superhuman character just to avoid becoming the world's worst tyrant.

Answers to these apparently insurmountable difficulties are available and are contained in God's law. Its principles define real and workable solutions to even the most difficult problems of mankind.

God will require every nation to implement that law as its national standard of conduct when Jesus Christ returns as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Bible tells us Christ will use God's law to change the world. Let's see how.

## Removing the cause of problems

A fundamental obstacle in solving human problems is the fact that the real cause of those problems is *spiritual*. They cannot be solved by physical human efforts alone. God's law addresses those spiritual problems and presents solutions.

But almost none of the leaders who wield power and influence over our world as we know it would even think about relying on God's law. Many of them have little respect for God's revelation to mankind. Those who do highly regard it are generally too

fearful of public opinion to try to implement it.

Jesus Christ will not be so timid. He will zealously enforce God's law when He establishes His Kingdom on earth. His gospel is focused on how the coming Kingdom of God will restore God's ways among men.

Many people believe the Kingdom of God is the church. Others think of it as Christ living—being accepted—in the hearts of men. Few realize that Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God concerns His *direct intervention* in human affairs to drastically alter the way human beings live and behave. That is what His gospel is really all about. He intends to eliminate the *cause* of the violence and misery that plagues the world. That cause is what is commonly known as *sin*—the lawless behavior of people (1 John 3:4).

Why don't people understand that, when Jesus Christ "came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14), He was simply *continuing* the message preached by the prophets of the Old Testament? They wrote extensively about the Messiah and His Kingdom. In their writings we find the exciting details about that Kingdom and its impact on the world of tomorrow.

Jesus compared Himself to a "certain nobleman [who] went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom *and to return*" (Luke 19:12, emphasis added throughout). At Jesus' second coming voices from heaven will announce, "The kingdoms of this world *have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*" (Revelation 11:15). At that time the whole world will also "see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets *in the kingdom of God*" (Luke 13:28).

The Old Testament prophets will live as an integral

*A fundamental obstacle in solving human problems is the fact that the real cause of those problems is spiritual. They cannot be solved by physical human efforts alone.*

## In This Section . . .

How Will the World's Problems Be Solved?

*Man's problems are so great that they defy solution. Prophecy shows that solutions will come from an unexpected source.*

Find the Pathway to Peace

*Will we ever find the peace prophesied by Jesus Christ?*

History: A Chronicle of War

*The Bible reveals that man's future will differ greatly from our past.*

E1 | Where Is Your Citizenship?

*The Feast of Tabernacles teaches us about the transitory nature of this life.*

No More Lies

*A time is coming when the world will be transformed by truth.*

E4 | Knowing God for the First Time

*Man has never really known God—but that will change.*

E6 | The Work of the Master Potter

*A biblical analogy helps us understand how God works with us.*

E8

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E14

part of Christ's Kingdom. So we should expect them to have much to say about both the Kingdom and Jesus as the Messiah ruling over it. After His resurrection, Jesus took the time to explain to His disciples prophecies of Himself "which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms . . ." (Luke 24:44).

The Old Testament contains information throughout about the first *and* second comings of the Messiah. It tells us how the Messiah—the returning Jesus—will use the law of God to change the world.

### What is the Kingdom of God?

God gave Daniel a vision of a great man-like image that represented the major world empires from the time of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar until the second coming of Christ (Daniel 2:27-43). God revealed to Daniel that "in the days of these kings *the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed*; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (verse 44).

The Kingdom of God will supersede the governmental structures existing on earth at the time of Christ's return. It will be a literal kingdom that will rule over all nations. "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and

### *The Old Testament prophets wrote extensively about the Messiah and His Kingdom. In their writings we find the exciting details about that Kingdom and its impact on the world of tomorrow.*

the ends of the earth for Your possession . . ." (Psalm 2:7-9).

As King of Kings, Jesus Christ will make major changes in the way people are governed. "He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

Under Christ's rule, the way the world is ruled will change drastically. "But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth . . . Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist" (Isaiah 11:4-5). "He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth . . ." (Isaiah 42:4).

### The restored kingdom of Israel

To make these changes, Christ will first

build a model nation for the rest of the world to emulate. He will gather the scattered descendants of ancient Israel and again make Israel one nation. "It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people . . . and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:11-12).

Long ago God promised: "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:37-40).

Jesus Christ will personally reign as King over a restored Israel. Under His rule Israel will become a truly righteous nation. He will then establish God's New Covenant with them. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: *I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

How will Christ write the law of God in the hearts and minds of the restored descendants of ancient Israel? How will He make a holy nation of them, a kingdom that other nations will eagerly desire to imitate?

First He will bring them to repentance and forgive their sins. "And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return . . . I will *cleanse* them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will *pardon* all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me" (Jeremiah 33:7-8).

Then God will give them His Spirit so they can understand and keep His law from the heart. "I will give you *a new heart* and put *a new spirit* within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. *I will put My Spirit within you* and cause you to *walk in My statutes*, and you will *keep My judgments and do*

*them*" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The world is in such sad shape because of man's disobedience to God. Paul tells us that our natural, human mind is hostile to God and "is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). Through the transforming power of God's Spirit, hostility to God's laws and way of life will be removed. Man will have "a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezekiel 18:31). By changing mankind's heart, Jesus Christ will bring true justice to the earth for the first time.

He will say to the people of Israel: "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults" (Isaiah 51:7). Why will people no longer live in fear? "For law will proceed from Me, and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples" (verse 4).

God's law, coupled with His Spirit, will be His instrument to bring about this wonderful transformation in human behavior. David wrote of this change: "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes." By God's judgments "Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:7-11).

This is how Christ's Kingdom will change the world. Once the people of Israel are on the right track—once they begin keeping God's covenant and obeying His law—they will help Christ teach God's law to the other nations. "Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

Christ "will exalt the law and make it honorable" (Isaiah 42:21). He will notify the people of earth that they must respect and obey the law of God!

### The restoration of all things

At that time Christ will begin the "restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). "Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days" (verse 24).

The restoration of the kingdom of Israel is only the beginning of the worldwide Kingdom of God. Christ will institute the ways of God in all nations. "Behold! My

Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1).

God says to Israel, “The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:3). What will attract them? It will be the tremendous blessings that God will pour out on the land and people of the restored kingdom of Israel.

God says: “Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you” (verses 4-5).

Jerusalem in particular will become the governmental and commercial center of the world. The world’s wealth will begin to flow into it, and the world’s human leaders will come courting Christ’s favor. “Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession” (verse 11).

Jerusalem will be the capital city of Christ’s Kingdom. “And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem” (Zechariah 2:12). Jerusalem will import the world’s finest products and become the envy of the nations. “The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the pine, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you The City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 60:13-14).

God has promised that the restored kingdom of Israel will impact the rest of the world. “But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, [foreigners] shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast. Instead of your shame you shall have double honor . . .” (Isaiah 61:6-7). “Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles . . . All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed” (verse 9).

### **Nations will change their traditions**

God has promised that “many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and

they shall become My people” (Zechariah 2:11). But changing the whole world won’t be easy. Earth’s inhabitants will at first fiercely resist. As in our time, people will defy any attempt to change their beliefs, culture and traditions—their way of life. Therefore, although the restored kingdom of Israel will flourish under Christ’s guidance, other nations will stubbornly oppose His rule. Several years will pass before all nations will surrender their ways and accept the ways of God.

Rather than conquering them by force,

*The Kingdom of God will supersede the governmental structures existing on earth at the time of Christ’s return. It will be a literal kingdom that will rule over all nations.*

Christ will give them a choice. They can cooperate and change their ways to receive the same blessings they can see in Jerusalem and the land of Israel. But, if they refuse to acknowledge that God “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45), they will have to live without God’s blessings, which will be essential to their survival.

It will be their choice. Christ will focus on a portion of God’s law that is almost totally spurned by today’s world. God commands the observance of His annual festivals, including the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:13-15). He will withhold His blessings from any nations that refuse to participate in the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

“And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:17-19).

Christ will allow uncooperative nations to suffer the painful consequences of a prolonged drought until they realize that God’s ways are better than their own traditions. The effects of drought and the example of Israel’s growing prosperity will begin to change the attitudes of people around the world.

### **Following a right example**

God explains the tremendous impact the example of the city of Jerusalem will have

on other nations. “Then it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to them; they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it” (Jeremiah 33:9).

God further says of Jerusalem, “The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory . . . You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God” (Isaiah 62:2-3).

Therefore, “the Gentiles shall come to

[the LORD] from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things’ (Jeremiah 16:19). “Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths’” (Micah 4:2).

As the nations begin to seek God’s will, Christ will send envoys from Jerusalem to teach God’s law to them. “For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (same verse).

Finally “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). God’s knowledge is available to us if we desire it. It is in the same textbook—the Bible—that Jesus will use to change the world. At the heart of that sacred knowledge is the law of God, epitomized by the Ten Commandments.

When one young man asked Jesus Christ how he could live forever, Jesus explained to him: “. . . If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). That is exactly what He will tell all people when He returns. That is how He intends to change the entire world—by teaching and implementing God’s law in all lands when He rules as King in the Kingdom of God. *GN*

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

To better understand the awesome future God has in store for mankind, be sure to request *The Gospel of the Kingdom and God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Both booklets are available free from any of our offices listed on page 2.

# Find the Pathway to Peace

*Whatever happened to the peace promised by Jesus Christ and the prophets before Him? Will humanity as a whole ever experience that peace?*

by Gerhard Marx

**W**hen the prophet Isaiah spoke of a future benefactor of the world, little did he realize that 2,500 years later and 2,500 miles away the German-born composer George Frideric Handel (born in 1685) would highlight this prophetic event with his oratorio *The Messiah*.

When Isaiah's messianic words were set to music and first performed for charity in Dublin in 1742, *The Messiah* was an immediate success. Handel's masterpiece fell on receptive ears in Ireland and England—fittingly reflected by the 3,000 admirers who attended his funeral in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey in 1759.

Unlike many popular visionaries, Isaiah's words highlight the coming of a Messiah, a great event to benefit all mankind. Not the least of the benefits of the Messiah's appearance will be genuine, lasting peace, as reflected by the prophet's encouraging words so well known and often sung in *The Messiah*: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, *The Prince of Peace*" (Isaiah 9:6, King James Version, emphasis added throughout).

When the Messiah did appear on earth, He taught and practiced the way of peace as no one before or after Him. Yet the first coming of Jesus Christ did not leave this present world a legacy of perpetual peace. "Peace" and "Goodwill toward men!" announced the chorus of heavenly messengers at the time of Jesus Christ's birth (Luke 2:14). But now, 2,000 years later, where is the evidence of the universal peace proclaimed by Isaiah? What went wrong?

## Only a dream?

The people of earth have seen little true peace, even when the name of Christ is esteemed. The Holy Land has for centuries seen war after war, conflict after conflict. The only periods of peace in that embattled area seem to be the intervals leading up to the next armed conflict—as attested to by five wars in modern Israel's brief 50-year history.

Much of the world can only dream of peace, and only the Messiah could make that dream a reality. "The way of peace they have not known" is Isaiah's verdict on man's typical behavior (Isaiah 59:8). His sobering statement is echoed by the words of Jeremiah: "It is not in man who walks

to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

History verifies this divine assessment of human conduct throughout the ages. Left to our own devices, people seem utterly incapable of keeping the peace. The 20th century has witnessed innumerable blood-stained episodes of strife and war. The world has rejected the peace that God so freely offered.

## The promise of peace

How have human beings rejected peace? They have rejected Jesus Christ and His message, disregarding the way to reconciliation, respect and cooperation that He taught and exemplified. But help is on the way. God will keep His promise by sending the Prince of Peace to earth a second time (Hebrews 9:28) to inaugurate the long-hoped-for utopia.

The world at large will have to wait a little longer to experience peace. But not everyone has to linger on a waiting list to experience it. Some are called to embrace peace now, well ahead of the rest of humankind, as the emissaries of God's way of life.

To those who accept this special calling, Jesus Christ promises: "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you; [but] not as the world gives . . ." (John 14:27). The real peace Christ offers is genuine and "surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). It is yours for the asking!

Christ offers, on an individual basis, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to embrace peace today rather than waiting for the universal calm and accord that will dawn when God intervenes mightily in world events.

Yet living a life in which peace is foremost in our minds isn't easy. In a chaotic age engulfed in turmoil and strife, finding the pathway to peace requires skill and initiative and has to be pursued in humility. It can, however, be achieved!

## The prize for peacemakers

The world tends to elevate its military heroes. Many visitors down through the years have seen the duke of Wellington's massive monument in St. Paul's Cathedral in London with its impressive list of his victorious battles. Few tourists have failed to notice the sky-high victory column of the duke of Marlborough at Blenheim Palace or the towering monument to "Braveheart" William Wallace near Stirling in Scotland.

True, these men of renown registered impressive

*"Peace" and "Goodwill toward men!" announced the chorus of heavenly messengers at the time of Jesus Christ's birth. But where is the evidence of the universal peace proclaimed by Isaiah? What went wrong?*

military achievements in this age of man. But greater conquests than the spoils of war—the accomplishments of peace—are too lightly esteemed.

“Peace has her victories,” noted John Milton. King Solomon, a scholar in his own right, reflected on this theme: “He who is *slow to anger* is better than the mighty, and he who *rules his spirit* than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32). Gaining the victory over our own base instincts is a worthy accomplishment, said Solomon—and so it is viewed by our Maker.

Notice God’s words to Solomon, a peacemaker who requested wisdom and understanding—divine qualities that preclude the killing fields of war—to better serve his people. “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” (1 Kings 3:11-13).

God heard and acted on Solomon’s request. This king would be blessed as a peacemaker in an otherwise blood-stained, violent age. In the eyes of our Creator, esteem and honor go to those who wage a battle for peace.

Good intentions and praise of peace are not in short supply. Yet a genuine, heartfelt desire to work out matters peaceably among nations or in our personal relationships all too often goes begging.

The God-inspired Scriptures make it clear that Christ’s first coming—apart from His sacrifice for the sins of the world—served to invite a cadre of people from many nations to individually embrace a life of peace now (John 14:27; 16:33).

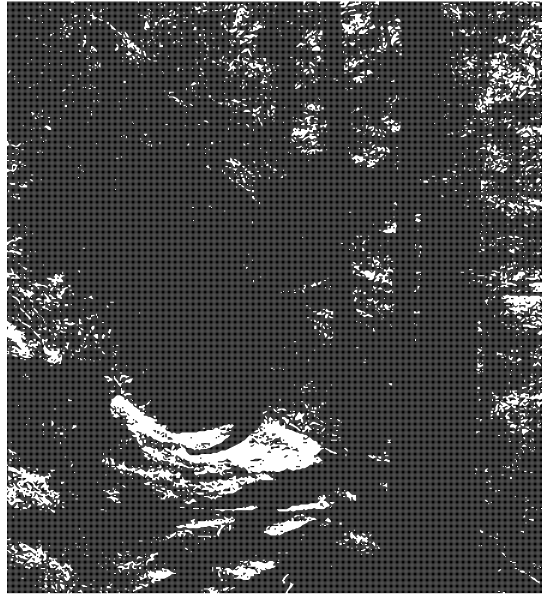
Surprising to some, Jesus Christ did not come 2,000 years ago to establish pervasive peace for one and all. The promise of peace for the world in general is for a time yet future when the Prince of Peace Himself will force an end to war (Revelation 2:27). Beginning at that time Christ will teach the way of peace to one and all—assisted by converted individuals already groomed as messengers of peace (Revelation 5:10).

### The personal touch

What is this peace that Jesus Christ taught 2,000 years ago that He will teach to the

whole world at His return? It is, first and foremost, *a way of life*. It is a state of mind—*God’s mind in us*. It is a mind living in harmony with the Word of God, the Bible.

As King David tells us, “great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble” (Psalm 119:165). Those who put into practice Christ’s teachings about peace will focus their minds on *loving* others rather than *taking advantage* of them. They will place the well-being of other people equal to, or even higher than, their own wants and needs. Because of this,



*In a chaotic age engulfed in turmoil and strife, finding the pathway to peace requires skill and initiative and has to be pursued in humility.*

“nothing causes them to stumble.”

Christ in God’s Word has shown us the way to peace. But how much do we make that way an integral part of our lives? We may not be able to bring our influence to bear on the world at large in any compelling way, but we can successfully heal a soured relationship.

To practice peace, as exemplified by Christ, one must be at peace with oneself and firmly believe that a peaceful approach is the only practical avenue to heal hurts and build amicable, friendly relationships. Embracing Christ’s way of peace pays valuable dividends.

No one ever set a better example than Jesus Christ. He reached out to make peace with the Samaritan woman, as recorded in John 4. At that point in history, relations between the Jews and Samaritans had dete-

riorated such that they were no longer on speaking terms with each other. Worse yet, this state of affairs was accepted as normal.

But Christ would have none of it. As a result of His desire to heal broken bonds, He made it clear that salvation would be made available to Samaritans as well as Jews. His stirring parable raised the anonymous Samaritan—viewed as among the most despised social class by Christ’s audience—to a position of honor and respect. Jesus’ message? All men are of equal potential in God’s sight, and He had come that all could ultimately experience the peace and salvation that can come only through God.

### Pathway to peace

Of the Prince of Peace, the apostle Paul wrote, “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and those who were near” (Ephesians 2:17). Our Savior included *all* who were willing to pursue peace. No one was barred from emulating Jesus Christ as a messenger of peace. Making peace is an art, and we have Christ’s example and His teaching to guide us.

The lesson for us is that we must build strong bonds where none existed, that we have to heal relationships where they have been bruised and broken. A personal touch from you is of paramount importance. Someone out there needs you—requires your example as a peacemaker—just as the world at large needs the Messiah.

Isaiah’s prophecy of a benefactor materialized 2,000 years ago in the person of Jesus Christ. This was stirringly presented to the public at large by Handel’s oratorio. Remember the Messiah’s promise, “Peace I leave with you!” Why not take Jesus Christ up on that promise and accept His invitation to be a messenger of peace? *GN*

### RECOMMENDED READING

Will the world ever see lasting peace? Is there a way to experience peace in your life? Be sure to request the booklets *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, *What Is Your Destiny?* and *The Road to Eternal Life*. They are yours free for the asking when you contact us at the office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2.

# History: A Chronicle of War

*History has long marched to the drumbeat of war. But the future will be quite different.*

by Jerold Aust

“**T**he Spanish are entering the Channel heading northwest. I saw ’em with my own eyes! They don’t appear to know we’re here.” Capt. Thomas Fleming was flushed with excitement as he delivered his message to a group of fellow captains gathered for a friendly game on the Bowling Green at Plymouth, England.

The mighty galleons of the Spanish Armada were indeed headed up the English Channel. Large, heavy and square-rigged, three or four decks high and loaded with heavy guns, these were not ordinary ships. The Spanish had built them to carry back treasure from the New World. Fleming had spotted their broad, white sails, all filled with a northeast wind. They looked every bit the imposing force they were.

When the English captains first heard the report, they dashed for their ships. But vice admiral Sir Francis Drake, the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe, halted them. Coolly, he insisted the match be finished: “There is time to finish the game and beat the Spaniards too” (Joseph B. Mitchell, *Twenty Decisive Battles of the World*, 1967, p. 152). The game resumed. We don’t know who won the game, but Drake and his compatriots won the war.

And a mighty and decisive battle it was. From that point, England ascended to maritime greatness. Spain began its descent as a major power. Many such wars fill the history books.

The story of mankind can be chronicled by its bloodshed. Many decisive battles have altered the course of human history: the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.); of Arbela (331 B.C.); of Tours (A.D. 732); and, closer to our modern era, the battles of the Spanish Armada (1588), Midway (1942) and Stalingrad (1942-43).

Lt. Col. Joseph B. Mitchell counts these clashes as six of the 20 battles that contributed most to shaping human history. As his book *Twenty Decisive Battles of the World* puts it: “The shape of history, as historians themselves admit, has often been decided, not by ‘movements’ or economics or assemblies, but by the individual actions of man on the battlefield.”

What does history tell us about war, and vice versa?

## Toll of human suffering

A recent edition of *Information Please Almanac*, under the heading “Headline History,” lists the most important events of this century. Of the 96 dated entries, 56 are wars. A random selection of the century’s most important dates from the first quarter of this century includes: 1904, Russo-Japanese War;

1911, Turkish-Italian War; 1912, Balkan Wars; 1914, World War I begins; 1917, America enters World War I in France; 1917-18, Russian Revolution; 1922, Mussolini marches on Rome; 1923, Adolf Hitler’s “Beer Hall Putsch.”

These conflicts show how man has busied himself in this century. In these conflicts—some minor, some not—thousands lost their lives. Millions have experienced the horrors of war. American casualties from World Wars I and II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War have added up to nearly two million men.

A history student might find these data interesting. Some might even consider wartime events glamorous. But they are sobering when they’re viewed in the light of anguish and suffering. Many of the brave millions who died on the battlefield were the fathers children were never to see again. Viewed from another perspective, the same men who died were the sons of many more millions of anxious parents who hoped and prayed in vain that their sons would return home. Soldiers, sailors and airmen had wives, children, parents, girl friends. When viewed in this light, war doesn’t seem glamorous.

For millennia, men have died by the thousands and even millions on bloodstained fields of battle. Their deaths mark milestones in history. But to what end? In the long term, their deaths were futile, because none of their sacrifices brought lasting peace.

## Why nations war

During World War II, Gen. George S. Patton seemed to relish war. But Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, later an American president, came to abhor the foolishness of the battlefield, especially after he viewed European concentration camps. Gen. Douglas MacArthur also came to see the futility of war and even to predict ultimate disaster if nations did not find another way to solve their disagreements.

Thousands of veterans who lived through horrific conditions have come to hate war. Why, then, do nations go to war?

Man’s Creator gives the answer: “What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn’t it because there is a whole army of evil desires within you? You want what you don’t have, so you kill to get it. You long for what others have, and can’t afford it, so you start a fight to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don’t have what you want is that you don’t ask God for it. And even when you do ask you don’t get it because your whole aim is wrong—you want only what will give *you* pleasure” (James 4:1-3, The

*Men have died by the thousands on bloodstained fields of battle. Their deaths mark milestones in history. But to what end? In the long term, their deaths were futile, because none of their sacrifices brought lasting peace.*

Living Bible, emphasis added throughout).

A nation reflects its individual citizens. As its citizens go, so goes the nation. People do not like to be ruled, to be told what to do, especially by God, whom they can't see.

### The problem with human nature

God understands our nature. After all, He has put up with our disobedience to His law for some 6,000 years. Shortly after God created Adam and Eve, Satan influenced our first parents to disobey God (Genesis 3:1-14). Lacking the power of God's Spirit, Eve succumbed to the deceit and manipulations of the devil, and Adam, though not deceived (1 Timothy 2:14), also partook of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:17).

The apostle Paul confirms our human weakness: "... The carnal mind [one that is preoccupied with its fleshly desires] is enmity [hostile] against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Our thoughts—without God's Spirit—are motivated not by God's law, but by the "law of sin" (Romans 7:23). Sin is the breaking of God's holy laws (1 John 3:4). The law of sin is characterized as a prevailing pampering of our fleshly desires that often leads to sin (James 1:13-15). God gave His law—spiritually applied to our thought processes (Romans 8:9-14)—to provide peace for mankind.

Before the flood of Noah's time, Scripture describes man's susceptibility to selfish influences: "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. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them'" (Genesis 6:5-7).

War, then, begins with selfishness and lust. When people fail to fill their self-indulgent agendas through deceit and manipulation, they often turn to violence. Full-blown war follows.

Nations go to war—and often. But, to be fair to mankind, we need to note that people are influenced to fight and war by the god of this world, Satan the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-3; Isaiah 14:20). He has a specific rationale for promoting human wars.

Satan knows that God is adding men and women to His spiritual family. This evil being recognizes that our destiny is to be a part of God's immortal spirit fam-

ily, sharing eternity with Him.

The apostle Paul sums it up: "As we have born the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man [Jesus Christ] . . . Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:49-50, 53).

Satan knows this. He knows that, when resurrected humans gain eternal life in God's family, they will exist on a higher plane than the angels. They will assist God even in the administration of angelic affairs (1 Corinthians 6:3). To try to disrupt God's plan, the devil perversely influences us to kill ourselves, to do his dirty work by helping us commit cosmocide (Matthew 24:21-22).

Certainly, millions of people have died in wars. Yet God will overcome Satan's handi-

## War begins with selfishness and lust. When people fail to fill their self-indulgent agendas through deceit and manipulation, they often turn to violence.

work through the promise and power of the resurrection. All who have lived and died will eventually be resurrected, each in his order (1 Corinthians 15:23), in accordance with God's plan and timetable.

### The end of war

Through Jesus Christ, God will put an end to war. Notice how the world will change after Jesus' return: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain [kingdom] of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains [human kingdoms], and shall be exalted above the hills [nations]; and peoples shall flow to it . . . He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:1, 3).

However, quite some time will pass before this peace will prevail. Some will be angry at God's intervention in human affairs (Revelation 11:18).

Some will violently resist Christ's rule and suffer the consequences: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war . . . Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads

the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:11, 15). Christ will put an end to war.

One of God's feast days, the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25), foreshadows the earth-shaking time when Jesus Christ will return to save mankind from himself. For thousands of years, the blowing of trumpets has signaled impending battles and bloodshed. Christ reveals that His angels will blow seven separate trumpets (Revelation 8-11), announcing to all His imminent return. Then He will make war on the obstinate, those who will not listen to Him or heed His servants (Revelation 11).

Jesus Himself then will return at the sound of a great trumpet blast (Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 11:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:16) and the announcement that forever changes man's history: "*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our*

*Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*" (Revelation 11:15). By observing the Feast of Trumpets, we celebrate Christ's victory ahead of time.

Throughout the historical record, man often marks his life on earth through wars. Rare is the time when man hasn't engaged himself in the throes of a great war or several simultaneous smaller conflicts. After His return and the resurrection of the dead, Christ will teach mankind the utter futility of war. Man will learn that Satan is the primary and hidden instigator of all wars, motivating humanity to destroy itself.

When Christ rules on earth, man's history will be marked by peaceful achievements (Amos 9:13-15; Ezekiel 36:35-38; Zechariah 14:10-11). This is part of the gospel—the wonderful news—that Jesus Christ's servants are to share with the entire world (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20). *GN*

### RECOMMENDED READING

The Bible has much to tell us about the future course of history and God's purpose and plan for humanity. To learn more about what lies ahead for this world, be sure to request your free copies of *The Gospel of the Kingdom* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Both booklets are available free for the asking at the office in your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2.

# Where Is Your Citizenship?

*Time spent living abroad teaches important spiritual lessons.*

by Joel Meeker

**I**'m married to an alien. No, not the science-fiction kind. My wife, though married to an American, is a citizen of another country.

I know how she feels. I've spent more than a fourth of my life as an alien as well. Marjolaine is Canadian, and I am American, but we have lived most of our married life in France. Both our daughters were born in Strasbourg, a few miles from the Rhine River, in eastern France.

Living away from one's own countries is a continual education and a rewarding experience. It can have its frustrating moments but for the most part is enriching. Our time abroad has special meaning for us because of Bible passages that describe the Christian way of life. Several of those passages concern the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles, one of God's sacred feasts described in the Bible.

## **A lesson for the Feast of Tabernacles**

As we approach the latter part of God's annual festival cycle, we receive a reminder of the important lesson about where our spiritual "citizenship" lies. In other words, where do we belong, spiritually speaking?

One of the instructions the Eternal gave the Israelites concerning the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles is in Leviticus 23:39-43. There we read that during this festival the Israelites were to live in temporary shelters. This was to call to their memories how God had brought them out of Egypt and how they had to dwell in tents as they passed through the wilderness on their way to permanent houses in their new home in the Promised Land.

Because the men in Israel were to travel to the Israelite center of worship—the tabernacle, or later the temple—to observe this festival, it was sometimes called a pilgrim feast.

The apostle Paul explained that much that happened to the people with whom God worked during the Old Testament period was symbolic of things to come for the New Testament Church. For example, in Romans 15:4 Paul wrote that "everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (New International Version throughout). In 1 Corinthians 10:11, he specifically applied the experiences of God's people in the Old Testament as types of the Christian life.

Speaking to the spiritual lesson implied in the wandering of Israel in the wilderness and the

Israelites living in tents, Paul writes: "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built with human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling . . . so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life" (2 Corinthians 5:1-4).

In other words, Paul explains, living in temporary dwellings reminds us that the time allotted for our human life is limited and that we are spiritual foreigners who belong elsewhere.

Of Abraham, the father of the faithful, Hebrews 11:9-10 says: "By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

The Scriptures often use the analogy of God's people as resident aliens living temporarily in a foreign country.

As did several of the apostles, Peter apparently had experience traveling and living in foreign lands. In 1 Peter 2:11, he used this as an analogy for the Christian life: "Dear friends, I urge you, *as aliens and strangers* in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul" (emphasis added throughout).

Peter describes Christians as temporarily living in a foreign country and should be careful about where they put down their spiritual roots. A few verses earlier Peter had written: "Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives *as strangers here* in reverent fear" (1 Peter 1:17).

As Christians, we are to remember that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20). Spiritually, we're from somewhere else. We are just temporary residents in what the apostle Paul calls "the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4).

Of the great examples of faith recorded in the Old Testament, Hebrews 11:13 tells us: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were *aliens and strangers* on earth."

A few verses later we read that, although, for example, God called Abraham to move to another geographical area, we can see a much deeper significance than strictly a physical relocation:

*God's people should consider themselves to be foreigners, resident aliens, heading toward their true country, which won't be established on earth until the return of Jesus Christ.*

“Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a place for them” (verse 16).

God’s people should consider themselves to be foreigners, resident aliens, heading toward their true country, which won’t be established on earth until the return of Jesus Christ. Because “our citizenship is in heaven,” Paul says, “we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ . . .” (Philippians 3:20).

When we are converted (Acts 3:19) by rejecting the forsaking of God’s way, repenting of our sins, committing ourselves to absolute submission to His will, being forgiven at baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38), our spiritual citizenship changes.

Before conversion we were of this world; after conversion we become at once foreigners in this world and citizens of a spiritual nation. Our primary citizenship changes.

Paul wrote to the converted gentile Christians in Ephesus: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:19-20).

### What a difference!

One important principle my wife and I learned living abroad is that one of the most effective ways of understanding one’s culture is to compare it with another. Most of us grow up taking for granted that the way things are done in our country and culture is the right way. Often it is only by considering an alternative that we can understand what we do and why we do it.

For example, when Marjolaine and I moved to France, we quickly learned that people there enjoy their meals. I mean really *enjoy* them. Many employees and school-children take a two-hour lunch break. Quite often we saw people who were traveling by car pull off to the side of the road right at noon, take a folding table and chairs out of the trunk and have a leisurely sit-down meal they had prepared in advance.

Special dinners with guests would often go for three or four hours, sometimes more. (The record for a meal we experienced was seven hours. We sat down a bit before noon and didn’t finish until around 7.) When the French invite guests, they usually have at least a five- or six-course meal. They often change the plates and cutlery between each course. That takes time, so people have long

opportunities for conversation. Usually the entire family, even the children, stay at the table for the duration of the meal.

I have to admit that, before becoming accustomed to this practice, I grew a little restless after two hours. I wanted to do something: play cards, watch TV, go for a drive, see a movie—do something. But our French hosts enjoyed long conversations, really getting to know their guests. They were more interested in *getting to know each other* than they were in other activities.

When I realized this, I thought about how in America we often ate much too quickly, hardly taking time to talk even with our family members. Then we rush off, often in separate directions, to do something else. I had never really thought about this before. I came to see and understand this aspect of

### *Paul explains that living in temporary dwellings reminds us that the time allotted for our human life is limited and that we are spiritual foreigners who belong elsewhere.*

modern American culture only when I compared it with another way of doing things.

### Comparing and contrasting two ways

In the same way, as Christians we come to better understand the Kingdom of God and His way of life by looking at the results of man’s way of doing things. We can then more fully appreciate that God’s way of giving and love is better. Man’s way is so often wrong.

Apparently, before their rebellion against God, Satan and the other angels who followed him had never really seen what life would be like if they didn’t follow God’s ways (Ezekiel 28:15). Perhaps they didn’t fully understand the miserable, permanent results of sin. But for us, living in this world deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9), there can be no doubt of the consequences.

I’ve had occasion to travel in nations where physical want is common. Most people aren’t sure of having enough to eat every day. Many face illnesses because of poor sanitation and enjoy no access even to rudimentary medical care. Several people I know in Central Africa recently came down with typhoid fever because their city’s water treatment was inadequate and contaminated.

In Western countries more and more people suffer the effects of choices contrary to God’s way: sex outside of marriage, illicit-drug use, domestic violence and the like. Even our everyday, seemingly unimportant attitudes of jealousy, dishonesty and selfishness can lead to painful results and at times even horrible crimes. We need look no

further than a news broadcast or a newspaper to see how far those attitudes can lead.

When we see the negative results of the world’s way of life, they should help us understand more clearly the need for a society based on love, mutual respect and obedience to divine principles. This lesson often becomes especially clear during the Feast of Tabernacles, when Christians come together for eight days in larger numbers and in higher concentrations than during the rest of the year. We can enjoy a foretaste of the attitudes of love, concern and obedience to God that will prevail when the Kingdom of God is established on earth.

### You’re not from here are you?

Another biblical concept we see illustrated when living abroad, and also illus-

trated by the Feast of Tabernacles, is the “in but not of” principle. We travel to sites around the world for the eight-day period of the Feast. We live at those sites temporarily but know they are not really our homes.

During our time in France we lived in the country, but only as visitors, not as citizens. We lived in France, but we were not French. We paid our taxes and obeyed the laws of the land but had no civic rights or responsibilities. We were not eligible to vote and could not be called for military service. We registered the births of our children with the American consulate to obtain U.S. passports for them (they also have Canadian citizenship). French passports were not an option open to us.

Especially when we first moved to France, I stood out as an American. All my clothes looked obviously American, noticeably different in cut and style. At church picnics, I was remarkably inept on the soccer field, since I had hardly ever played the game as a boy. Most of all, because I was still learning French and spoke with an American accent, I heard constant reminders that, though I resided in one country, I was from somewhere else. Occasionally people I met corrected my conjugation (French has many irregular verbs). Sometimes they just curiously asked where my home was, since I obviously wasn’t from there. I could never forget I was a foreigner. I was in, but not of, France.

Similarly, the Bible reminds us that Christians should never forget where their true citizenship lies. Jesus said of His disciples

that they were “in the world” but they were not “of the world” (John 17:11, 16).

We live here, but we don’t follow the ways of this world. We should stand out in the societies in which we live, not because of the cut of our clothes or for being poor soccer players, but as *examples of a different way of life*. Jesus said our examples of good works should be evident and ought to glorify God: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, *let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds* and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Peter points out that people won’t always immediately connect our good works with God’s presence in our lives, but they will remember them when God ultimately calls them to know Him (1 Peter 2:12). In the meantime, we should stand out for our friendliness, honesty, devotion to our families and willingness to help and serve others. This should be true, not only collectively during the Feast of Tabernacles, but in our individual lives all through the year.

### **So that’s what they’re like**

This leads to another lesson we learned from living abroad. If people haven’t had much contact with citizens of your physical nation, they will tend to judge your country by you. You become, in their eyes, an unofficial ambassador for your homeland.

A French child remarked, when I was introduced to him as an American: “I thought Americans were taller,” as if my fellow citizens were all just my height. I also heard someone say, “I thought Americans talked loudly” (this was after I’d learned to lower my voice in conversation, as most Europeans do). It was clear that these people were matching me up against their preconceived ideas and applying my example to the entire United States.

My wife found that people judged her native country, Canada, by her example. “I didn’t know Canadians were so energetic and lively,” one French person confided to her. She assumed that all Canadians were just like Marjolaine.

If we were happy with our example, and it were appreciated by others, we didn’t mind unofficially representing our nations in this way. If we had been culturally clumsy or were having a bad day and our examples weren’t the best, we hoped they wouldn’t reflect too poorly on our homeland.

God’s Word says Christians are His

representatives. Paul calls us “Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to represent Jesus Christ in all we do. Our lives should represent the way He would act if He were in our shoes.

By telling us this, our Savior places a weighty responsibility on our shoulders. When people know of our religious convictions, they judge Christianity, or our particular church or congregation, by our examples. This can be good or bad, but it will rarely be neutral.

We would all like our examples to reflect well on the One we represent and on His Church. “I didn’t know Christians were so hard working and generous and could still enjoy life so much!” is a wonderful comment I overheard about one outstanding example of Christianity whom I know. On the other hand, some people may observe us and conclude, “If that’s what people are like in their church, no thanks!” If so, we are not adequately fulfilling our responsibilities as ambassadors.

Of course, none of us sets a great example all the time. But, if we take our responsibility seriously and ask for God’s help, He will supply what we are unable to do ourselves: “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).

### **Time is short**

To say that Marjolaine and I enjoy French culture and history is an understatement. We find them fascinating. When we moved to France, we knew we would have a limited time to spend there, so we tried to take advantage of every opportunity to visit sites of interest and learn.

In our free time and during our vacations, we strolled through the monuments and museums of Paris. We thrilled to the beautiful Renaissance chateaux on the Loire River. We drove along the majestic Mediterranean coast from the Spanish to the Italian borders. We gasped at the beauty of the Alps and the Pyrénées. We climbed through castles or ruins of castles in every corner of the country. We were sobered by the World War I trenches and forts in Verdun and the June 1944 D-Day invasion beaches in Normandy. We delighted in tasting and appreciating the cheese and wine from many parts of the country.

In other words, we tried to make every moment count, to see and learn as much as possible in the time we had. When we finally moved out of France, we were happy that we had done so much and taken advantage of virtually every opportunity that pre-

sented itself to profit from our time there.

If you have already observed a Feast of Tabernacles, you know how quickly that joyous time passes. We prepare for the Feast over weeks and months, planning our trip, lodging and activities. During the festival, our time is full of encouraging fellowship, inspiring messages that help us draw closer to God and enjoyable activities with family and friends—and then suddenly it’s all over until next year. Our time at the Feast is limited, and there are so many things to do.

As Christians, we should know that we have a limited time in this world, and we have a great deal to accomplish. The Scriptures encourage us to feel a sense of urgency about the work God has given us. Of the end of the age, and His return to earth, Jesus told His disciples: “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap” (Luke 21:34).

We must remember that we’re temporary residents, here for only a short time. Yet a great deal rides on how we use our time here. In the last book in the Bible, Jesus says to John in a vision: “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” (Revelation 22:12). What we do, or don’t do, makes a difference.

Paul told the Thessalonian Christians: “Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night . . . But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you . . . So then, let us not be like the others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6).

These passages remind us that it is appropriate to periodically ask ourselves how urgently we take advantage of our opportunities to draw closer to our Father in heaven, to become more like our elder brother Jesus Christ, to serve our fellow Christians and all those with whom we come in contact, to do our part to help accomplish the work God has given His Church in this age. When the time of our sojourning here is up, and none of us can be sure of how much time we have, we will want to know we didn’t waste any of it. Time is short. We should make every day count.

As Christians, we should anticipate and work toward the moment we can enter, once and for all, our homeland: the Kingdom of God. Each year the Feast of Tabernacles helps us focus on these important lessons. *Bon voyage! GN*

# No More Lies

*A time is coming when truth will replace lies. This will take place at the removal of Satan the devil and is aptly pictured by the Day of Atonement.*

by Graemme Marshall

**W**ho was first to climb Alaska's Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America? Dr. Frederick A. Cook claimed to have made the first ascent in 1906. He even published a book to back up his assertion. It included a photograph apparently taken at the top. But Cook's claims were refuted in 1912, and subsequent advances in photography proved his photo to be a fraud.

Remember Rosie Ruiz of Boston Marathon fame? She claimed first prize among women runners in 1980, but later examination of camera footage failed to show her at any of the required checkpoints. She had broken the rules by taking a shortcut.

Lying and deception are so much a part of human nature that we find it difficult to trust anybody. We wonder how much of history we can believe. Did Sebastian Cabot really find Hudson Bay in 1580? Did Father Hennepin actually explore the lower Mississippi? How do we know Cortez conquered Mexico? Why do we believe Hannibal crossed the Alps? Did Marco Polo dine with Kublai Khan?

No photographic evidence authenticates these supposed events. All we have are claims and often-unsubstantiated diaries. (Of course, some historical claims have a much greater probability of truth than others. Scholars make use of carefully thought-out rules of evidence to support or disprove such claims.)

So can we believe all the assertions of ancient explorers? According to one researcher of historical hoaxes, definitely not. It's a powerful temptation to claim being first to accomplish something, even if the claim is a falsehood. For some explorers, this researcher observes, the "decision to fake an exploratory achievement determined almost everything about their lives. The hoax became the central fact of their existence."

## A new world to come

Why do people lie? The reasons are many. Generally they involve making oneself look good at the expense of others.

How much is society influenced by untruths? How did the mind-set of deception get started? Will it ever end?

The good news is that a time is coming when *truth* will replace all lying! This refreshing good news is revealed through one of God's annual festivals, the Day of Atonement. The Christian observance of this day depicts a future event destined to alter the course of history: Satan the devil will be removed from his

ability to influence and mislead mankind.

In God's master timetable, the historic landmark depicted by the Day of Atonement falls between two other momentous events—the return of Jesus Christ and the beginning of His millennial reign on earth. Both of these occurrences are depicted by other festivals of God—the Feast of Trumpets and Feast of Tabernacles.

In the utopian period Christ will usher in, the *architect* of lies, their *originator*, will no longer be around to influence anyone. Jesus Christ's righteous rule will ultimately rid us of lies (Revelation 21:27; 22:15).

Until God removes the chief instigator of sin, humanity will continue to be influenced to choose the way that leads to disobedience and suffering. Although our ingrained greed, selfishness and vanity all play a part in sin, Satan the devil bears the greatest responsibility for misleading mankind to disobey God.

The devil blinds people to the understanding of God's truth. The apostle Paul explained: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4, New International Version throughout).

Paul further warned that the devil is a master at deceitfully packaging himself and his message. Rather than presenting himself as he is, "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Jesus Christ plainly states that Satan introduced rebellion into the world. Jesus made clear to those antagonistic to His teachings: "You belong to your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Satan's influence is pervasive. He has managed to deceive the entire world (Revelation 12:9). The apostle John tells us that Satan's hold on humanity is so great that "*the whole world is under the control of the evil one*" (1 John 5:19, emphasis added).

Jesus Christ, our Savior, will rescue us from falsehoods, our own and others'. We must do our part to actively resist evil and turn from lying. So it's with feelings of relief that we can appreciate the Day of Atonement. It looks forward to a time when Satan's deceptive influence will be removed (Revelation 20:1-3).

God will banish Satan and his demons before Christ establishes His millennial rule. God will bind

*Continued on page E13*

*Satan's influence is pervasive. He has managed to deceive the entire world. The apostle John tells us that Satan's hold on humanity is so great that "the whole world is under the control of the evil one."*

# Knowing God for the First Time

*Through His annual festivals, God offers us the opportunity to experience now what the whole world will experience in the future.*

by Graemme Marshall

**T**he emotions surrounding the moment a 17-year-old girl saw her father for the first time brought tears to my eyes.

A television documentary pictured the event. At age 11 she had come home from school one day to find her mother with the family photo album. Her mother said, “You’ll find pictures of a man in there you don’t know. He’s your real father.”

In her adolescent way, the girl searched for her biological father for six years without success. Some people aware of her longing decided to intervene and through a private investigator eventually found her father. Not knowing whether it was the right thing to do, they arranged to meet the girl in a motel without having told her of their success. There they asked her, “Do you really want to see your father?”

“Oh yes, more than anything!”

“He’s in the room next door waiting to see you.”

She broke into tears of disbelief as her father walked into the room with a bouquet of flowers. He explained that, after the breakup of his marriage with her mother, he had not wanted her to be confused by having two fathers.

## **Do you know your father?**

Surprising as it may sound, we, too, have a father whom we have never seen—not a physical, flesh-and-blood father, but our heavenly Father.

Long ago Moses desired, much as we might today, to personally see the face of God. Moses had already had the great privilege of speaking personally with the God of the Old Testament. Even so, Moses was not allowed to see Him face to face: “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live” (Exodus 33:20).

The emotions of a young girl seeing her biological father for the first time can be similar to our experience as believers. We are born into a physical life without prior knowledge of our heavenly Father. When called by God as true Christians, we are limited in our perception of the Kingdom of God, and we still do not see God as He is.

However, God does provide a way for us to experience what finally meeting our heavenly Father will be like.

This leads us to the picture of that incredible future painted by God’s Feast of Tabernacles. This

foretaste of the Millennium is the motivation behind thousands of Christians who save their money through the year to leave their homes to observe this feast of God in temporary dwellings (Leviticus 23:1-2, 34-41).

## **Taste of the future**

The Feast is not just a holiday. It is quite apart from a vacation. It is a specific, predetermined observance ordained of God forever. And, yes, Feastgoers do enjoy a vacation—a time of refreshment and restoration—in part. But the focus of this feast is its daily worship services—and for good reasons.

During the services members focus on the most wondrous knowledge they could ever receive: insights into God’s plan for humanity, eternal life and the Kingdom of God.

Scripture shows that, at Christ’s return and the beginning of His millennial reign, changed believers will *see* the glorified Jesus Christ for the first time. That will serve as a prelude to a still-future time when all human beings will meet their heavenly Father for the first time. What a momentous event! The understanding of it is derived from observance of this sacred festival, the Feast of Tabernacles.

In God’s plan for humankind as outlined through His feast days, the world will be forever changed by the return of Jesus Christ, symbolized by the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24), followed by the Day of Atonement (verse 27), which depicts God’s banishment of Satan.

After these two annual festivals is the Feast of Tabernacles (verses 34-41), picturing the 1,000-year reign over the earth of Jesus Christ and the resurrected saints after His second coming (Revelation 20:4). During this time all people will enjoy ready access to God, bringing about a “new heart” and “new spirit”—God’s Spirit—within them (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Under the guidance of the Spirit of God, people will enthusiastically want to obey God from their hearts. They will place the interests of others before themselves. That’s why believers today, led by that same Spirit, place such a high priority on attending this feast of God. They know that, in turn, they will receive inspiring spiritual knowledge of God’s plan for mankind, including His gift of eternal life.

*Surprising as it may sound, we, too, have a father whom we have never seen—not a physical, flesh-and-blood father, but our heavenly Father.*

## The significance of tabernacles

God's command to ancient Israel to dwell in tabernacles, or "booths" (Leviticus 23:42), symbolizes the temporary, transitory nature of life. The apostle Paul explained that, as this temporary body—"this tent"—ages, we yearn even more for our permanent, eternal Spirit body from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1-2).

Hebrews 11 describes the faithful servants of God as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (verse 13). The Feast of Tabernacles is an annual reminder of our temporary state and that believers "seek a homeland" with God (verse 14).

The transitory nature of human life is

### *Scripture shows that, at Christ's return and the beginning of His millennial reign, changed believers will see the glorified Jesus Christ for the first time.*

reinforced when we travel to festival sites and dwell temporarily in hotels, motels or campgrounds. Believers gain enormous encouragement from the Feast's portrayal of the future. Understanding what God has in store for us—eternal life—gives great hope and purpose for our having to endure physical life now. These are some of the wonderful spiritual lessons from keeping God's festivals.

## Knowing God for the first time

Scripture depicts believers permanently bound in a close, loving, relationship with Jesus Christ. God's Word describes "the marriage of the Lamb"—Jesus Christ—to His Church at His return (Revelation 19:6-9). This close relationship as changed spirit members of the Kingdom of God will continue throughout eternity. The Bible describes the saints as members of the very family of God, as His children (Romans 8:16-17; 1 John 3:1).

Throughout the world human beings will at last have gained access to the spiritual knowledge they have never known. Under Christ's righteous rule, "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9, emphasis added throughout).

Of that time God tells us: "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their

iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

Christians who attend the Feast of Tabernacles are pioneering this future world by observing God's festivals now. In the magnificent world to come, entire nations will join in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16). When these pioneers are changed to Spirit members of the Kingdom of God, they will assist Christ in a global reeducation program (Revelation 5:10; 20:6).

Believers who observe the Feast are every year busily preparing to help bring that ideal to pass. Jesus said we should direct our prayers to our heavenly Father,

whom we have never seen. The apostle John said that at our change to spirit, from mortal to immortality, "we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

To see God is to be in a close, accessible relationship. John further adds, in the final chapter of the last book in the Bible, that "they will see His face [the Father's], and His name shall be on their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4).

The Feast of Tabernacles provides us a foretaste of a new life, a new environment (a new world) and a new destiny, and it offers us a fascinating taste of a world filled with people who will enjoy a close personal relationship with our heavenly Father and, of course, our elder brother, Jesus Christ.

These are some of the pictures painted by the Feast that bring understanding and great hope for believers. *GN*

### RECOMMENDED READING

Few people realize that the feast days in the Bible help us understand God's plan for humanity. Each of His festivals reveals and helps us understand major events in God's dealings with mankind and how He will intervene in human affairs. You need to understand what the Bible says of these days. Request your free copy of *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind* from the address of your country (or the country nearest you) listed on page 2 of this issue.

# Lies

*Continued from page E11*

fallen angels—who for thousands of years have led people into every imaginable evil—and confine them to a place of restraint (verses 2-3). Complete reconciliation of humanity to God cannot occur until the source of so much sin and suffering—Satan—is gone.

## The significance of fasting

The Day of Atonement is markedly different from God's other holy convocations. The specific biblical instruction for its observance describes it as both a "sacred assembly" and a time to "deny yourself" (Leviticus 23:27-32). Rather than a day of feasting, it is a day of fasting (Acts 27:9).

Briefly, to "deny yourself," or to "afflict your souls" (King James Version), means to go without sustenance for the day, to fast. God instructs that, in our being somewhat weakened by hunger, we better learn and express humility. Our fasting assists our desire for closeness with God, who is truth and in whom is no lie. It heightens the realization of our dependence on God for life itself. It promotes a repentant state of mind, one that seeks to be true to ourselves as well as others. (More details about the proper observance of the Day of Atonement are found in our booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. Be sure to request your free copy.)

Some 2,700 years ago God, through the prophet Isaiah, described how degenerate His people had grown in their disregard for truth. "... Truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter" (Isaiah 59:14).

How applicable are the prophet's centuries-old words today. You can't believe everything you read! Too many politicians promise what they cannot deliver. Newspapers and magazines print unsubstantiated rumors and stories masquerading as facts, leaving readers unsure how much is true of what they read or hear.

We can be thankful that Christ's sacrifice rescues us from the consequences of our human capacity to lie. We can also thank God that the Day of Atonement pictures an era when the chief architect of falsehoods will be banished—and his lies with him.

The wonderful world to come will be characterized by the spread of the true knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9). In the coming age of truth, virtually all people will learn to obey the Ninth Commandment. At last, there will be no more lies. *GN*

# The Work of the Master Potter

*When we understand the steps needed in making flawless pottery, we can begin to see how God works with us and what methods He employs.*

by Roger West

**T**he making of pottery is one of mankind's oldest crafts. Pottery fragments are so common that archaeologists often use them to date and identify ancient civilizations and their cultures. Over the centuries mankind has learned to create a vast variety of vessels from clay.

The potter's process of collecting clay and shaping it can remind us of some of the ways God works with us. As a clay vessel is the handiwork of the potter, so are we God's handiwork.

Notice God's words at the creation of man: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). We also learn that "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Elihu, speaking to Job, understood man's origin: "I also have been formed out of clay" (Job 33:6).

## God compares Himself to a potter

God Himself uses the analogy of potter and clay to help us understand His work with us. He inspired the prophet Isaiah to write, "But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand" (Isaiah 64:8).

Jeremiah, another prophet, recorded God telling him to visit a potter's house, where he watched the man at work. When the potter recognized that the vessel on which he was working was flawed, he reshaped the malleable clay into a new container more to his liking and purpose. God compared the potter's decision to reshape the defective vessel to His own power to work with entire nations in carrying out His purpose. "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" He asked. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!" (Jeremiah 18:6).

Paul used the analogy when writing to the Romans: "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have power

over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" (Romans 9:20-21).

As a potter works with clay, God works both with nations and other groups of people and in the lives of individuals He calls for His purpose. The potter is the one who determines the ultimate use of the clay.

What lessons can we learn from this often-used biblical analogy?

## Steps in making pottery

Pottery—the art or craft of the potter—takes great patience because of its many time-consuming steps. Here is a summary of the steps a potter must take to create a useful vessel from a lump of clay. He must:

- Select the type of clay to use.
- Remove the impurities from the clay, then let the clay age, weather and ferment until it is ready to be worked.
- Wedge (knead and pummel) the clay to remove lumps and air bubbles to make it pliable.
- Be sure the clay is centered on the wheel so the resulting vessel isn't shaped unevenly.
- Form the clay, with the aid of water, into a vessel.
- Fire the vessel to permanently set and harden it.
- If necessary, fire the vessel again if it is not yet usable.
- Judge the vessel's final readiness.

Let's analyze these steps, comparing the way God as the Master Potter forms us with the way a potter works with clay.

## The spiritual context

God has a master plan in mind. He selects whom He will call (John 6:44; Acts 2:39) and who, if they will accept their callings, He can make into useful vessels. Those who are called, if they respond to His preparing, are to live forever in God's family. This helps us understand how and why God works with us as He does.

A potter's first step is to choose his raw material: clay. When a potter digs up his clay, he

*As a potter works with clay, God works both with nations and other groups of people and in the lives of individuals He calls for His purpose. The potter is the one who determines the ultimate use of the clay.*

must first rid it of accumulated dirt. As is the case with the potter's clay, we have debris from our past that needs to be removed before we can be useful to God. We need much preparation because we don't realize the extent of our contamination (Psalm 51:2). That's where Christ's sacrifice is so important. We must know that we need cleansing by His blood.

But that is just the beginning. "When first dug, clays are much too fresh and not ready for immediate use. The clay crystals are locked in bundles making the body 'short' or not as plastic as it might be. Weathering, or exposure to rain and frost through a winter, breaks up the clay and improves it. All manipulation of clay has a similar effect and this makes preparation an important process" (Gwilym Thomas, *Step by Step Guide to Pottery*, 1973, p. 8).

In the same way, our spiritual journey begins with great imperfections when God first calls us. Some weathering must take place as we begin to understand God's Word and His ways and start to apply the knowledge He reveals to us.

When the potter decides the clay is ready, he goes to work "wedging," or working, the clay to make it malleable and pliable. "Properly wedged clay responds readily and dependably to the potter's touch . . . Wedging ensures . . . the absence of air cavities" (Thomas, p. 10). Air cavities in clay are like vanity in people. Vanity has to be removed to create a useful vessel. We learn that the ways we thought were right are actually ways that lead to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). God, the supreme Potter (Isaiah 41:25), humbles us to make us ready for His purpose.

Centering comes next. Centering is the process that ensures the clay is revolving in the center of the wheel head—vital to ending up with a good product. "The results of . . . an uncentered block of clay include walls of uneven thickness, weak spots, and poor and unstable shapes" (Peter Cosentino, *The Potter's Project Book*, 1987, p. 18). The closer we are to the center of God's way (the more God-centered we are), the more useful we will be to our Creator.

After wedging and centering, the potter introduces water to lubricate the clay as he begins shaping it with his hands. In the Bible water is used as a type of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). God shapes us through His Spirit, molding His character in us (Romans 8:14).

Much preparation and work come before the potter judges the vessel's shape. Even then, he is not finished.

## Testing by fire

The pot is ready to face the test of fire. The potter, before the firing process, must know his clay and how much fire it can take. "Firing raw pots enables the carbon present in the clay and glazes to be burnt out. Without the 'cleaning' burn . . . impurities would remain trapped in the pots" (Andrew Holden, *The Self-Reliant Potter*, 1984, p. 74).

In the Bible, fire pictures trials. "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, *that the genuineness of your faith*, being much more precious than gold that perishes, *though it is tested by fire*, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7, emphasis added throughout).

The potter does not leave the fire while the vessels are in the kiln. He must make sure he uses just the right temperature to bake the pottery. Just as God will not leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), He also will not allow our trials to overwhelm us (1 Corinthians 10:13). A potter looks at a vessel as an investment, having labored hard to bring it to this point. We know that God likewise cares for His spiritual vessels (1 Peter 5:7).

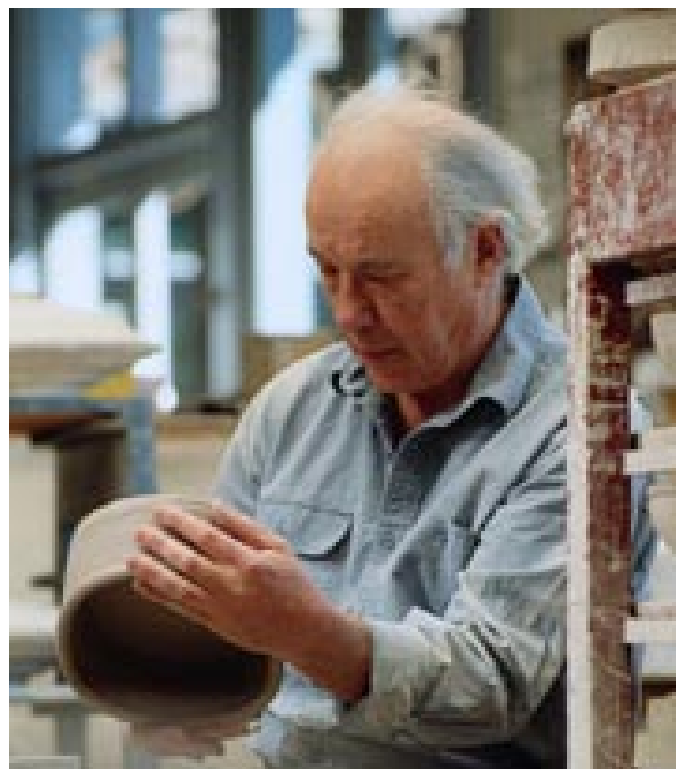
"To create the pot envisaged in the 'mind's eye' a complete understanding of the materials and what happens to them during the firing process is necessary" (Holden, p. 7). Although Christians, through weakness, make mistakes, we should learn from them. James tells us that our trials are a part of the perfecting process (James 1:2-4). We need considerable patience for the best results.

After the potter fires his pottery several times, he is ready to judge it. Did the vessel turn out the way he wanted it to? Is it even, or does it sag in places? Did it warp? Is it hard and strong? Did it develop holes or cracks in the process? Does the vessel reflect the attributes of the potter? As one potter puts it, "of all human-made objects, nothing resembles its maker or reflects her or his physical attributes more than a clay pot" (Thomas, p. 56). As a potter knows each vessel, God knows His workmanship (2 Timothy 2:19).

The Christian is God's vessel, designed for service (2 Corinthians 4:6-7), reflecting the attributes of the Master Potter. The potter labors carefully and long to produce his vessels. His vessels represent him; they bear his name. In the same way, God continues to work with us, His human vessels. He is not ashamed of us; He knows how many firings we have gone through to come this far.

How many more firings will we have to go through before our physical life ends or Christ returns? The Master Potter knows. He doesn't want to lose any of His vessels (Matthew 18:14). He knows that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

The Bible tells of those who, at Jesus



**God Himself uses the analogy of potter and clay to help us understand His work with us. He inspired the prophet Isaiah to write, "We are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand."**

Christ's return, will then be with Him. They are "called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14). They have passed through the firings successfully. They have proven themselves and will be vessels in God's Kingdom. **GN**

## TYPES OF POTTERY VESSELS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE

The Bible mentions several types of containers made from pottery. How did ancient people use them, and what can we learn from the terms they used for pottery vessels? In her book *Strange Scriptures That Perplex the Western Mind* (1985), Barbara M. Bowen discusses the use of pottery:

- **A vessel for honor** (2 Timothy: 20-21). "Now let us go into a peasant's home. As you enter, back of the door you will find a bench about four feet high, with three holes in it. This is the water-jar stand. It is called 'the holder of jars.' Here you will see two large jars, each holding four or five gallons, and beside them a small drinking vessel. The peasant will offer you the small drinking vessel as you enter the house. It is very much of an art to be able to use it, but to people brought up from childhood in an Oriental home it does not appear so. You will be invited to fill it to the brim from the first jar, called the vessel of honor.

"What is a vessel of honor? Well, let us go back to the pottery and ask to buy a vessel. The potter will ask, 'Do you want to carry it to the fountain? Then you must bear a vessel of honor.' A vessel of honor, what does it mean? It is a vessel that will give out pure water to quench the thirst of the stranger and the weary traveler. You purchase the vessel of honor, holding about five gallons. It has two handles and is beautifully shaped.

"You place it on your right shoulder or your head and go to the fountain to get water. If you meet a stranger he will see your jar filled with cold, clean, refreshing water, and he likely will ask for a drink. This is the mission of a 'vessel of honor,' giving free water, the gift of God, to passers-by. It is nothing but an earthen vessel, but nevertheless, it is a vessel of honor, because of its giving-out nature. It fulfills the expectation of the master potter" (p. 115).

- **A vessel for dishonor** (2 Timothy 2:20). A vessel for dishonor "looks just like the vessel of honor; but is not of the same nature. You could never tell the difference, but the potter can explain to you the difference between the vessel of honor and the vessel of dishonor. This vessel will remain at home. All the stale water in the vessel of honor will be emptied into it. It receives much, but gives out very little.

"In Jeremiah 22:28 we read of a vessel called 'empty of pleasure.' This is the vessel beside the vessel of honor on the bench. This vessel receives the left-over water, is forever receiving, but never gives out refreshing water. It is used for stale water only, and after a time the inside becomes slimy, and the water ill-smelling. And there is now no pleasure in it, either to the potter or to the owner. It is finally placed in the backyard as a receptacle for waste things and then will be called an abominable vessel . . . It must be sad for the potter to know that the vessel he spent much time and skill upon should become a vessel empty of pleasure, . . . an abominable vessel" (p. 116).

- **A vessel of mercy** (Romans 9:23; Mark 9:41). "Here is a vessel of mercy. A Moslem never prays without washing his hands. In the villages travelers need water supplied to them, so the villagers provide small vessels of water for the traveler to use called vessels of mercy, to help others" (p. 116).

- **A vessel of wrath** (Romans 9:22). "We see a pile of vessels laid aside, called vessels of wrath, useless to the potter. They appeared absolutely all right until they were put into the furnace. They came out cracked, they just could not stand the fire. However, the potter will not give them up, he has prepared a certain kind of cement . . . The potter . . . mixes it with some powdered broken pottery and cements the cracks in his vessel of wrath. When it passes through the furnace again, it may come out all right, or it may come out broken again. He patiently cements it again and again, but he may finally be obliged to lay it aside and pronounce it a vessel of wrath, of no value, and then he casts it away" (p. 117).

- **A shard, or sherd, from a vessel** (Isaiah 30:14). "This picture which means little or nothing to our minds, was full of beauty to those who first heard it spoken. Pitchers and jars of earthenware are the usual means of carrying water from the well to the home. These jars are very easily broken. A woman stumbles or falls on her way to the well, the vessel crashes from her head to the ground and there lies in pieces.

"Frugality is one of the Eastern woman's virtues. Even these broken pieces of pottery (sherds) may be turned to service. She selects two of the largest: one she places by the side of the well or water pit; the other she takes home and places beneath the hearth. The piece by the well side will serve some day for the thirsty traveler to stoop down and scoop up the cool waters out of the pit. The sherd by the hearth will be used to carry glowing embers to light another fire, perhaps in a neighbor's home" (p. 57).

- **A clean vessel** (Isaiah 66:20). A clean vessel "was once a vessel of honor on that bench, giving out life-giving water to thirsty travelers. It has been handled by many unclean hands. Its nature is not changed, but its looks have been marred. So it will be taken to the potter again to be filed and scraped. He will remove all uncleanness left by contact with soiled hands, then place it in the furnace again, burn it once more. It comes out for use again, clean without and within, 'A Clean Vessel'" (p. 117).

- **A chosen vessel** (Acts 9:15). "Let us return to the pottery. Tell the potter that you are returning to your own country and desire to take home a vessel to show your friends. You request him to choose for you. He will hand you his chosen vessel, saying, 'I will never be ashamed to send this vessel to any part of the world, for I have chosen it and I know it will never put me to shame. It is a chosen vessel'" (p. 118).

—Roger West