

The Good News

**‘Neither Shall
They Learn
War Anymore’**



*Drought Conditions Reach Crisis Levels • The Hope of Glory
Coping With Worry • ‘If a Man Die, Will He Live Again?’*

The Source of Violence and Terror

The Peruvian capital of Lima is the home of some eight million people. It is one of the world's megacities, growing rapidly as more people crowd into its suburbs in search of security and a measure of prosperity. Lima exhibits the contrasts of a city struggling with the demands of population growth and the inability to provide for everyone's physical needs and wants. Wealthy districts boast well-built homes and manicured gardens, while poorer neighborhoods accommodate settlements thrown together by desperate squatters from the countryside.

Peru has suffered its share of political problems. The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), a Maoist organization, terrorized the country for years. Though the Shining Path all but disappeared after the life imprisonment of its leaders, other individuals and organizations still plot the violent disruption of Peruvian society. Shortly before I rode through the city center on a recent visit, a bomb blast had shattered windows near government buildings.

Worldwide, no area seems safe from the reach of the terrorist's devices. From the TWA disaster off Long Island to the persistent problems in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, terrorism is again front-page news. What is going on?

Some years ago, while attending a press conference in Japan, I heard Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister of Britain, put into perspective the tendency of humans for violence. As Mrs. Thatcher remarked, what is going on is the result of the same capacity for violent behavior that led Cain to lift his hand against his brother. It's been around that long—and longer.

According to the Bible, the violence that has been so much a part of this terrible century should be attributed to a mastermind whose subversions affect everyone. "You became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God" (Ezekiel 28:16). This mastermind is the fallen angel Lucifer. The Bible calls him Satan, a Hebrew word meaning "adversary." His capacity for violence has existed from the beginning. His deception of humanity into believing that violence can provide answers should come as no surprise. "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

The apostle Paul wrote clearly about Satan's effect on all of us at one time or another. He reminded the Christians of the first century that they "once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves" (Ephesians 2:2-3).

We can easily gloss over the significance of these scriptures amid the horror, revulsion and emotion of the recent tragedies. But we can ill afford to miss the spiritual reality that is Satan. The devil is a real being. We should be thankful that the Bible reveals that the time will come when he will no longer influence humankind.

In the meantime, what can we do? We can recall that God is a Being who always has our best interests at heart. His plan eclipses the sufferings of this life. We can take hope in the promise of the Creator's Kingdom of Peace, where finally "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

May God soon comfort the anguished survivors whose lives have been shattered and destroyed by these terrible acts of violence.

—David Hulme

Good News

September/October 1996 Volume 1, Number 5

The *Good News* (ISSN: 1086-9514) is published bi-monthly by the United Church of God, an International Association, 444 E. Huntington Dr., Suite 206, Arcadia, CA 91066-3678. © 1996 United Church of God, an International Association. Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Periodicals postage paid at Arcadia, Calif. 91006, and at additional mailing offices.

Publisher: David Hulme

Managing editor: Scott Ashley

Copy editors: Dixon Cartwright, Peter Moore

Art director: Shaun Venish

Editorial reviewers:

John Bald, Robert Boraker, Roger Foster,

Bruce Gore, Paul Kieffer, Rod McQueen,

John Meakin, Brian Orchard, John Ross Schroeder,

Richard Thompson, Lyle Welty, Dean Wilson

United Church of God Council of Elders:

Gary Antion, Robert Dick (chairman), Jim Franks,

Roy Holladay, Doug Horchak, David Hulme,

Victor Kubik, Dennis Luker, Burk McNair,

Peter Nathan, Leon Walker, Donald Ward

Subscriptions: Call (818) 294-0800 or write to *The Good News*, United Church of God, P.O. Box 661780, Arcadia, CA 91066-1780, or contact us at the office nearest you (see international addresses below). *The Good News* is sent free to all who request it. Your subscription is provided by the voluntary contributions of members of the United Church of God, an International Association, and others. Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax-deductible in the United States. Those who choose to voluntarily support this worldwide work are welcomed as coworkers in this effort to proclaim the true gospel to all nations.

Personal contact: The United Church of God has almost 300 congregations and more than 450 ministers in virtually all U.S. states and many countries. For locations and times of services nearest you, write or call the addresses listed or dial our fax information service at (818) 294-0818. You can access our World Wide Web home page at <http://www.ucg.org/> on the Internet.

Scriptural references in *The Good News* are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

International addresses:

Australia: United Church of God—Australia
GPO Box 535, Brisbane, Qld. 4001, Australia
Phone: 075 5 35 6030 Fax: 075 5 35 6106

Bahamas: United Church of God
P.O. Box N8873, Nassau, Bahamas
Phone: (809) 324-3169 Fax: (809) 364-5566

Canada: United Church of God,
an International Association
9251-8 Yonge St. No. 303,
Richmond Hill, ON L4C 9T3, Canada
Phone: (416) 231-9379, (800) 338-7779
Fax: (416) 231-8238

South Africa: United Church of God
P.O. Box 4345, 2125 Randburg, South Africa
Phone: 011 792-4601 Fax: 011 791-0711

Spanish-speaking areas: United Church of God
P.O. Box 458, Big Sandy, TX 75755, U.S.A.
Phone: (903) 636-4928

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

Address changes: POSTMASTER—Send address changes to *The Good News*, Box 661780, Arcadia, CA 91066-1780.

Table of Contents

Cover Feature

Neither Shall They Learn War Anymore 4

Some 27 centuries ago, the prophet Isaiah foretold a time when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” Since that time, countless millions of lives have been lost in war and its grim aftermath, and man has expended vast resources in killing his fellowman. Were Isaiah’s words simply an empty dream, or will they one day become a reality?



Will humanity ever be rid of the scourge of war? 4

Drought Conditions Reach Crisis Levels

Spreading drought in portions of the U.S. breadbasket is increasingly bringing comparisons to dust-bowl conditions of the 1930s. Are there lessons for humankind to learn from such natural weather occurrences? 8



Archaeological discoveries verify the Bible 20

If a Man Die, Will He Live Again?

The ancient words of Job reflect an age-old question: What happens to us when we die? Is death the end for us? Is there any hope for us beyond the grave? The Bible gives the clear—and to many surprising—answers. 12

The Hope of Glory

The Olympic Games have inspired mankind for centuries. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Paul encouraged Christians with examples from his day. . . . 14



Why worry doesn't work 26

Archaeology and Genesis: What Does the Record Show?

Is the Bible historically accurate? Some believe that it is little more than myth. Archaeological discoveries, however, verify many details of the biblical accounts. See how some finds illuminate the book of Genesis. 20

Coping With Worry

You worry. I worry. We all worry about all kinds of things. But why do we allow ourselves to worry so much? Does our worrying accomplish anything? And are we concerning ourselves with the right things? 26

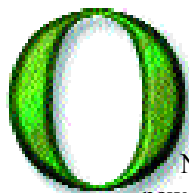
Regular Features

World News and Trends	<i>Significant Developments on the World Scene</i>	10
Profiles of Faith	<i>Daniel: God Is My Judge</i>	17
Understanding God's Word	<i>The Resurrections of the Dead</i>	24
Just for Youth	<i>Teen Success Stories</i>	28

‘Neither Shall They Learn

Will humanity ever find a way to settle its differences without resorting to the violence of war?

by Mario Seiglie



One of the most famous sculptures of modern times stands in front of the United Nations headquarters in New York. There a powerfully built man is depicted beating a sword into a plowshare. It was sculpted by the Russian artist Ergenly Vuchetich and was dedicated May 21, 1960. On the base are words, slightly altered from Isaiah 2:4: “We shall beat our swords into plowshares.”

At first glance this saying appears appropriate. Certainly the aim is lofty. Surely we all yearn for peace.

“Everything, everything in war is barbaric . . . But the worst barbarity of war is that it forces men collectively to commit acts against which individually they would revolt with their whole being.”

—Ellen Key (1849-1926), Swedish writer

Paul, writer of several books of the Bible, even recommended that his readers pray for leaders: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Yet this same Paul did not want his Christian brethren to form a false hope that a lasting peace would be achieved by human government. Although he exhorted them to be good citizens and to be a light to the world, he pointed out they must base their hopes of a true peace on the coming Kingdom of God.

Cycles of war

Man constantly seeks peace, but he frequently engages in war. Why is mankind’s quest for peace always eventually thwarted by war? Will man finally, once and for all, forge his mighty weapons into instruments of peace? Will he break the cycle of war?

There is a way, but, as we shall see, the way that would work is not seriously considered by most people.

Here are some statistics on the history of war from the Norwegian Academy of Science and the World Organization for the Protection of Humanity. These organizations have calculated that, in the last 5,600

years of man’s written history, armies have fought 14,531 wars. Over the 5,600 years, they estimate only 292 years of peace. That means that 94 percent of the time—5,208 of those years—saw war. The same organizations figure that deaths caused by war have totaled 3.4 billion.

These figures work out on average to be about 700,000 deaths every year, or 70 million per century. In our century some 150 million people—more than half the present population of the United States—have died as a result of armed conflicts.

At this time, civil wars are being waged in the Russian state of Chechnya and in several African states. A decade ago James Reston of *The New York Times* wrote that in this century alone history has recorded 207 wars. In the two world wars, the estimated number of casualties ran more than 50 million. Now, he says, some nations are in a race to acquire the technology capable of waging battles in space, and not just on our planet. It seems everywhere man goes weapons of death and destruction follow.

Armaments and drugs

Former United Nations secretary general Javier Pérez de Cuéllar noted the sad fact that the two largest industries in the world are the armament business—with almost \$900 billion in annual sales—and the illegal-drug market. It is a sad portrayal of how some choose to use a good portion of national and individual wealth.

Considering the enormous military expenditures of the nations that form the United Nations, perhaps it would be more realistic to portray the sculpture in front of UN headquarters as a man forging a plowshare into a sword.

Much more money and metal are being used for weapons than for agricultural tools. While many nations sacrifice to equip their armies with the latest and most expensive technology they can afford, one fourth of the earth’s population is still in abject poverty.

Nevertheless, some feel encouraged by the prospect of world peace. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the fragmentation of the Soviet Empire has come some lessening of international tensions. It is also true that, among the major powers, nuclear disarmament has made real progress.

But consider the frightening figures. *Newsweek*

War Anymore.'

The statue outside the United Nations building in New York City, donated by the people of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, embodies the hope of much of mankind to see the end of war forever. The more urgent task, however, is to bend the will of man—an impossible endeavor without divine intervention.

WE SHALL BEAT OUR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES

reported in its July 1995 international edition that, from a Cold War high of 13,000 strategic warheads, the United States then had 8,500. Russia's had decreased to about 10,000. France had 482, China 284,

"In peace sons bury fathers, but war violates the order of nature, and fathers bury sons."

—Herodotus (ca. 484-425 B.C.), Greek historian

Britain 234. Israel was estimated to have 50 to 100; India had the capability for 80; and Pakistan owned 15 to 25. North Korea is believed to have had enough material for two to three bombs, and U.S. authorities thought Iran was actively pursuing a secret program that would make it a nuclear power in about eight years.

The leaders of these nations are candid in explaining that this disarmament had to do more with the collapse of the Soviet empire than any desire to beat their swords into plowshares. It was simply the case of one contender being temporarily knocked out of the ring, so it did not make sense to continue escalating the fight and the costs.

But new contenders are always waiting in the wings. Now the fear is that China will soon enter the ring to defend its heavyweight status. China's belligerent actions when it threatened Taiwan with nearby military exercises is just an example.

European independence

Europe is acting more and more independently of the United States. Russia is a wounded nation with much political instability and an enormously powerful and deadly nuclear arsenal. The threat of more international bullying and wars, as Saddam Hussein of Iraq showed in invading Kuwait five years ago, is still real.

In a way, the world is in as much danger now as before the end of the Cold War. Recently Terry Hawkins, director of nuclear security for the National Laboratory of Los Alamos, made the point in an interview that during the Cold War it was quite difficult to obtain nuclear material, and that difficulty posed a barrier to nuclear terrorism.

But now, he says, "the barrier is no longer as strong as before. If a terrorist group or an unstable government obtains this nuclear material, which is transported

by illegal salesmen, they have solved the most difficult part of building a nuclear bomb" (David Hughes, "Nuclear Terrorism," May 1996, *Popular Mechanics*, foreign edition).

Another article described the inadvertent discovery of nuclear material by police. According to a *Newsweek* article of July 24, 1995: "In Prague [in December 1994], police found almost six pounds of highly enriched uranium in the back seat of a Saab. Also in the car were a Czech nuclear scientist and two col-

the subject, yet the simplest and most direct answer was given almost 2,000 years ago: "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war . . ." This is the explanation given by a New Testament writer, James.

Man's history of war has to do with his human nature. Time after time, in century after century, nations have become more powerful than their neighbors, eventually coveting their territory and other wealth.

In fact, the statue in front of the United Nations building is also symbolic of what is wrong with humanity. Instead of apply-

AN ALTERNATIVE TO WAR

God has given man an alternative to war by offering His divine protection. Some say this is nonsense, yet God once prevented the attack of an invading army of one million men:

King Asa of Judah "had an army of three hundred thousand from Judah . . . Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah.

"So Asa went out against him, and they set the troops in battle array in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, 'LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!' So the LORD struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled" (2 Chronicles 14:10-12).

This type of intervention is noted several times in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, Christ taught His followers to trust in God. He admonished: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you . . ." (Matthew 5:43-44). Jesus did not teach His followers to kill their enemies.

leagues from Belarus and Ukraine.

"We're starting to see significant quantities of significant material," says a White House source. Adds a Pentagon official, "If just one bomb's worth gets out, people are going to wake up real fast."

Definitely, these modern nuclear swords are now in danger of passing far more eas-

ily the true meaning of the verse paraphrased from Isaiah, human leaders take it as a present reality. On their own they believe they can forge swords into plows.

Let's read what God really said when He inspired Isaiah to write these words. "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's

"... In modern war there is nothing sweet nor fitting in your dying. You will die like a dog for no good reason."

—Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), American writer

ily to unstable nations or terrorist groups.

Heart of the problem of war

But what is the root cause of war, the menace that threatens each generation of human beings. Much has been written on

house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. 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. 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 2:2-4, emphasis added throughout).

Clearly, this quote in front of the United Nations does not apply to the world today. Instead of an effort by a man-made organization, God will ultimately intervene so man will be forced to forge his weapons of war into farm implements.

Nowhere does the Bible indicate that man will achieve lasting peace by his own efforts. It does prophesy that man will continue to search for peace up to the end, but not by following God's ways, nor by faithfully keeping His law as Isaiah mentions of God's Kingdom.

Man is ultimately destined to fail in his quest for peace, since his human nature has not changed. Nor have most humans tried to live by truly applying God's Word. But the good news is that we have a loving Creator God who has determined He will save man from himself. The Bible predicts that human nature eventually will be changed, but only when Christ returns to "rebuke many people."

False hope for humanity

The famous sculpture in front of the UN headquarters creates a wrong impression and holds out a false hope for mankind. It encourages us to think that by man's own efforts he can bring lasting peace. Tragically, history teaches us otherwise.

Viewing objectively how humankind is currently spending money on enormous efforts to defend itself, perhaps a more appropriate phrase for the United Nations would be the old Roman maxim: "If you want peace, prepare for war."

In this regard, God inspired the prophet

Joel to describe the sad reality of humankind before Christ intervenes. It shows man will turn his plows into swords, instead of the other way around.



"War's a profanity . . . You've got two opposing sides trying to settle their differences by killing as many of each other as they can."

—Norman Schwarzkopf (1934-), U.S. general and author

Speaking through Joel, God warns the world: "Proclaim this among the nations; 'Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am strong."' Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around" (Joel 3:9-11).

Jesus Christ predicted a world in which, before His return, man's accumulated weaponry would be enough to annihilate all life on the planet. He said: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved, but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22).

The prophecy of the coming Kingdom of God shows humanity finally walking humbly with God and peace at last achieved. One day we will learn the path to peace (Isaiah 2:1-4). This is the time pictured by the biblical Feast of Tabernacles.

We read in Zechariah 14:1-17: "Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to

battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken . . ." (verses 1-2).

"Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle" (verse 3).

"And the LORD shall be King over all the earth" (verse 9).

"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep 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" (verses 16-17).

Truly, the magnificent sculpture in front of the United Nations building is greatly symbolic of a coming time of peace and plenty pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, when under Christ's government mankind will change its warlike ways into cooperation and peace. Only then will it be that, as God prophesied, "neither shall they learn war anymore." *GN*

Drought Conditions Reach Crisis Levels

Spreading drought in large portions of the U.S. breadbasket brings a comparison to dust-bowl conditions of the 1930s. What can be learned?

by Bruce Gore

The world set some unpleasant records in 1995, according to a report released by the Worldwatch Institute, an environmental research group. Among their conclusions: It's hotter, and there is less to eat!

The group's 169-page report "Vital Signs 1996" strongly focuses on what it sees to be a worsening global climate leading to grain shortages, mounting weather-related insurance claims and anticipated global food-price hikes.

"In an era of high technology, humanity is suddenly struggling in 1996 with one of the most ancient challenges: how to make it to the next harvest," warned Lester R. Brown, leader of the environmental research group for the last two decades.

Citing statistics from both government and private sources, the institute reports records in 1995 for several factors central to human welfare:

- The global grain harvest was the worst since 1988, and world grain reserves—the amount of grain

Worsening drought conditions in many areas of the U.S. and Mexico are leading farmers and ranchers to draw uneasy comparisons to the infamous Dust Bowl days of the 1930s.

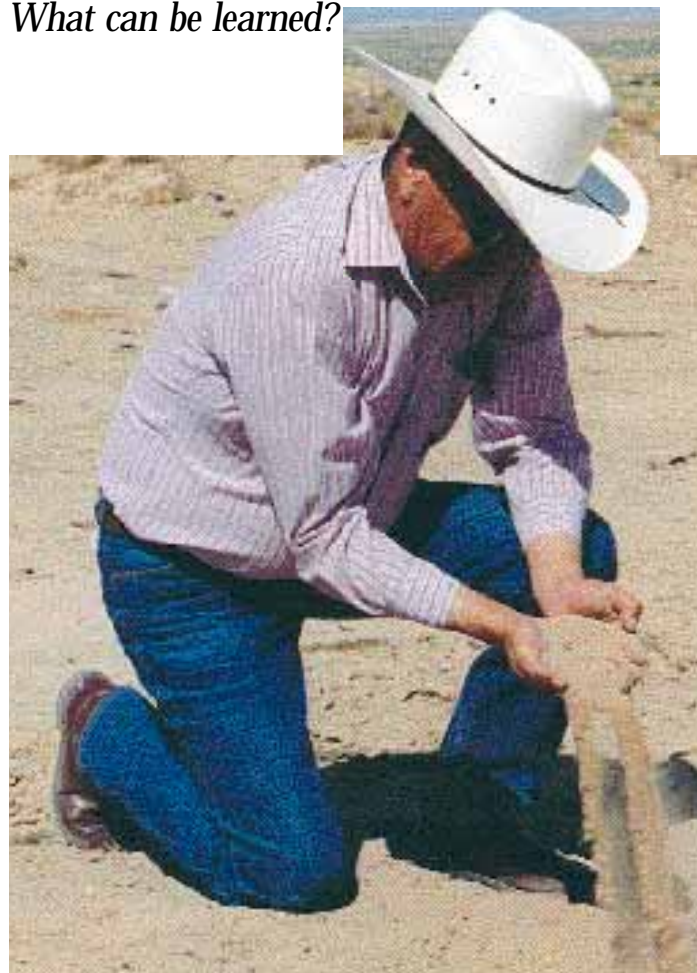
available to humanity if all grain production ceased—reached an all-time low of only 48 days' consumption.

- Insurance companies paid out \$48 billion for weather-related damage in the first half of the 1990s, compared to \$16 billion for the entire decade of the 1980s.

- The global climate was the warmest since systematic records began to be kept 130 years ago. The average worldwide temperature hit 59.7 degrees Fahrenheit (15.39 degrees Celsius).

Weather problems hit close to home

At the same time, worsening drought conditions in many areas of the United States and Mexico are leading many farmers and ranchers to draw uneasy comparisons to the infamous dust-bowl days of the 1930s,



A range conservationist handles parched earth on cattle-grazing land in Arizona. Suffering from drought, the normally fertile soil has seen only one inch (26 mm) of rain in nine months.

when prolonged drought devastated large areas of the lower Midwest.

Lack of feed caused by drought in Texas and other states has forced many cattle ranchers to sell large portions of their herds—even their expensive breeding stock. This has resulted in a temporary glut in the market, causing beef prices to plummet. At some cattle sales, some farmers and ranchers have had to load their cows back onto their trailers and take them back home because nobody would even bid on them. High feed costs, low beef prices and a drought that has destroyed thousands of acres of

pastures have put them in an extremely precarious situation!

What was a serious problem has grown to crisis proportions in Texas, according to Charles Carter, executive director of the Cattlemen's Association of Texas. "We have started to see that a lot of our producers who have just been trying to hang on and hang on and hang on, all of a sudden they can't hang on anymore," he said.

Much of the Midwest, the U.S. breadbasket, is suffering through one of the worst droughts of the century. Many wheat farmers in Kansas, Oklahoma,

to contend with early-spring floods. The resulting crop losses make it likely that food prices will increase in the next year. Beyond that, is it possible that food shortages could follow before the end of this century?

God gives the rain

Man has been able to accomplish awesome achievements in this age of technology. However, humanity has no power to make it rain to water the soil that is the source of the food we must have to survive. Unless rain falls sufficiently and consistently from the clouds above us, we are

nations, He would bless them more than any nation had been blessed before. Among those blessings was the promise of good weather for their crops and orchards. "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil" (Deuteronomy 11:13-14).

However, God also warned them that if they turned away from His instructions, they would suffer, among other consequences, drought and famine. "Take heed to yourselves . . . lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you" (verses 16-17).

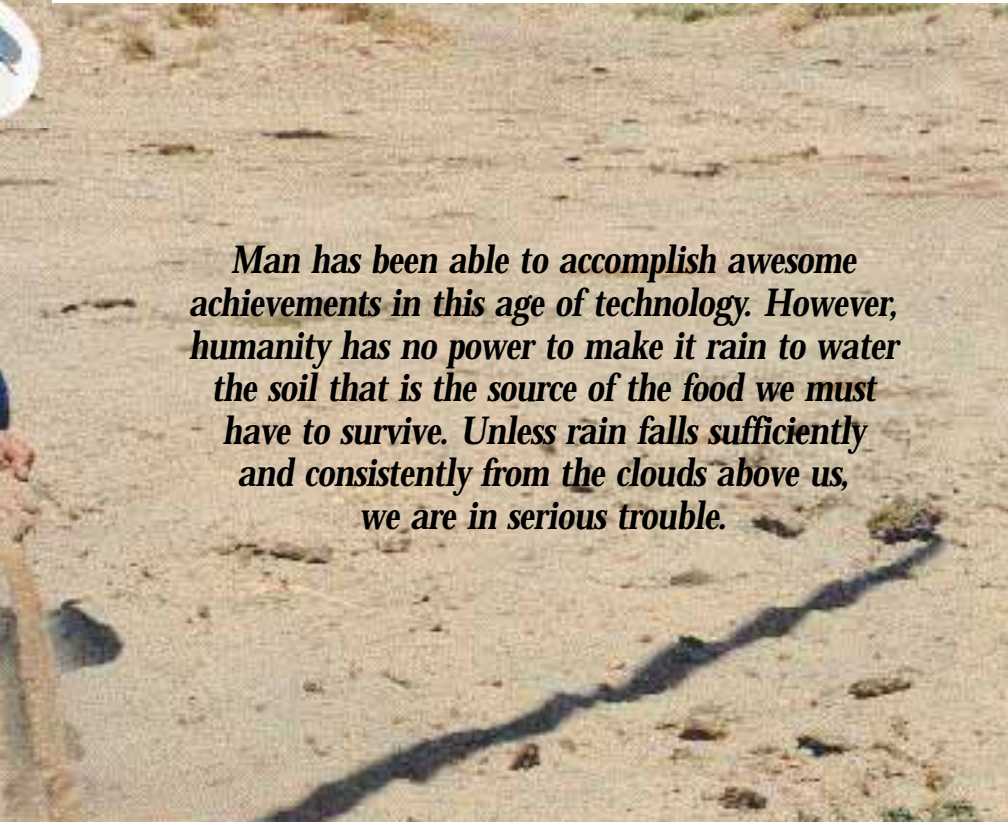
Consequences of forgetting God

The ancient Israelites became a great nation. In time they grew to become more wealthy than the other nations around them. They were able to invent and manufacture many things that made life easier and more enjoyable for them. But they forgot where all those things came from. Soon the things they owned became more important to them than the One who provided them. "Their land is also full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, and there is no end to their chariots. Their land is also full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made" (Isaiah 2:7-8).

The prophet Jeremiah also spoke of how Judah turned away from God: "But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; they have revolted and departed. They do not say in their heart, 'Let us now fear the LORD our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest'" (Jeremiah 5:23-24).

Sadly, Israel did not heed the warnings of God's prophets. One way God chastened His people was by turning off their source of water. "I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part

Continued on page 23



Man has been able to accomplish awesome achievements in this age of technology. However, humanity has no power to make it rain to water the soil that is the source of the food we must have to survive. Unless rain falls sufficiently and consistently from the clouds above us, we are in serious trouble.

Texas and Colorado gave up on this year's wheat harvest and have plowed it under. Prices of grain are going up in anticipation of a short supply come harvesttime.

In Oklahoma alone, state agriculture officials predicted that an estimated 7,000 wheat producers will go bankrupt or cease farming after statewide drought-related losses of more than \$1 billion. In Texas, agricultural losses caused by drought are expected to total between \$2 billion and \$4 billion this year, according to state officials. Throughout the region, many crops are the smallest in decades.

While some parts of the country have suffered from lack of rain, other parts had

in serious trouble.

According to the Bible, God gives the rain that makes possible the bountiful harvests for us to feed ourselves. "God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend. For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; likewise to the gentle rain and the heavy rain of His strength" (Job 37:5-6).

Anciently God chose Israel to be His special people—a people with which He would share His laws. He gave the Israelites the holy Scriptures and told them that if they would live by the ways He was teaching them and be an example for other



A Look at the Current



Declining moral standards in Britain

George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury, has launched a national debate about the waning of traditional values in the United Kingdom. Besides newspaper interviews and an appearance on BBC Radio 4, he delivered a 40-minute speech in the British House of Lords. Dr. Carey has made English schools the focus of this moral crusade. Here are a few of his colorful comments:

• "Our nation, steeped deeply in the faith and values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, has been shaped by the Ten Commandments and teachings and example of Jesus Christ.

"Our nation, steeped deeply in the faith and values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, has been shaped by the Ten Commandments and teachings and example of Jesus Christ. We are in danger of squandering this inheritance" —Dr. George Carey

We are in danger of squandering this inheritance" (*The Independent*, July 6).

• "It's a do-it-yourself approach. We've lost a sense of right and wrong" (*Evening Standard*, July 5).

• "It would be a failure if our schools were to produce people with the right skills and aptitudes to take on our economic competitors, but who cannot string two sentences together about the meaning and purpose of life" (*Daily Telegraph*, July 6).

• "On sexual morals, there has been a steady decline. Sex before marriage leads to divorce. Divorce leads to broken homes. Broken homes lead to crime" (*The Independent*, July 6).

• "When I am at my most pessimistic moment, I sometimes wonder how anybody can possibly put back into society something which is central to its existence, and something which seems to be lost . . . I seriously doubt whether we can actually do any more than blow trumpets from castle tops and warn" (*The Sunday Times*, June 30).

As we might expect, Dr. Carey's crusade has inspired a volley of verbal counterattacks by journalists, religionists and educators. Among other things, they have accused him of seeking to rescue his broken ministry by suddenly seizing on an old-fashioned-values campaign. But his call for a return to traditional morality has been a fairly consistent part of his

message for years.

Armed conflict continues in smaller countries

Although the winding down of the Cold War may have reduced the threat of war among the world's superpowers, conflicts among smaller nations continue largely unabated, says the Swedish International Peace Research Institute's annual report.

The institute, financed by the Swedish government, reported 30 major conflicts in 1995. The report cautions that an ominous trend in these more localized conflicts is "loss of control of developments by the great [world] powers."

"Now it is not the strong but the weak state that presents the greatest threat," warned Adam Rotfeld, director of the institute.

Major armed conflicts of 1995, with casualty tolls given by the institute, included:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina: 55,000 killed in this conflict, which began in 1992.
- Croatia: 10,000 killed since war began in 1990.
- Russia: 10,000 to 40,000 killed since 1994, when fighting began in the nation of Chechnya.
- Turkey: 17,000 estimated to have died since 1984 in fighting between the Turkish government and the Kurdish Workers' Party.
- Cambodia: 25,500 killed in conflicts with the Khmer Rouge since last year.
- Tajikistan: 50,000 estimated to have been killed in fighting dating back to 1992.
- Algeria: 3,000 killed in fighting between Islamic fundamentalist rebels and the government.
- Liberia: 150,000 war-related deaths since fighting between rival parties began in 1989. (Source: The Associated Press.)

World slums breeding grounds for deadly diseases

Shantytowns and urban slum areas are rapidly becoming breeding grounds for deadly diseases, according to researchers addressing a United Nations conference on urban problems.

Although many factors contribute to such problems, the greatest single component appears to be the massive flooding of people into cities, especially in less-developed countries. Within 20 years, nine of the 10 most populous cities are expected to be in less-developed nations, with several in epidemic-prone areas in Africa and Asia.

Three such megacities—Bombay, India; Dhaka, Bangladesh; and Lagos, Nigeria—are expected to grow to a total population of 70 million within the next 20 years.

Unsanitary conditions resulting from such population growth create ideal breeding grounds for disease-bearing mosquitoes, and overcrowding allows faster spread of diseases through such cities, particularly in areas where people's





t State of the World

resistance to disease is weakened from chronically fouled drinking water.

Some families moving into cities from outlying areas also bring their animals—cows, goats, pigs and chickens—with them, creating opportunities for disease transmission across species. Some scientists believe that the AIDS virus

Since 1973 at least 30 new diseases have been identified, including the deadly Ebola virus, which emerged in 1977 and resurfaced in 1995 in Zaire, where it killed 245 people.

was transmitted from an animal host to humans, where it proved deadly.

"It's fine to coexist with these other species in a dispersed rural setting, but when we come into the kind of contact [that exists] in the cities . . . what you create is the ideal circumstance for ecological mixing of microbes," said Laurie Garrett, author of *The Coming Plague*.

Since 1973 at least 30 new diseases have been identified, including the deadly Ebola virus, which emerged in 1977 and resurfaced in 1995 in Zaire, where it killed 245 people.

Compounding the threat are drug-resistant forms of other diseases, some of which have been reintroduced into cities around the world through rapidly expanding international travel. In 1991, for example, an outbreak of cholera across South America demonstrated how quickly age-old diseases can spread via modern transportation systems.

The following year, a new strain of cholera arose in India and has spread to Southeast Asia. Tuberculosis, largely forgotten in modern countries, is making a deadly comeback as drug-resistant strains are on the rise in poorer areas of some American cities. (Source: The Associated Press.)

Teenage pregnancies cost society dearly

Births to teens under age 18 cost U.S. taxpayers nearly \$7 billion annually, according to a study by the Robin Hood Foundation, a charity based in New York City.

The study compared the financial consequences for teenage mothers, their babies and the babies' fathers with others of similar social circumstance who did not bear children until the mother was 20 or 21. Researchers studied data from the most recent 13 years, comparing differences in welfare payments, taxpayer-financed health care, social cases that led to children being placed in foster-care situations, and the rate of prison incarceration of children born to teenage mothers.

According to the study, teen childbirths cost the U.S. taxpayer public an additional \$2.2 billion yearly for food-stamp benefits and welfare payments, \$1.5 billion for medical care, \$900 million in additional costs for foster care and \$1 billion for construction of additional prison facilities.

The annual financial impact also includes \$1.3 billion in lost tax revenue resulting from lower and lost wages of women who have babies during their teen years.

"That's \$7 billion a year that's going right out the window," said Rebecca Maynard, chief editor of the study and professor of education and social policy at the University of Pennsylvania. She noted that from a financial standpoint "we could spend \$7 billion to fix this problem and end up no worse or better off financially."

Analysts say the study's conclusions are conservative; they considered only the consequences of births to American teens under 18. This age-group gives birth to 175,000 children annually. Among all girls age 15 to 19, some 500,000 children are born each year, with 72 percent of mothers unmarried. (Source: *The New York Times*.)

AIDS slowing, but still killing thousands

At the 11th International Conference on AIDS, conferees heard that AIDS infects another 8,500 people every day. Worldwide, an estimated 21 million people are infected with the virus, with 90 percent of them in poorer countries, according to the United Nations.

Although the rate of increase appears to be slowing in many areas, AIDS remains a pervasive and deadly killer in others. In Botswana, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, at least 10 percent of the populace is said to carry the virus.

Worldwide, three of every four cases are said to be transmitted heterosexually, which contributes to the extremely high rate of infection in some countries. Women now account for 42 percent of AIDS victims.

In the United States an estimated 40,000 people are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) annually. Of these, 19 percent are women, whereas they comprised only 7 percent of AIDS cases a decade ago. About

Although the rate of increase appears to be slowing, AIDS remains a pervasive killer. In Botswana, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, at least 10 percent of the populace is said to carry the virus.

one in every 300 Americans age 13 and up is infected. This rate is remaining fairly steady, with new people infected at the same rate others are dying from the disease.

In 1992, the latest year for which U.S. figures are available, an estimated 650,000 to 900,000 were infected with the HIV. Of those infected, half were men contracting the deadly virus through homosexual sex and a quarter through the use of injected drugs. (Sources: The Associated Press, *The Los Angeles Times*.)

—Scott Ashley and John Ross Schroeder



‘If a Man Die, Will He Live Again?’

The ancient words of Job reflect an age-old question: What happens to us when we die? Is there life after death? The Bible gives the clear—and to many surprising—answers.

by Bruce Gore

Stephen Mandell was frail most of his short life. Finishing high school, he entered New York University to study aeronautical engineering. He made the dean’s list at 23. Stephen loved to read poetry, and he enjoyed photography. When he had the time, he played guitar and became quite a musician.

His life was shaping up quite well except for his health. An intestinal infection continued to trouble him and refused to respond to any kind of medical treatment.

Over time, Stephen’s physical condition worsened, and he grew more concerned about the prospects of dying. He began to wonder if he were going to make it.

Grasping for an answer

Stephen avidly read science fiction for years. He had read stories with futuristic themes of scientists

We are not products of some evolutionary accident fated to grope for answers to life’s problems and pains. We are the result of the planning and power of Almighty God.

devising ways to bring the dead back to life. Then he read about an organization in California known as the Cryonics Society that advocates the freezing of human bodies immediately after death to preserve them in case techniques can later be discovered to revive the dead and cure the diseases that killed them.

A little research on Stephen’s part revealed a similar organization in New York, closer to his home. Stephen decided he didn’t have long to live, so he joined the Cryonics Society of New York.

Seven months later the infection sapped the last little strength from his body, and Stephen died. Five members of the society and a mortician hurriedly made arrangements. They drove two hours to the funeral home, where his body was drained of its fluids, then packed in dry ice. Within a few days he was placed in cryonic suspension in a body-sized capsule cooled by liquid nitrogen to 100 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.

With several others, Stephen’s body waits, frozen to preserve body and brain as they were when he drew

his last breath. Stephen died hoping that science would later find a cure for his disease and restore him to life, then treat the disease and enable him to enjoy a normal, healthy life.

In case of brain damage, a tape recording made while Stephen was alive preserves pertinent information about him. Stephen’s mother said she realized that the possibility of her son’s revivification was remote, “but perhaps it was worth the chance.”

When asked if she would also consider the services of the Cryonics Society, she replied that she “didn’t want another chance at this life.”

The solution to the problem of death

With few exceptions, humans fight—consciously or unconsciously—to live and cling desperately to life. Once I was asked to be with a comatose young boy whose parents had directed his removal from a hospital’s life-support system. We watched the blip on the monitor helplessly as his heart vainly struggled to continue beating.

Sooner or later all of us must face our own mortality. There is no way to cheat death to escape our common fate.

Disease took the lives of Stephen and the young boy whose being I witnessed ebbing away in the hospital that day. But the time is coming when they will live again. Their waking to new life will not happen the way they imagined. It won’t be the result of technological advances by scientists or doctors seeking a way to revive frozen corpses.

It will be because a great, life-giving God calls them forth from the dust of the earth and restores them by the miracle of resurrection!

We are not products of some evolutionary accident fated to grope around for answers to life’s problems and pains. We are the result of the planning and power of Almighty God, the Being who created this astounding universe and everything in it.

How God reveals humanity’s future

The Bible, the Word of our Creator, informs us that He wants to share His life with us. He wants us to become His children, a part of His family with His divine nature. In that Book of Books that graces bookshelves and coffee tables but is little read, He describes

the incredible feat of resurrection.

The Bible describes seven yearly festivals God gave us to celebrate. Sadly, few even know of the existence of these festivals, and fewer understand their spiritual significance and symbolism. Instead, most celebrate a set of holidays that are found nowhere in the Bible.

One of these God-given festivals, the Feast of Trumpets, foreshadows a time when Jesus Christ will return to crime-ridden, war-torn planet Earth and God will bring back to life billions of the dead.

“For the Lord Himself will descend

of the age. “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘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).

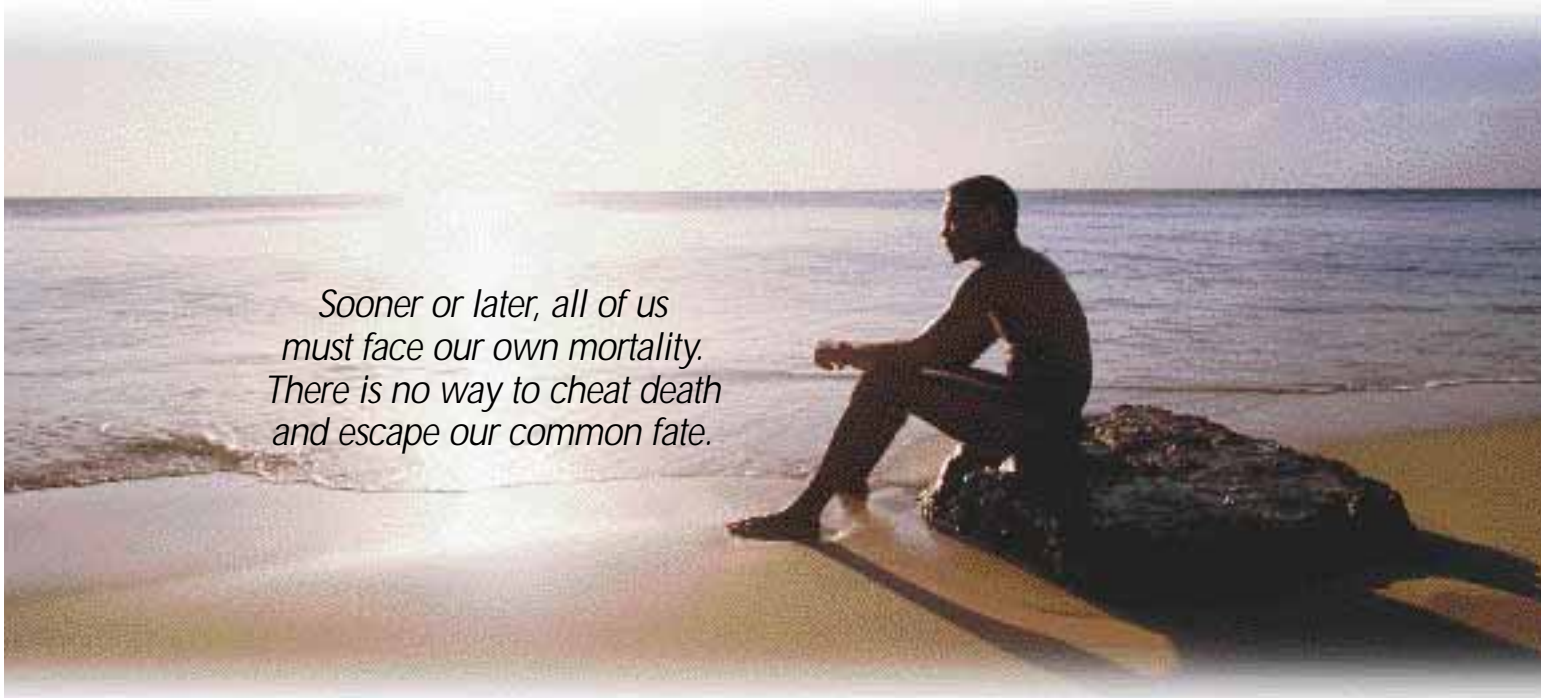
Notice that resurrected Christians are caught up in the air with Christ. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Christ’s followers whom God will res-

To those who voluntarily submit to His rule in their lives now, Jesus Christ offers to share His rule of the earth. Those resurrected at Christ’s return will be made “to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10, New International Version). He will give them the opportunity to be leaders and educators in this exciting new age.

There’s much more to the story!

This is only part of the story. The days God instructed us to keep depict God’s plan, which includes the promise of still



*Sooner or later, all of us
must face our own mortality.
There is no way to cheat death
and escape our common fate.*

from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the *trumpet* of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, emphasis added throughout).

The “dead in Christ” are those who have genuinely turned to Christ for salvation and humbly submitted themselves to Him in true repentance.

Paul wrote of this time in his letter to the Corinthian church: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*. *For the trumpet will sound*, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Resurrection at the last trumpet

The last book of the Bible speaks of earth-shaking events at the time of the end

urrect at Christ’s return will awaken to an exciting and productive life. They will live again to work with Christ in bringing order to earth and making it a wonderful place to live. In time it will become like the Garden of Eden. God has in mind rewarding, exciting responsibilities for His saints in this first resurrection. “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12).

Jesus tells us in Revelation 3:20-21: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

another resurrection of everyone who has ever died, including babies and other children and all who never understood the wonderful spiritual truth of the Bible (Ezekiel 37).

Jesus Christ Himself verified this is so: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice” (John 5:28).

The serpent in the Garden of Eden subtly sold Adam and Eve on the idea that God’s instructions aren’t necessarily the best way. The two ancestors of all mankind bought into Satan’s idea. Since then, the devil’s deception has cloaked the earth with spiritual blindness (Revelation 12:9).

People who never heard of Christ

Thus, down through the millennia,

Continued on page 29

When my youngest daughter was in grade school she had an assignment to assemble a collage illustrating all her areas of interest. That assignment, and the worry over her many other assignments ahead, overwhelmed her.

I volunteered to help with what was, to her, an Olympian-sized task. I found an old Bible with its pages falling out and carefully cut out a well-marked verse that read, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34). I offered this simple cut-out as my contribution to her dreaded collage and went about my work.

Arriving home late in the evening, I found my tired daughter sitting beneath the bright lights over the kitchen table with a grin on her face as she proudly displayed the most extravagantly decorated collage I had ever seen. Pasted right in the center was my tiny cut-out with the comforting words of Jesus Christ’s teaching not to worry about tomorrow.

She stayed with it, with the help of spiritual encouragement, and succeeded in spite of what seemed impossible odds.

In the different and more dramatic setting of the recent Olympic Games, the same spirit of determination and perseverance shone out many times. Although the Games are now past, and the details, or even whole

salvation, but that they should run the race of life with all their might, with all their heart and with all their being for the glory of God, just as the trained athletes of that day gave their all to win for the glory of Zeus.

Once someone sets foot on the path of Christianity, there can be no turning back—only looking ahead, pressing toward the goal, living up to the high calling of the Christian profession.

Paul extended a challenge to his fellow Christians by calling their attention to the Olympic spirit of dedication to purpose, determination to excel and the will to endure in spite of adversity. He spoke to them in the terminology of the Greek classical Games, hoping they would understand just as Christians today must understand: When it comes to pursuing the Christian way of life, it must be through Christ, and it comes only with great dedication.

Ancient Olympics were religious festivals

Unlike the Olympics of today, the Games of the apostle Paul’s time were an integral part of the religion of many to whom he preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Paul fully understood the athletes’ religious dedication to the honor of the gods as well as the people’s fervent dedication to the religious meaning of the Games. His reason for using athletic terms in his Christian message becomes even more clear when we understand the extent to which the Greek world was

by Wayne Dunlap

The Hope of

events, grow dim in our memory, individuals and their stories still illuminate our minds.

The stellar achievements in individual and team Olympic events inspire us to strive for excellence in all we do. It’s not just us today who find such inspiration in the Games. One biblical author used the athletic challenges as a model for spiritual endeavors.

In the mid-50s, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, 100 miles east of Olympia, comparing the Christian’s struggle to that of a well-conditioned athlete competing for a prize. “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it [win!] . . . Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown” (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

The ancient Olympians raced for the glory of Zeus to win a perishable crown of olive branches. The Christian runs his race—lives His life—to the glory of God for an imperishable crown, the gift of eternal life!

Paul was not telling the Corinthians they could earn

socially and religiously enmeshed in the observance of these competitions.

The classical-games circuit

Athletes of ancient times were eager to compete in the classical games—not just the Olympics, but the Isthmian, Pythian and Nemean games. Although earlier formal games took place in Greece and Rome, by the mid-sixth century B.C. these four had become the most famous and were known as “the circuit.” Fiercely competitive athletes entered as many games on the circuit as possible to increase their chances of winning and bringing honor to the gods they worshiped.

According to the historian Eusebius, the Isthmian Games took place on the Isthmus of Corinth in the first and third years of each Olympiad from 523 B.C. These events honored Poseidon, Greek god of the sea, and offered a wreath made from pine branches. The Pythian Games occurred every other year beginning in the same year at Delphi in honor of Apollo, the Greek god of music, poetry, prophecy and medicine, offering

m to illustrate another great contest.

the winner a wreath of laurel branches. From these games we derive the English phrase “resting on one’s laurels.” The Nemean Games were held other years, at Argolis, beginning in 516 B.C., in honor of the Nemean Zeus. They offered to the victor a wreath fashioned from wild celery.

With so many games in which to participate, ancient athletes trained year-round to stay in top condition, hoping to qualify for all the competitions on the circuit. They expended agonizing effort to excel in their specialties—running, wrestling, boxing, throwing the discus and javelin, and many other sports that have featured in the modern Olympics. A Greek word for an athletic contest is *agon*, from which comes the English word *agony*. Athletes participating in the games on the circuit agonized in their efforts to win the victor’s reward.

Biblical comparisons to athletics

It should come as no surprise that Paul would make metaphorical reference to athletic games in view of the widespread enthusiasm for such contests in the Greek world.

The Isthmian Games occurred in Corinth in the spring of A.D. 55, around the time that Paul wrote his first

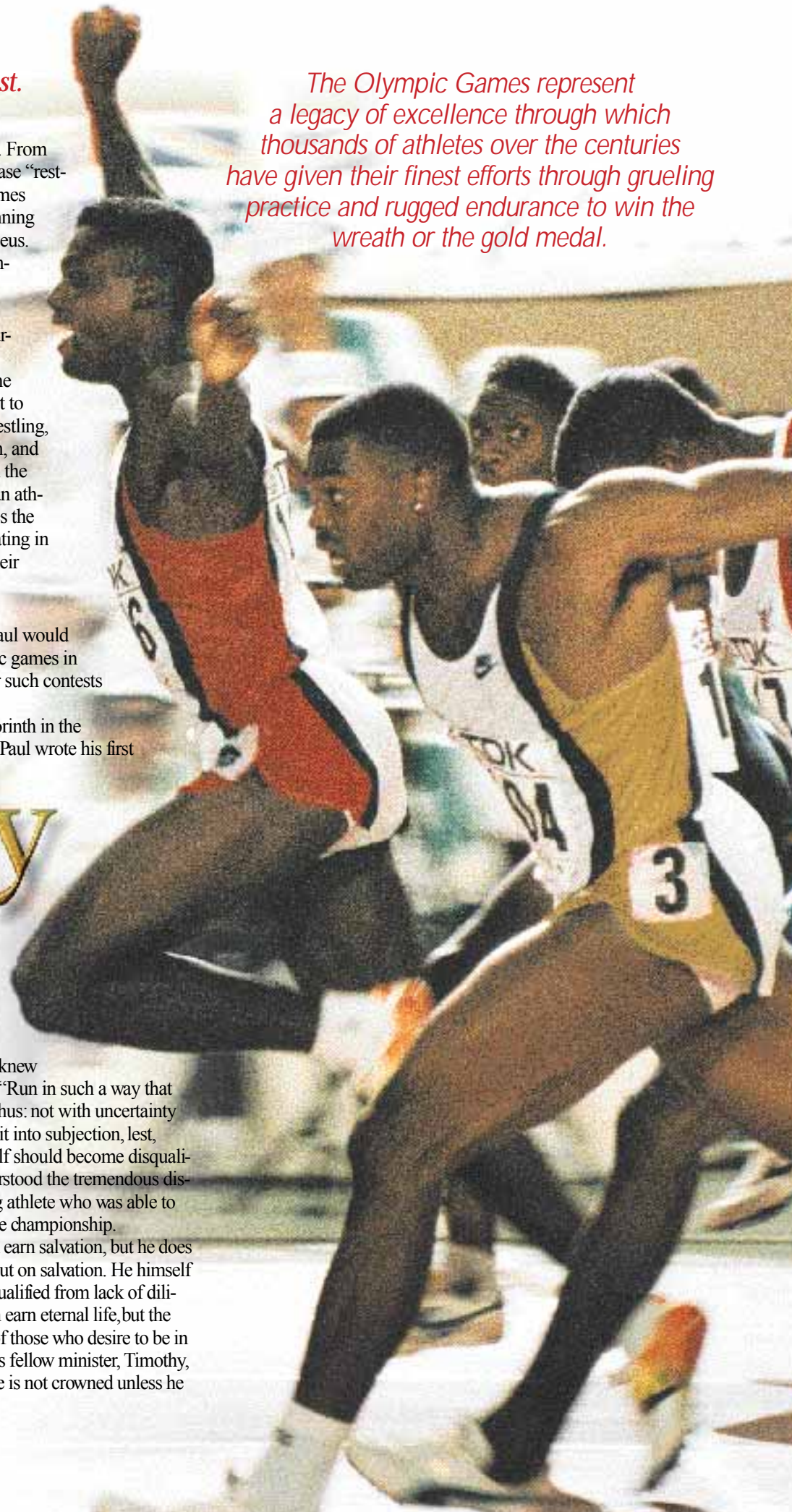
Glory

epistle to the Corinthians. His references to athletes in the classical games of the day must have resonated with the people of Corinth; they were inspired as we are by the examples of fine Olympic performers.

The people to whom Paul preached knew exactly what he meant when he wrote, “Run in such a way that you may [win],” and “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty . . . But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). He understood the tremendous discipline and training required of a strong athlete who was able to qualify in his event and go on to win the championship.

Paul does not tell Christians they can earn salvation, but he does tell them they can disqualify and miss out on salvation. He himself was concerned that he not become disqualified from lack of diligence in his service to God. No one can earn eternal life, but the Word of God tells us what is expected of those who desire to be in the Kingdom of God. Paul instructed his fellow minister, Timothy, that, “if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he

The Olympic Games represent a legacy of excellence through which thousands of athletes over the centuries have given their finest efforts through grueling practice and rugged endurance to win the wreath or the gold medal.



competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:5).

Olympic athletes swore before Zeus that they would follow the rules of the Games. Christians are to live “by every word of God” (Luke 4:4), to follow the rules He has established.

Jesus Christ had strong words regarding the performance He expects of Christians. Addressing the church at Laodicea, He gives this admonition: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot . . . So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out

The Christian course

The Christian race has its own course, its obstacle course of ups and downs, that often presents daily challenges of Olympian magnitude. What constitutes the Christian course? Our race is a contest of the mind involving many tests of faith. We must be selfless, and we must persevere.

Selflessness

The Christian must provide not only for the physical, mental and emotional needs of the family, but for the spiritual as well.

This is difficult enough when two parents are available to “run the race.” But

old finalist in the 10,000-meter singles canoe race, won the gold medal, setting a world record. Twenty-eight years earlier, Frank’s father, Bill Havens, was the finest canoe racer in the world and was predicted to win the gold in the Paris Olympics of 1934.

But, on finding that his wife was due to deliver their first child at the time of the Paris Olympics, Bill Havens had given up his place on the American Olympic team, choosing rather to be with his wife.

“It was more important to me,” said the elder Mr. Havens in a recent television broadcast, “to see that my wife got along all right.”

That summer their son Frank was born, but Bill Havens had missed his opportunity for Olympic victory and glory. After Frank won the gold medal in Helsinki, just before the awards ceremony he sent a telegram to his father: “Dear Dad: Thanks for waiting around for me to be born. I’m coming home with the gold medal you should have won. Your loving son, Frank.”

Bill Havens did the right thing by putting his wife and family first—and the reward came in a special and unexpected way. When we sacrifice for the sake of our families, blessings can come in ways we cannot foresee. Loving care of our families certainly qualifies for a place in the Christian course.

Perseverance

Sometimes the unexpected happens and the Christian is confronted with a seemingly insurmountable crisis.

This can be the most difficult time a Christian will face in his or her spiritual race. Many of us have seen circumstances arise in the lives of others that threatened to virtually destroy them and their families. It seems we all must face our own personal trials and tests.

During the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany, the Games that year were tragically interrupted by the horrible spectacle

Continued on page 30



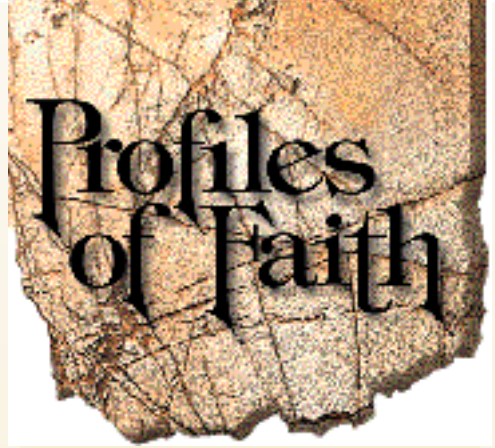
The Christian race has its own “course,” its obstacle course of ups and downs, that often presents daily challenges of Olympian magnitude.

of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15-16). No victor’s wreath or winner’s medals will go to lukewarm Christians.

Instead, the gift of eternal life will go to the overcomer. Jesus promised to reward the one “who overcomes [prevails], and keeps My works until the end” (Revelation 2:26). The one who prevails and is victorious, through the strength of Christ, will receive a priceless reward: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Revelation 21:7).

often only one is available to take on the many demands of keeping the family together. A thousand pages would be insufficient to relate the heroic accounts of the many fathers and mothers who have set aside their own needs and desires to provide for their families’ needs and desires. Yet not one of them is sorry for the sacrifice and service rendered to achieve family success and togetherness.

The 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland, showcased a poignant example of family sacrifice. Frank Havens, a 28-year-



Daniel

by Jerold Aust

King Nebuchadnezzar was enraged when he realized that his wise men could not interpret his dream. He didn't just want it interpreted; he was demanding that they first describe his dream and *then* interpret it.

"My decision is firm" the king barked. "If you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap" (Daniel 2:5). King Nebuchadnezzar thundered these words to the royal guards, who immediately laid hold of the wise men.

Shocked numb, the formerly favored officials contemplated Nebuchadnezzar's gruesome sentence. After years of favor, years in which they enjoyed the trappings of royalty, they were, in a moment, reduced to the humiliation accorded a common slave, consigned to an imminent and ignominious death.

The guards quickly got out ropes and began binding the wise men before the king.

Already the cry rang out through the inner palace walls, echoing a death knell: "Find Daniel and his companions, for they are to die with the rest of the wise men!" bellowed the captain of the guard (Daniel 2:13, paraphrased). The night brought fear and uncertainty, a critical time for God's chosen and faithful representatives in

Babylon: Daniel and other Jewish exiles who had been faithfully serving the government of the empire.

Why would God allow the monarch and his minions to include His faithful servants in this harsh judgment? The wise men could not conjure up and interpret the dream, but why would Daniel and his friends have to die along with them? Surely God must have had good reason for permitting this cruel condemnation along with the others.

Before we find out why God allowed government officers to arrest His faithful

followers, let's briefly examine King Nebuchadnezzar's self-perception.

King Nebuchadnezzar had to be acutely aware of the long line of the kings of Babylon who preceded him. This knowledge likely inspired him to make his reign memorable. Merrill Unger depicts Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon:

"The Ishtar Gate led through the double wall of fortifications and was adorned with rows of bulls and dragons in colored enameled brick. Nebuchadnezzar's throne room was likewise adorned with enameled

Why would a beloved prophet of God want God to judge him? Doesn't the Bible show that God's judgment is reserved for evil people? Read God's view on this seeming paradox.

followers, let's briefly examine King Nebuchadnezzar's self-perception.

Nebuchadnezzar's elegant empire

Although Nebuchadnezzar's domain was vast and the city of Babylon a marvel of its time, such had not always been the case. It all started with the city of Babel, where its earliest inhabitants attempted to build the Tower of Babel (Genesis 10:10; Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 1966, p. 115). About 1830 B.C., the city began its rise to prominence. Between 1728 and 1686 B.C., Hammurabi ascended to the throne and con-

quered southern Babylonia but also sought to bring all of Mesopotamia under his rulership. Herodotus said this ziggurat rose to a height of eight stages. Near . . . [was] the Temple of Marduk or Bel, which the king restored. Not far distant were the hanging gardens, which to the Greeks were one of the seven wonders of the world" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 1966, p. 115).

Probably Nebuchadnezzar wanted to eclipse the fame of former Babylonian kings, establishing his building programs as the greatest ever: "The East India House





Babylon and Borsippa, and also to a vast system of fortifications and large shipping docks. On one of his inscriptions, Nebuchadnezzar boasted, “The fortifications of Esagila [the temple of Marduk] and Babylon I strengthened, and established the name of my reign forever” (Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 1985, Vol. 7, p. 65).

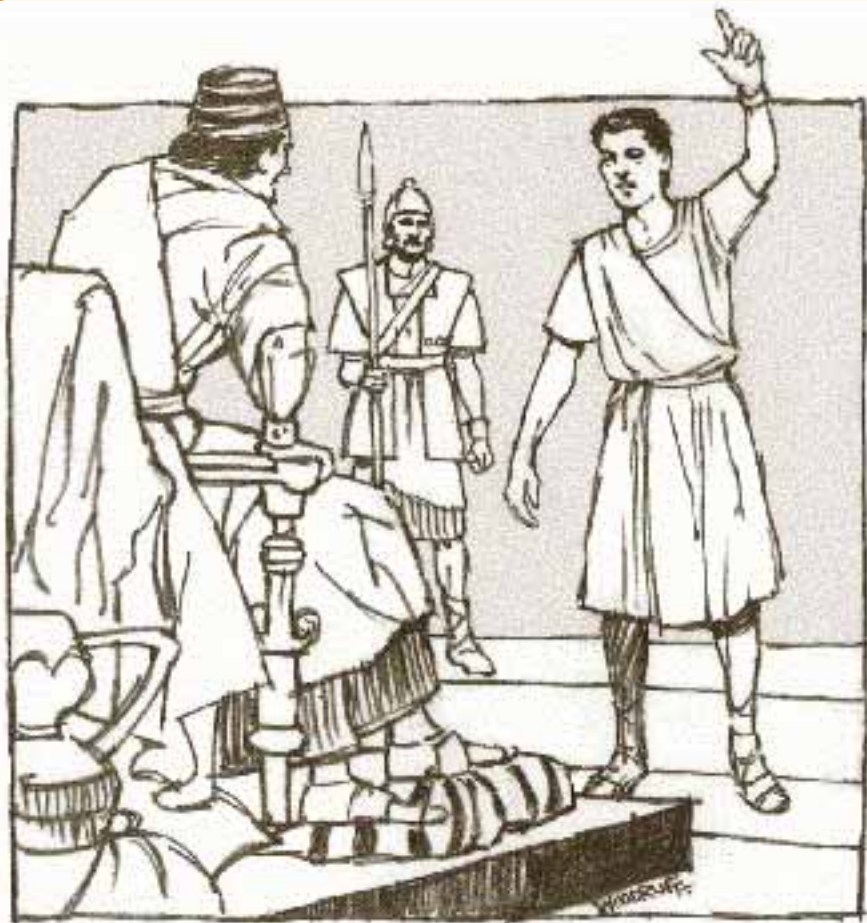
Daniel’s writings capture the insatiable ambition of King Nebuchadnezzar when he unwisely boasted, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). This verse gives a clue to why King Nebuchadnezzar might have forgotten Daniel’s warning from God (verse 27). God used this ruler’s pride to show His great glory. The stage was set for God to reveal, through Daniel, the great prophecy that outlined the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24), a period that to date has exceeded 2,500 years (from about 580-560 B.C. to the present).

The king was a dreamer

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream—literally. God induced the dream, and that dream mystified the monarch. “Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him . . . And the king said to them [the wise men of Babylon], ‘I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream’” (Daniel 2:1, 3).

God was intervening in the affairs of men, specifically using this king as His instrument of communication. The message God placed in Nebuchadnezzar’s mind, through his dreams, was so awesome that it frightened him, muddling his analytical powers. By reading ahead in Daniel 2, we, some 2,500 years later, can know the meaning and significance of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams. But, for the ruler at that time, stark terror—the horror of the unknown—blurred his thinking.

If a god, especially one of his gods, were sending him an omen and his trusted wise men couldn’t describe the content of the dream and interpret it



they to him?

“Apparently Nebuchadnezzar had already decided on an unheard of test of their magical abilities to interpret his dream. Before they explained its meaning, they would have to give its contents. He apparently reasoned that, if they had the powers of divination they claimed, they ought to be able to relate what he had dreamed—for surely their gods would know this and be able to pass it on to their devotees. If, however, he simply related the dream to them at first then they might come up with some purely human and essentially worthless conjecture. He was interested, not in speculation, but in supernatural disclosure” (Archer, pp. 40, 41).

The king was so focused on obtaining an accurate explanation of his dream that, when it wasn’t immediately forthcoming, he abruptly ordered that the wise men be put to death.

Unlocking God’s secrets

Daniel’s reputation and close previous association with King Nebuchadnezzar hadn’t escaped the attention of Arioch, the captain of the royal guard (Daniel 1:17, 20). When Arioch, acting on the king’s hasty order, came to arrest Daniel and escort him to await his execution, he found the man of God calm and quite capable of

questioning a respectful Arioch. “Why is the decree from the king so urgent?” Daniel wanted to know (Daniel 2:15).

Arioch quickly recounted the macabre scenario to Daniel. Maybe the captain reasoned that Daniel might just be able to make sense of the king’s dream. After all, the king (in his more rational moments) and others of the royal court believed Daniel to be more competent than any of the magicians and astrologers of the realm (Daniel 1:19, 20). Daniel confidently came before the king and asked for more time to discover the dream and its interpretation. God, if He so chose, could demonstrate His sovereignty over all human kings and reveal the dream and its meaning.

With the king’s permission, Daniel quickly returned to his house, where he recounted the situation to his colleagues. Daniel’s actions and words provide us a key to unlocking God’s hidden secrets. “Then Daniel went to his house, and made the [king’s] decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” (Daniel 2:17, 18).

The next verse indicates that these



Jews' faithful action unlocked the secret of God: "Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven" (verse 19). Daniel consistently relied on his relationship with God. His commitment was steadfast. In the face of great personal danger, Daniel turned immediately to His Creator.

From death's door to rulership

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever," Daniel prayed, "for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him. I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king's demand" (verses 20-23).

Clearly, thanks to Daniel's relationship with the Eternal, he knew that God follows His own time schedule, that He is more powerful than human kings and governments, that He imparts knowledge and wisdom and that He alone reveals His hidden secrets to His prophets (Amos 3:7).

While Daniel thanked God, he had every confidence that God had revealed to him the dream and its correct interpretation.

Arioch, realizing that Daniel had come to know the king's dream and its explanation, quickly ushered Daniel in to see King Nebuchadnezzar, attempting to take some credit for the hoped-for resolution of the problem: "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation" (Daniel 2:25).

Daniel first lectured the king on the limitations of his wise men and the greatness of Almighty God, who alone can reveal His secrets to mankind.

The skeptical monarch then questioned Daniel: "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" (verse 26).

At this point, Daniel, instead of immediately revealing the dream and its meaning, first lectured the king on the limitations of his other presumably wise men and the greatness of Almighty God, who alone can reveal His secrets to mankind (verses 27-30).

The dream explained

Then Daniel, raptly attended by the king and his court, began.

"As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this . . ." (verse 29). Daniel diplomatically acknowledged Nebuchadnezzar's concern for Babylon's future welfare and that God was revealing important information to the king. "He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be" (same verse).

Daniel explained that the dream included a great image of a being with a

head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass and legs of a tenuous mixture of iron and clay.

Then, in the dream, a stone appeared that struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, crumbling and turning it into little more than a heap of dust. Wind blew the image's dusty remains away until nothing was left. The stone then grew larger and became a mountain that filled the whole earth (verses 31-35).

At this point, King Nebuchadnezzar may well "have been leaning forward to hear the explanation from what he now knew to be a spokesman from God" (Archer, p. 45).

Daniel continued. "This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king" (verse 36). God's servant's elucidation of the king's night vision amounted to one of the most important prophecies of the Bible and one of the longest in the period predicted by the prophecy.

Nebuchadnezzar himself represented the image's head of gold. Then three mighty kingdoms would succeed him and his great Babylon. They would all be uprooted and destroyed in the end time by a fifth world-governing power: the Kingdom of God, ruled by the Stone (Jesus Christ), carved out without hands (verses 36-45).

God not only kept Daniel safe from death's door; He inspired King Nebuchadnezzar to appoint Daniel to a position of even more prominence in Babylon. The king declared Daniel ruler of Babylon under himself and chief administrator over his wise men (verse 48).

Daniel, mindful of his friends, petitioned the king to promote his compan-

COULD NEBUCHADNEZZAR NOT REMEMBER HIS OWN DREAM?

Because of an unclear translation of Daniel 2:5, for generations many readers of the King James Version of the Bible have understood the verse to mean that King Nebuchadnezzar couldn't recall his dream of the night before. In the KJV the verse reads:

"The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces . . ." The problem is the phrase "The thing is gone from me," which readers of the verse have understandably taken to mean "The dream is gone from me." The verse seems to say that the king couldn't remember his own dream, therefore he ordered the wise men to describe it to him.

However, other translations correctly render the verse. Here it is in the New King James Version: "But the king answered and said to the Chaldeans, 'My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces . . .'"

In the original Hebrew, the "thing" refers to the king's decree, not the dream. "The thing is gone from me" could be paraphrased: "The decree has gone out from me, therefore it cannot be changed." Smith & Goodspeed translates the phrase: "I am fully resolved that . . ." The New International Version has it: "This is what I have firmly decided . . ."

Contrary to a prevalent misconception about the king's dream, he could well remember the vision that had appeared to him while he lay sleeping. But he insisted, as a test, that the wise men describe the dream to him. If they could summarize the dream, then, he reasonably assumed, their interpretation might also be the correct one.

—Dixon Cartwright

Continued on page 31

Archaeology and Genesis: What Does the Record Show?

by Mario Seiglie

A century ago Charles Darwin advanced an alternative to the biblical account of creation. About the same time, Karl Marx made use of the theory of materialism, which stated that matter has always existed and doesn't need a Creator. This provided his followers with an alternative to belief in God. Then literary criticism focused its sights on the Bible and slowly began to attempt to tear it to pieces. Literary critics claimed that the

Archaeologists excavating the site of ancient Sumer have unearthed fascinating artifacts that depict some of the events described in the book of Genesis.

Bible is filled with myths and is of much more recent origin than the Bible itself claims to be.

As one scholar explains, man began to think of himself, rather than God, as the center of the universe. "The idea of evolution had captured the thinking of that day, and was thought to furnish the best key to the understanding of history as well as of nature. Religion was discussed from the standpoint of its subjective benefits to man. All possibility of special revelation from a personal God was discounted, and the religious side of man was to be explained by a natural process . . . They concluded that Israel's religion must have developed along similar lines" (A. Noordtzy, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 98-99, pp. 388-390, 1940-41).

When the 20th century dawned, the tide of criticism eroded belief in the literal truth of the biblical accounts. Then came a series of remarkable

archaeological discoveries. Archaeology began in the 19th century but came to full force in the 20th. Critics of the historical accuracy of the Bible were confronted with physical evidence attesting to the truthfulness of certain accounts.

As author John Elder comments, the study of archaeology had much to do with tipping the scales, in many people's minds, back in the favor of biblical credibility. "Little by little, one city after another, one civilization after another, one culture after another, whose memories were enshrined only in the Bible, were restored to their proper places in ancient history by the studies of the archaeologists . . . Nowhere has archaeological discovery refuted the Bible as history" (*Prophets, Idols and Diggers*, 1960, p. 16).

In this article we take a look at some of the astounding discoveries of the last two centuries and show how physical evidence confirms aspect of the biblical record.

When Luke wrote the Gospel that bears his name, he carefully laid out the evidence in favor of the historicity of Jesus Christ and His miracles, including His resurrection. He wanted his account



This seal, with its impression at right, is known as the Temptation Seal. Discovered at the site of ancient Sumer, it depicts a serpent, woman, tree and man—all important elements in the account from Genesis of the temptation.

to meet the scrutiny of doubters. Luke said he intended to write "an *orderly* account" (Luke 1:1-4) so his readers could "know the *certainty* of those things in which you were instructed" (emphasis added throughout).

Luke then proceeded to augment his account

with historical references mentioning, for example, the contemporaneous rulers of Judah and the emperor of the Roman Empire (Luke 1:5; 2:1).

Because of the number of discoveries, we cannot examine all of the evidence here. We will discuss, however, some of the principal finds that corroborate part of the biblical record of Genesis.

The Temptation Seal

Seals made use of some of the most ancient forms of writing. They were used to certify documents, to show authority, and, on occasion, as amulets. The earliest seals were made of clay impressed with markings or writing, and some of them became hardened with time or were baked when fire swept through a city. Since they are made of clay, they have survived much longer than records written on papyrus or parchment.

Archaeologists' dating of seals has found them to be 5,000 years old. They are among the surviving materials that provide evidence of people's beliefs at the dawn of civilization. Seals have been uncovered that confirm several biblical accounts, including some in Genesis.

The first chapters of the book of Genesis cover the creation of humans and the temptation that induced Adam to sin. God had given Adam certain laws to keep and explained the consequences of disobedience. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" (Genesis 2:16-17).

Genesis depicts the tempter, Satan, influencing Eve and in turn her husband, Adam, to disobey their Creator. God had told Adam and Eve they would die if they ate of the tree. But the serpent said to Eve, "You will not surely die." So Eve partook, found the fruit pleasant, then offered it to

her husband, "and he ate" (Genesis 3:1-6).

Is this account only a myth? Many critics thought so. Yet archaeology has unearthed, not in biblical Israel, but in the site of the most ancient civilization known, Sumer, a seal depicting this very sequence of events described in the book of Genesis. This find known as the Temptation Seal, is in the British Museum. It



This clay tablet, inscribed in cuneiform, was recovered from the ancient city of Nineveh. It describes a flood that devastated the entire world—an account remarkably similar to the flood of Noah's time described in the book of Genesis.

dates to the third millennium before Christ, some 5,000 years ago. This artifact shows a man and a woman viewing a tree, and behind the woman is a serpent. The man and woman are both reaching for fruit of the tree.

The Genesis account of the temptation was believed to be a fabrication by Jewish writers, yet this graphic portrayal of events described in Genesis existed thousands of years before critics believe the book of Genesis was written. This artifact, one of the earliest surviving records, demonstrates that humans knew the essentials of the

temptation incident, and not only from the biblical account written in Genesis.

The Adam and Eve seal

Another Sumerian seal, dated ca. 3500 B.C. and now housed in the museum of the University of Pennsylvania, shows events that took place after the man and woman ate the forbidden fruit. This seal depicts the naked figures of a male and a female

bowed in humiliation, being driven out, followed by a serpent. This seal also describes the story of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden: "... [Therefore the LORD God sent him Adam] out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken" (Genesis 3:23).

It is difficult to explain what the three figures engraved on a seal dating from the beginnings of human antiquity, are doing if the artifact is not another depiction of the Genesis account.

The flood epics

"And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered ... And all flesh died that moved on the earth" (Genesis 7:19, 21).

One of the most questioned accounts of the Bible is the flood of Noah's time. A century ago liberal critics considered it one of the most fanciful biblical myths. Yet

more than a century of archaeological digging has revealed accounts of the flood in the earliest of civilizations.

One of the most astounding finds is the Gilgamesh Epic, recorded on clay tablets that were translated in 1872 by George Smith of the British Museum. The tablets narrate the flood account from the perspective of the ancient Babylonians. A similar account was found on Sumerian tablets, which are the earliest writings yet discovered.

Which one is the more authentic account of the flood? That is easily answered. Professor Gleason Archer notes that the differences in the Gilgamesh and Genesis narratives are too great to allow one to have been borrowed from the other. "The stark contrast between the passion-driven, quarrelsome, greedy gods of the Babylonian pantheon and the majestic holiness of Jehovah is most striking and

significant” he writes. “Likewise the utter implausibility of a cube-shaped ark and an inundation of the entire world by a mere fourteen-day downpour [of the Gilgamesh Epic] stand in opposition to the seaworthy dimensions and the gradual sinking of the waters in the Biblical record” (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 1974, p. 211).

Clearly, the Gilgamesh Epic shows evidence of corruption.

These ancient tablets are by no means the only external corroboration of the biblical flood narrative. An enterprising historian, Aaron Smith, is said to have patiently tallied all the flood stories he could find. He came across 80,000 works in 72 languages about the deluge (Werner Keller,

Excavations in Iraq at the beginning of this century revealed that an enormous tower had existed in Babylon at one time.

among the Algonquins? . . . All of these agree that all mankind was destroyed by a great flood (usually represented a worldwide) as a result of divine displeasure at human sin, and that a single man with his family or a very few friends survived the catastrophe by means of a ship or raft or large canoe of some sort” (Archer, p. 209).

The Tower of Babel

“Then they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said,

famous metropolis of the ancient world, the royal seat of Nebuchadnezzar, was brought to light, and at the same time, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the ‘Hanging Gardens’ . . . and ‘E-temen-an-ki,’ the legendary Tower of Babel . . .

“The bricklaying technique described in the Bible at the building of the Tower of Babel corresponds with the findings of the archaeologists. As the investigations confirmed actually only asphalted bricks were used in the construction, especially in the foundation. That was clearly necessary for the security of the structure in

accordance with building regulations . . . Foundations and stonework were therefore made waterproof and damp-proof with ‘slime,’ i.e., asphalt . . . Seven stages, ‘seven squares,’ rose one above the other. A little tablet belonging to an architect which was found in the temple expressly mentions that length, breadth and height were equal . . . The length of the sides at the base is

given as being rather more than 290 feet. The archaeologists measured it as 295 feet. According to that the tower must have been almost 300 feet high” (*The Bible As History*, 1980 edition, pp. 302, 317-318).

This means the tower rose to the height of a 20-story building.

Further research has revealed that the original tower was destroyed, and on the same site a similar tower was later built at the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

D.J. Wiseman, professor of Assyriology, explains: “The tower was severely damaged in the war of 652-648 B.C. but restored again by Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.). It was this building, part



This enormous mound, the remnant of a ziggurat similar to the destroyed Tower of Babel, was erected at Ur in 2300 B.C. Close to this court archaeologists excavated a complete record of the building of the tower.

The Bible as History, 1980, p. 38).

Certainly if Noah’s flood were just local event affecting people in a limited geographic region, its impact would not have been etched indelibly into the minds of so many far-flung peoples

One historian notes: “The Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians of Mesopotamia might well be expected to cherish a similar tradition to that of the Hebrews, since they lived so close to the presumed seat of antediluvian civilization . . . But what shall we say of the legend of Manu preserved among the Hindus . . . or of Fah-he among the Chinese . . . or of Nu-u among the Hawaiians; or of Tezpi among the Mexican Indians; or of Manabozho

‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens . . .’” (Genesis 11:3-4).

Many of us have heard about the Tower of Babel, but few know of the solid evidence behind the Bible account.

Excavations in Iraq at the beginning of this century revealed that an enormous tower had existed in Babylon at one time. Werner Keller writes: “In 1899 the German Oriental Society equipped a large expedition under the direction of Professor Robert Koldewey, the architect, to examine the famous ruined mound of ‘Babil’ on the Euphrates. The excavations, as it turned out, took longer than anywhere else. In eighteen years the most

Drought

Continued from page 9

was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered” (Amos 4:7).

Parallels to our time

Are there parallels with our situation today? The founding fathers of the United States were well aware that our national blessings came not from our own efforts, but from God’s divine providence. Yet today we have largely forgotten that fact.

Over the years, the United States became a great nation because of the good things that God has provided for us. He gave millions of acres of fertile soil. Over the years the nation enjoyed good weather. Back-to-back years of harsh weather have been rare. As a nation, where would we have been without those wonderful resources from the good earth that God has given us.

It sounds as if God allowed David to look into our time when he wrote Psalms 55:9-11: “. . . I see violence and riots in the city, surrounding it day and night, filling it with crime and trouble. There is destruction everywhere; the streets are full of oppression and fraud” (Today’s English Version).

Could it happen again?

Is it possible that God is again withholding rains, using the weather to discipline a people? America has largely turned from God. The pursuit of pleasure and material things has become more important than honoring Him.

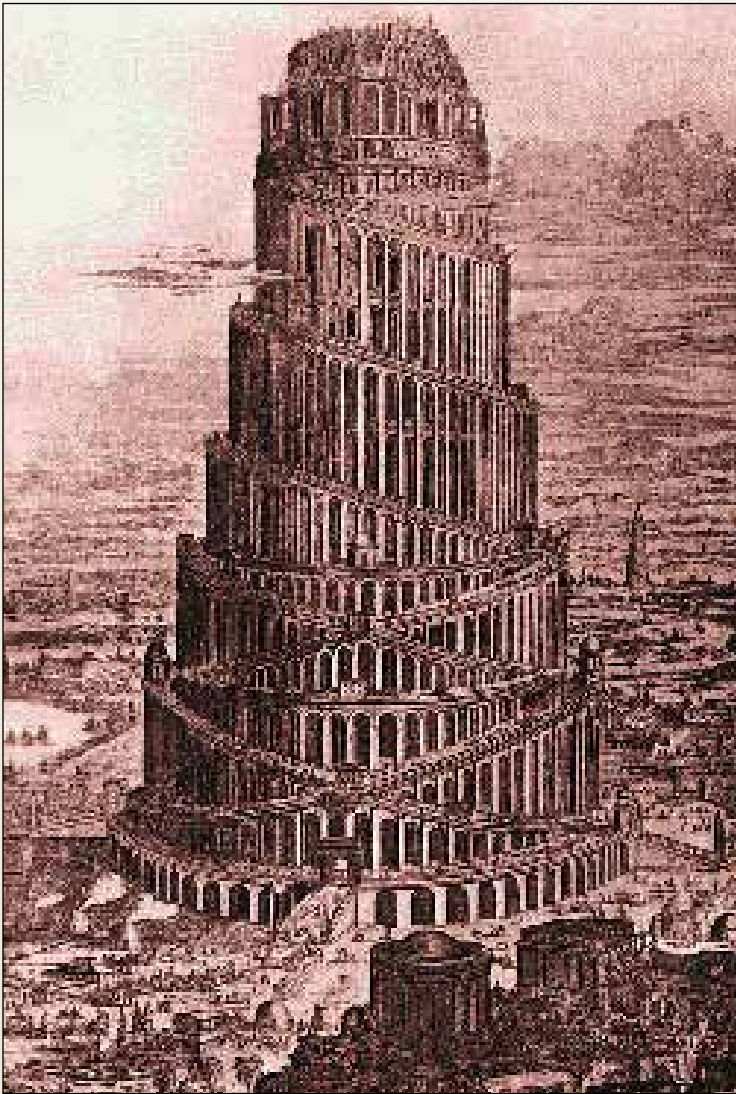
Sooner or later, God brings all nations and kingdoms to an accounting. “He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth . . . He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff” (Isaiah 40:22-24).

Unless we get back to some of the basics of how to live, as defined by God in the Bible, we face the loss of our prosperous, comfortable way of life. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). *GN*

of which was recovered by Koldewey in 1899, which was described by Herodotus on his visit c. 460 B.C. . . . The base stage [of the later tower] measured 90 by 90 m[eters] and was 33 m[eters] high . . . The ziggurat [a sacred tower] at Babylon was demolished by Xerxes in 472 B.C., and though Alexander cleared the rubble prior to its restora-

Sacred towers were common in Mesopotamia. So far, the ruins of 35 such structures have been found. The first as the one at Babel.

From this brief survey, we can see the light that archaeology has shed on questions about the veracity of the biblical record. Although doubters will always question the truthfulness of God’s Word,



In 1899 the German Oriental Society equipped a large expedition to examine the famous ruined mound of “Babil” on the Euphrates. They brought to light the legendary Tower of Babel. This artist’s rendition is from a copper engraving.

tion this was thwarted by his death. The bricks were subsequently removed by the local inhabitants, and today the site of Etemenanki is a pit as deep as the original construction was high” (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1982, p. 111).

fewer and fewer now doubt its historical statements.

Many other exciting archaeological finds have helped confirm and shed light on the book of Genesis, and these will be examined in a future article. *GN*

The Resurrections of the Dead

Early in life we begin to realize that all living things die. The first realization may come at the death of a family pet. As we continue on this journey of life, people we know and love die. When a loved one dies, all of us struggle with grief, with the need for meaning in life and with the need to know what will happen to us after our own death. Thousands of years ago Job asked the age-old question, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14).

What does God, the Creator and Giver of life, say in His Word about the dead? What is their current state? Are they in heaven, hell, purgatory or some other place? What about those who have lived and died never hearing the name of Jesus Christ, the only name by which we can be saved? (Acts 4:12). What of the multiple billions who never heard God's truth before they died? Are they cut off from God for all eternity?

The Bible speaks often of the resurrection of the dead. But what is the purpose of the dead being raised if people go to heaven or hell at death, as many believe? Read on to discover the fascinating truth about the resurrections of the dead!

Discussion: What is the life of man? What gives our lives meaning and value?

- What does the Bible say about the life of man? (Psalm 90:3-6, 10, 12; 103:15-16; James 4:14).

Discussion: What happens to us at death?

- Is death a conscious or unconscious state? (Job 7:21; Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5-6).
- Do the dead have a relationship with God? (Psalm 6:5; 115:17).
- Will all people have to experience death? (Hebrews 9:27).
- Is it God's desire that human beings should suffer death? (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9).

Note: Death is not what God originally intended for mankind. Death is the result of sin. God designed life and had a plan for how it is to work for humans. All of us, under the influence of Satan, choose to live our own way and reject God's plan and purpose for our lives. The result is unhappiness, anxiety, strife and eventual death. God isn't the cause of our illness, accidents, grief and suffering. God is the only solution to save us from death (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Romans 3:23; 6:23).

- To what condition does the Bible compare death? (Psalm 13:3; John 11:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:14).
- Will those who have died be awakened from death? (Ephesians 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Note: Writers in both the Old and New Testaments refer to death as "sleep." This indicates that it is a temporary condition, from which

the Bible reveals the dead will be awakened!

Discussion: Does the Bible teach that those who are dead will come back to life?

- Did the saints and prophets believe in future resurrections of the dead? (Job 14:13-15; 19:25-27; Psalm 17:15; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2-3, 13; Hosea 13:14).

Note: The Old Testament writers proclaimed a Redeemer who would "ransom" them from the power of the grave. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is that Redeemer!

- What did Jesus Christ teach about the future resurrections of the dead? (John 5:24-25, 28-29; 6:39, 40; 11:21-26; Luke 14:12-14).
- What did the New Testament apostles believe and teach about the future resurrections of the dead? (Acts 4:1-2; 23:6; 24:15, 21; Philippians 3:10-14).
- Is immortality something man now possesses? (1 Corinthians 15:51-55).

Note: The Bible doesn't teach that the dead are now living in an eternal state of bliss in heaven or torment in hell. The resurrections of the dead are *future* events. The apostles understood that even the righteous king David (Acts 13:22) did not "ascend into the heavens," but was "both dead and buried" (Acts 2:29, 34). The doctrine of the resurrections is one of the foundational doctrines of the New Testament Church (Hebrews 6:1-2).

- Who is the only man who has been resurrected to eternal, spirit life? (Acts 2:22-24).
- Jesus, through His resurrection, received a special

place in salvation history. What is that honor? (Colossians 1:18).

Note: If He is "the firstborn from the dead," then there must be others to follow—which is exactly what the Bible reveals!

- How precious is this knowledge? (1 Peter 1:3-6).

Discussion: Are there different resurrections?

- Does the Bible describe more than one resurrection? (Revelation 20:4-6).
- When does this "first resurrection" take place? (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Note: The "last trump" and "seventh trumpet" refer to the same event, which is the great trumpet blast that precedes the second coming of Jesus Christ (Revelation 11:15).

- What will happen to those brought back to life in the first resurrection? (Romans 6:5; Philippians 3:20-21).
- Will this be a resurrection to a physical body, or something entirely different? (1 Corinthians 15:35-54).

Note: Those in the first resurrection will be raised to a glorified immortal spirit body. They will be like the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ! (1 John 3:1-2).

- What will those in the first resurrection do? (Revelation 20:4, 6).
- What will be their relationship with God? (Romans 8:14-19).
- Since there is a "first resurrection," is there a second resurrection? When does it take place? (Revelation 20:5, 11-12).

Note: This resurrection is called the "Great White Throne Judgement." The first resurrection will have taken place at Christ's return (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Those given eternal life in the first resurrection will live and reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4). At the end of this 1,000 years, "the rest of the dead" are brought back to life.

- Who will be resurrected at this time? (Matthew 10:15; 11:20-24; 12:41-42; John 5:28-29).
- Is the Great White Throne Judgement a resurrection to spirit life or a physical resurrection? (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

Note: All people who ever lived without an opportunity for a relationship with God will be resurrected at this time. Theirs will be a resurrection to physical life into a world that has been ruled by Christ for 1,000 years. They will no longer have Satan to

contend with, influence and deceive them (Revelation 20:7-10). Those resurrected at this time will be taught and judged by the "books" (Revelation 20:11-12) and for the first time have access to the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. Even ancient Israel will be resurrected and given an opportunity for salvation (Romans 11:25-32).

- Will there be final punishment for the incorrigibly wicked? (Revelation 20:14-15).

Note: This "lake of fire," or "second death," is not a state of eternal conscious torment. It is the total destruction of the person's body and consciousness. Matthew 10:28-31 describes this fire as one of complete annihilation. In Malachi 4:1, 3, God states that "The day is coming, burning like an oven, and . . . all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up . . . They shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this . . ." The unrepentant wicked are simply burned up, never to exist again.

All who have ever lived will have an opportunity through the resurrections to learn God's way of life, repent, receive God's Spirit and inherit eternal life. Those who refuse will be burned up and cease to exist.

These resurrections are not to be confused with various individual physical resurrections that have taken place. The Bible records several resurrections to physical life. Once these people lived out their lives they died and are waiting to be brought back to life in one of the other resurrections.

Examples of physical resurrections in the Bible are given in 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37; 13:20-21; Matthew 27:50-53; Luke 7:11-15; 8:41-42, 50-56; John 11:1-4, 11-14, 17-44; and Acts 9:36-42; 20:9-12.

The death of someone close to you can be emotionally overwhelming. The realization of the possibility of our own death can cause fear and anxiety. But, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins, we no longer have to see death as a permanent state. We have assurance that we will see our loved ones again. We have the promise of God that, when we die, the next moment of consciousness will be the resurrection.

Grief caused by the loss of a loved one is a normal reaction of sadness and mourning. Grief is not a sign of a lack of faith. But, at the same time, we can take comfort in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is going to return and the graves will open and the dead shall live again! *GM*

—Gary Petty

Coping With Worry

by Bonnie Greider

“Edith,” Walter scowled, “you have got to stop worrying so much. You worry all the time! You worried about Tom failing high school. You worried that the girls would marry deadbeat husbands who wouldn’t provide for them. You worried about the car breaking down during our vacation. You even worried about dying of pneumonia when you had the flu last spring. You worried about all of these things, and none of them happened!”

“See!” Edith exclaimed. “It worked!”

How many of us are like Edith?

Sometimes we lose sleep and jeopardize our health over events that may or may not ever occur, and often we find ourselves distraught over situations we cannot control. Worrying takes up a great deal of our time and energy. But, when we stop to consider the subject, why do we spend so much time and energy worrying? Do we gain anything by worrying?

Winston Churchill once stated: “When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which never happened.”

Why do we allow ourselves to worry so much?

I have discovered three main reasons we worry.

Blaming ourselves

For many of us who are wives and mothers, worrying takes on a life of its own. I call this the “could have, should have, and wish I would have” syndrome. We fear that the way we handled our lives in the past, particularly when it came to our children, was the cause of the problems and sorrows our families face today. In short, we lack confidence in ourselves and our roles as women. We tend to blame ourselves for problems our loved ones are facing, and we believe that, had we been better mothers, they would not be facing them.

This is particularly true when our children are involved. The scenario is a familiar one. A son (or daughter) is not doing well in school. We discover he is not

going to class or not completing his homework and is in jeopardy of failing a class. We talk to him, try to help him, sometimes pray about the situation—and we begin to nag him into oblivion.

But he doesn't listen.

Then the sleepless nights begin. We become preoccupied with helping him do better in class. This becomes the only topic of discussion we have with him. As a result, he begins to avoid talking to us, and a gulf develops between him and us. His grades still do not improve.

Is worrying doing something?

Another reason many of us worry so much can be illustrated by a situation that occurred in my family. My daughter had car trouble and had to park her vehicle alongside a road. As my younger son and I rushed to find out what had happened, I noticed that he was fretting. As I told him not to worry, and that she was surely going to be fine, he made a revealing request.

"Please don't make me stop worrying," he pleaded. "I have to *do* something!" That, to me, was interesting. When we are busy worrying about something, we sometimes feel we are actually doing something about it. What we are really doing is using up valuable time and energy best used in some other way.

Doing worrisome penance

A third possible reason many of us worry is that, deep down inside, we feel that if we make ourselves miserable with worry maybe God will see how miserable we are and intervene for us. We punish ourselves, hoping that God will feel we have suffered enough and fix things for us. This is something we don't consciously consider, but when you think about it that is what we are really doing.

How do we begin to control our sometimes overwhelming fears when our families are going through trials? When our children seem to be headed the wrong way, how do we stop ourselves from spending endless sleepless hours fretting over the events in the lives of those we love when we are powerless to do anything constructive to help them?

We can take one of two approaches that might help ease the strain of worry, help us learn to cope and allow our family members to come to grips with their problems.

First of all, when in a like situation ask yourself, "Is there really anything else I can do to help improve the situation?"

This is an important question, particularly when a child is involved. After you have prayed, after you have sought help from professionals, such as a teacher or minister, and after you have discussed all there is to talk about with the person involved (which is, quite often, a great deal more than you actually need to discuss), if there is truly nothing else you can do, then you should ask the second question:

"What is the worst thing that can happen if this scenario that I fear actually becomes a reality?"

The answer to this question, when really analyzed, is that the worst case would usually be significantly less of disaster than we thought.

Why can't Johnny succeed?

Let's take the example of the high-school student who is not doing well in school. When Johnny's mother first realizes that he is not doing homework or not attending class, she becomes upset. She talks with Johnny, with his teacher, with his father and perhaps with others whose opinion she values. Still, Johnny doesn't take the matter seriously. He continually rejects her admonitions to improve.

Then the cycle begins. Johnny's mother nags, he balks, Mom worries, Johnny falters. His mother is worried that Johnny will fail in school. But wait. What if Johnny fails? What if he has to be held back a year? Would this be the terrible

If we believe God, then we have to realize that God is aware of everything that happens in the universe and aware of everyone to which these events happen.

crisis that Mom is punishing herself nightly to avoid?

Frankly, sometimes it is better to allow children like Johnny to reap the consequences of their actions. How will he face his classmates if he fails in school? What kind of a job can he get without an education? Some children seem to need to graduate from the school of hard knocks. Experience isn't always the best teacher, but it can be an affective one.

An important question still remains to be answered. If Mom is powerless to fix the situation, why does she spend so much

of her life worrying about it? Of course, there are many problems that are more serious than the one mentioned above that our families must face. But the bottom line is similar. When we have done all we can do, and when we learn to focus on the probable end result, we can do nothing more, except allow God to teach what He will teach from the situation.

Learning patience and trust

That is where faith comes in, except we must realize that faith in God is far different from the faith we often have in ourselves. We are fallible, and God is not.

He can, and does, bring from every situation something of greater value than we can ever discern on our own. These are lessons of character, not the least of which is patience and trust in Him.

We know the Bible admonishes us in Matthew 6:25 not to worry "about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on."

Verse 27 tells us that such worrying doesn't really accomplish anything.

If we believe God, then we have to realize that He is aware of everything that happens in the universe and aware of everyone to which these events happen. He allows us all to make wrong choices, fail and stand back up and go at it again. At times He intervenes and helps us along the way, but most of the time He allows us to learn from our mistakes and the mistakes of others so we develop greater depth of character from our failings.

Life's hazards, therefore, are not really failures, but lessons, and He loves us enough to allow us to learn them.

God promises us in Romans 8:28 that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

Maybe it is time for us to stop worrying so much about what we could have, should have and wish we would have and spend more time worrying about how to love God and seek His purpose—and allow our family members to learn from our experiences. *GN*

Teenage Success Stories

Yours Could Start Today

by Kae Tattersall

Would you like to have more money in your pocket, face the future with more confidence and be able to set up a successful business for yourself? It is easier than you think. All it takes is a dream and a little thought and planning. Look at what these teenagers were able to accomplish:

Dorothy started her business at the age of 14, selling stick-insect eggs by mail order. Less than 20 years later, she is Great Britain's biggest breeder of stick insects. Her company sells 50,000 a year.

Because she had experience with insects and knew she wanted to make a career in the insect business, Dorothy studied applied biology at a university, designing the right kind of insect houses and researching proper feeding facilities for her insects.

This greatly increased her ability to supply the whole package to her customers. She found that many people who worked all day wanted a pet but could not provide the attention needed by a dog or cat. Stick insects (called walkingsticks in some countries) were the ideal answer for some, and her beautifully designed cages are just as attractive in a room as any aquarium.

Naomi is a 13-year-old entrepreneur. "I was 11 when I started breeding guinea pigs for a bit of pocket money," she said. "I bought a female guinea pig from a pet shop. The lady at the shop told me that the guinea pig was probably pregnant and she would buy the babies back from me when they were six

to eight weeks old. My parents gave me some money to buy more hutches, and my brother, who was 10 at the time, went into business with me."

Since first selling the animals says Naomi, she has learned all about guinea

we would no longer have a market, because the pet shop wants to keep their good reputation."

Now that Naomi has run a guinea-pig business, she would like to work with bigger animals, perhaps horses. "Or working in a zoo would be fun!"

It sounds easy, doesn't it? But how do you get started?

First, brainstorm. Divide a piece of paper into three columns. In column one, write what you want to accomplish in the next five years or so—a really good job, financing for college, more money or whatever you would like to do. In the middle column write down what it would take to accomplish this.

Consider, for example, financing four years of college. One young man did just that.

Ben's family helped him turn an after-school job cleaning swimming pools and mowing lawns into a successful and valuable service. Because of the skills he developed through hard work, he landed a position with a large company, which paid his college fees, provided him training in a career and guaranteed him a job after graduation.

The company was not looking for a high-powered businessman; it wanted someone who had learned financial expertise and the value of customer satisfaction and perseverance—all vital entrepreneurial skills. Ben got the position because he had taught himself the one thing every company is looking for: self-motivation.

In the third column of your paper write down your interests along with any potential money-making ideas you can think of. Do you have any hobbies like

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

Dorothy's or Naomi's? Can you provide a service like Ben's? Do you have any special skill that could be developed to earn money?

Richard • Richard is an example of developing and using his skills to earn money. At the age of 15 he learned leather craft at a summer camp. He lived in a remote community in Wales, a place of few employment opportunities. However, Richard made small items he could sell at the only shop in his village.

Because he could provide a service and was determined to produce the highest-quality work, his reputation and his profit margin grew. Soon Richard could buy larger quantities of leather, which he made into beautifully tooled handbags and purses. These he sold in a larger shop in the neighboring village. Each item contained an offer to hand-tool initials on the item free of charge. This led to even more sales in the form of commissions for large items. Soon Richard had more orders than he could fill

A secret to these teenage success stories is finding a niche in the market that no one else is filling. Research is vital before you start. If you hope to exploit a skill, make friends with local store and shop owners. Look for something they don't sell or something you can produce better or less expensively. Show your samples.

If you hope to provide a service, make sure you can do it well enough and consistently enough to supply a number of clients. When advertising a service, offering a first-time free trial can win potential customers.

The often overlooked dimension to a long and successful career is reliance on God, and perseverance. As God said through King Solomon, "Whatever your hand finds to do do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10), and he who heeds God's Word "will find good and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he" (Proverbs 16:20). See "Staying the Course" (page 14), for more inspiration.

Don't be afraid to dream. Talk to your parents, teachers and other adults about making your dreams a reality. It takes courage, confidence, ingenuity and hard thinking to come up with a money-making idea and plan. But if you do you will be well on your way to finding a good job or starting a career. The next teenage success story we read could be yours! **GN**

Live Again

Continued from page 13

many thousands or millions of people have died, having never heard about the true God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Billions have been born over the centuries in lands where a Bible was never to be seen.

None of these people could determine their place of birth or choose whether to hear and consider the truth preached in the name of Jesus Christ, the only "name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Men and women in such circumstances have never yet experienced an opportunity for salvation. But they will. Our loving God will resurrect them into a world in which the knowledge of God will cover the earth like the waters cover the ocean beds. "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of

The resurrection is not some unproved theory. It has already happened once. Jesus Christ died, was buried and was raised to life again by His Father. Christ's first disciples witnessed it.

the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

God will remove the veil of spiritual blindness separating humanity from His saving knowledge, and these resurrected humans will enjoy their first opportunity to know Him. "And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 25:7-8).

Fact, not just speculation

The resurrection is not some unproved theory. It has already happened once. Jesus Christ died, was buried and was raised to life again by His Father. Christ's first disciples were witnesses that Jesus' resurrection did occur; they walked and talked to Him face to face after they had witnessed His execution. They were so convinced by what they saw that most of them gave their lives in martyrdom for that same sure hope.

The reality of resurrection has been

demonstrated. Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead: "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (Revelation 1:18).

He is the prototype and the source. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Then Jesus asks, "Do you believe this?" Do we believe Jesus when He promises that His followers will live again?

Stephen Mandell and the young comatose boy I saw die didn't understand the certainty of the resurrection of the dead. There are those who believe this life is all there is. They seek to squeeze every drop of pleasure and good times from their few tenuous years on earth. Is life meant to be only a span of time between two eternities, a brief spark of

life with an infinity of nothingness on either end of it?

Learn about your awesome future

The Bible reveals a far greater future for mankind, and all the reveling and pleasure we could possibly stuff into our few short years cannot possibly approach the true happiness God has in store for us.

If you are convicted of this truth, you can more easily keep your priorities straight. You won't need to be distracted by the lesser concerns of this life.

You can live boldly with the knowledge of God's sure promise, that your Redeemer lives and that you will see Him on the last day.

Write for our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan—The Promise of Hope for All Mankind* to learn more about God's festivals and what they reveal about God's plan for all humanity, both the living and the dead.

Better yet, attend one of our festival sites and hear it in person while following along in the pages of your Bible. You can get in touch with one of our ministers through the address in the front of this magazine. **GN**

Glory

Continued from page 16

of terrorists who murdered 11 Israeli athletes. This deplorable act of violence nearly ended the games, but it was finally decided that Olympiad XX would go on.

One of the most amazing sagas in modern Olympic history occurred that year. The Olympic record-winner of the 5,000-meter run was 23-year-old Lasse Viren of Finland. He was the Finns' best hope against a strong field of contender in the 10,000-meter run. I vividly remember watching the race on television. I had followed the news stories on how diligently Mr. Viren had trained for the Games. He was in excellent condition, and I hoped he would win.

However, on the 12th lap of the race a horrified gasp went up from the crowd. The Finn had become entangled in a crowd of runners on one of the turns and had fallen flat on his back inside the track. His cause seemed utterly hopeless. But Lasse Viren decided that his race was not over. He pulled his lanky frame from the ground and got back into the race. Instead of panicking, he slowly worked his way up toward the pack of runners. Lap after grueling lap, he gained ground and momentum.

The network announcer offered remarks about Mr. Viren's courage and gallant effort, but the determined Finn had something more in mind than mere effort. He had not come to the Olympics to quit, nor had he come to lose. As he slowly narrowed the gap between himself and the other runners, the announcer again gave him credit for a great effort.

Near the end of the race, to the surprise of everyone, Mr. Viren caught up with the pack. The announcer began to take note of the Finn's chances to place in the contest. Then, to the astonishment of all, with a lap and a half to go, the great Finnish runner unbelievably took full command

A Christian can finish the race only through Christ!

of the race, shaking free of the other runners, and won the 10,000-meter race by eight yards! Even more astounding, his time of 27:38.4 was a new world record!

As I watched in admiration of the tremendous athletic feat just performed by Lasse Viren, I thought of the powerful words of Proverbs 24: "For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again . . ."

(verse 16, Revised Standard Version).

The most inspirational aspect of Mr. Viren's win was how he had won. He did not give up when a sudden crisis arose. He did not panic when it seemed all was lost. He relied on his training, kept his mind on the goal and ran with all his might. That same strategy was what Paul was trying to tell the Corinthians!

Over the years I have seen people fall down again and again, only to rise with the strength to overcome failure. I have seen men and women struggle against disease, impending financial disaster and mental and emotional despair. How does the Christian go on in spite of seemingly hopeless odds?

A Christian can finish the race only through Christ!

Learning to fully rely on the strength

Learning to fully rely on the strength of our Savior in times of crisis qualifies as a fourth leg in the Christian circuit. Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" —(Philippians 4:13).

of our Savior in times of crisis qualifies as a fourth leg in the Christian circuit. Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

The imperishable crown

The Christian race is an exciting challenge, and it does bring its reward. Notice the hopeful words of James, the brother of Jesus: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12).

The reward of the Christian race is a crown of life. What kind of life? Eternal life! The apostle John makes clear the kind of life Christians have been promised: "And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life" (1 John 2:25).

Everlasting life is the crown promised to the Christian. It is not a perishable crown of olive or pine branches or laurel or wild celery; it is the imperishable crown of eternal life, a crown that does not wither and die. The apostle Peter describes this reward: When "the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the

crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:4).

The fervent desire to bring glory to Zeus, Apollo and Poseidon drove the ancient athletes to win crowns and wreaths. But the Spirit of the living Jesus Christ empowers the Christian to run the race and win. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me," said Paul, (Galatians 2:20).

"To this end I also labor," he said, "striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:29). The Greek word here translated "striving" means agonizing, competing and struggling.

The final glorious victory

An awe-inspiring transformation is promised to the Christian who runs the race well. The time of this great transfor-

mation comes at the return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

Notice Paul's description of this occurrence: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality . . . Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

To the Christian will go the ultimate victory and the glorious reward of "eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality" (Romans 2:7). The Christian race is not an easy one, but the reward is great.

My daughter never forgot the scripture that I cut out for her collage that day. Now, having graduated from college, she still calls upon the words of that small but powerful collage centerpiece in handling the daily challenges of her Christian life. Perhaps the most important race in the Christian course is learning to put God first in our lives and knowing that He is in charge and will see us through to the finish line. *GN*

Daniel

Continued from page 19

ions, who were officially known by their Chaldean names, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, to help govern the affairs of Babylon.

God preserved Daniel because he lived up to the meaning of his name: “God is my judge.” He knew that only God could pass righteous judgment on him. The apostle Peter explained that Jesus Christ similarly placed Himself in the hands of God the Father, knowing God judges righteously: “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, *but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously*” (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Daniel with the lions

Much later in his life, while serving under a different king, Daniel depended on God to save Him when he was cast into a den of lions. By this time Daniel was advanced in age, possibly in his 80s (Archer, Vol. 7, p. 6). In 539-538 B.C., Darius the Mede assumed the kingship over Babylon after defeating King Belshazzar. He ruled contemporaneously with, but under, King Cyrus (Unger, p. 241; Daniel 6:28).

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one . . .” (Daniel 6:1, 2). Because Daniel evinced “an excellent spirit,” the king “gave thought to setting him over the whole realm” (verse 3).

This moved the other governors and satraps (officials subordinate to the governors) to jealousy, and they contrived a decree that, if the king signed it, would surely send Daniel to his death. The document proclaimed “that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions” (verse 7).

The satraps had tricked the king into signing the decree that automatically left Daniel in a dilemma. Daniel was faithful to the king (1 Peter 2:17, 18), but He knew that honoring God comes before honoring any man.

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days” (Daniel 6:10).

The die was cast. The king, too late, realized he had foolishly signed such a decree. But apparently there was no way out, and Daniel’s fellow governors reminded their ruler that “the law of the Medes and Persians” states “that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed” (verse 15).

Darius distraught

King Darius was bound by law to cast Daniel into the lions’ den. As the executioners lowered Daniel into the presence of the hungry beasts, the king reassured Daniel that “your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you” (verse 16). Darius was distraught over Daniel’s plight and his part in his friend’s sentence of death. The king spent the night fasting, tossing and turning in his bed (verse 18). He rose early the next morning, hurried to the lions’ den and cried out, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to

deliver you from the lions?” (verse 20).

Daniel replied: “O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you” (verses 21, 22). The king was relieved that his friend and adviser was safe and well, and he commanded guards to take Daniel out of the den. “So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God” (verse 23).

But, shortly thereafter, the petty official who had envied Daniel’s favored status found themselves cast headlong into the presence of the lions. “And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den” (verse 24).



God

King Darius also sent a decree to be read throughout the Persian kingdom. In that document, he acknowledged the supremacy and uncontested sovereignty of Daniel’s God, substantiating the omnipotence of the Eternal by recounting His divine deliverance of Daniel from the lions (Daniel 6:25-27). “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (verse 28). Daniel prospered because he continually committed his life to God.

Daniel willingly submitted himself to God’s judgment, and indeed God judges all of mankind (Revelation 11:18; 19:15-21). God promises to sternly judge those who cruelly oppress His people (Revelation 6:9-11).

Some unwittingly assume that God’s judgment must be harsh. God judges according to one’s works, good or bad. But, because Christians repent of their wrong ways and try their best to do God’s will, God looks at their heart from a different perspective. Judgment is now on the

God doesn't take it lightly when false witnesses accuse or attack His servants, returning evil for good.

house of God (1 Peter 4:17), not yet on the world at large.

God’s judgment of His people is linked with deliverance and salvation. When the saints suffer at the hands of envious evildoers, they can go before God in prayer and ask Him to intervene and adjudicate, or judge, on their behalf. In Daniel’s times of trouble, he invariably turned to God and placed his problems and his life into God’s hands. We can do the same.

“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19).

Daniel committed his life to God. Sometimes he suffered, but he always trusted God to deliver him from trials. You and I can live as Daniel lived. For those who are careful to live as Daniel lived, we can be thankful that God—not some

human being—is their judge. *GN*



What's the Best News This World Can Hear?

Today's headlines are filled with bad news—war, famine, natural disasters, new and baffling diseases, environmental catastrophes, 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, pandemics and natural disasters. With all this bad news, is there any hope for the future of humanity?

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 this world can hear! You'll find His message not only surprising but shocking!

In *The Gospel of the Kingdom* you can discover the 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 to our address nearest you. See the inside front cover for a list of addresses worldwide. Discover this good news for yourself!



How to get additional information

For additional information about the United Church of God, you can use your home computer to access our home page on the World Wide Web portion of the Internet. The address <http://www.ucg.org/> gives you access to general information and news about the church, as well as issues of *The Good News*, the *New Beginnings* newsletter and booklets.

Did a Good God Create an Evil World?

Is it possible to completely expunge all evil from the world? It is not only possible, it will be done! The Bible reveals how God will eventually banish evil from existence!

by Noel Hornor

We humans have thought up many an explanation to try to explain the phenomenon of evil. For many people, the idea that a devil incites human beings to deeds of lust and cruelty is absurd, nothing more than a fairy tale. A common view is that people commit atrocities because they themselves were victims of abuse.

Most psychologists discount the possibility of the existence of a devil, but a few years ago one psychological counselor squarely faced the problem of evil. He did so because he was retained by the judicial system to interview men who were accused of the most depraved acts. He entered the inner sanctum of jails and prisons to interview prisoners who had committed atrocities

defendants. The jury and the trial judge couldn't even listen to evidence that reflected unfavorably upon the accused.

Under the cloak of confidentiality, the counselor often heard vile tales vividly described by these depraved killers. Many of the stories contained evidence that would remain forever hidden to all but the psychologist, including confessions to hideous crimes as well as accounts of the pathetic pleas of victims in the moments before their deaths.

Stifling his inner revulsion, the counselor listened intently to graphic details of bloody torture and the beastly, systematic thoughts of the tormentor as he satiated his twisted, brutal appetites at the expense of

Does evil exist? Many in our educated society have rejected the idea. But the Bible is clear that evil is present in the form of Satan the devil, whose goal is to destroy and divide humankind.



against their fellow human beings.

A state supreme court had ruled that accused killers must have access to professional counseling before the state could put them on trial. Prosecutors could make public only evidence that was deemed favorable to the

someone's wife or child.

After emerging from behind the confining walls, this psychologist found himself pondering a question that the sum of his professional training had taught him to reject (even though most people intuitively know the

In This Section . . .

Did a Good God Create an Evil World?

What is the source of the evil we see in this world?

What Does the Bible Teach About Fasting?

What can we learn from biblical examples of fasting?

God's Judgment: Condemnation or Hope?

The judgment of God has a better ending than most people think.

E1 | How World Peace Will Come

The Bible speaks of a coming peace—but will it really come?

E5 | Develop Your Spiritual Senses

Understanding how sin works can help you avoid it.

E6 | What Does It Mean to Have Freedom in Christ? E14

Christ promised His followers freedom—but what is that freedom?

E8

E12

E14

answer): Does evil exist?

The source of evil

Many of the educated of our society reject the idea, but the Bible is insistent that evil exists. The biblical writers presented evil in the form of a decadent prince of demons, called Satan, whose primary purpose is to destroy humankind.

Conventional wisdom holds that people commit atrocities because they themselves were victims of abuse. But millions of people grow up in unhappy circumstances.

They live in poverty, are targets of parental violence and suffer the consequences of humanity's imperfections. But they do not grow into despots or mass murderers.

Why, then, do some people choose to vent their frustrations by hating and abusing others, although most do not?

The Bible shows us that a hateful spirit being lives who beckons men, women, boys and girls to follow his way of destruction, abuse and murder.

We first read of this creature in the book of Genesis, when he appeared on the scene in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent. He tempted the first man and woman to disobey God by eating forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-13). This first disobedience by mankind launched the human race on its course of chronic and habitual disobedience (Romans 5:12).

A little later this hateful being, Satan the devil, tempted Cain to commit the first act of murder. Cain, the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, became angry, and his rage clouded his judgment (Genesis 4:6). God challenged Cain to rise above his

wrath: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:7).

Cain responded by killing Abel (verse 8). Cain could have resisted the temptation to do harm to his brother, but he didn't. Anyone who murders or commits other violent acts has simply failed to subdue his nature, as Cain failed to subdue his. Those who seek an explanation for violent acts fail to understand the enormous influence Satan

has on the thoughts, attitudes and actions of mankind.

Earlier this year, after a gunman in Dunblane, Scotland, shot and killed 16 small schoolchildren and their teacher and wounded another 12 youngsters, a distraught school official summed up the tragedy: "Evil visited us yesterday, and we don't know why."

Some succumb to Satan

People who are aware, through the study of the Bible, that Satan exists know why the Dunblane tragedy happened. At least they understand the existence of evil in a broad sense. Students of the Bible grasp that Satan actually searches the earth for people who will follow him and succumb to murderous impulses because of their frustration with life. They understand that Satan entices some to "devour" anyone who gets in their way as would a vicious beast (1 Peter 5:8). These victims have themselves been devoured by Satan, who has enticed them into a life of cruelty and utter worthlessness.

Satan's influence is manifest in the form of other, equally hideous, acts. In June of this year a California jury convicted a 42-

When the jury foreman read the guilty verdict, the defendant responded by making an obscene gesture with both hands.

The world is filled with violence too savage to attribute to mere human evil. Through thousands of years of recorded history, Satan has influenced human beings to perpetrate the unimaginable against other individuals and, in wartime, against whole nations and peoples. The recent war in Bosnia is only the latest such example. The atrocities of World War II are still vividly remembered by many.

Both the Bible and secular history witness that, from the dawn of civilization, man's history depicts a bloody chain of inhuman cruelty in times of war. The ancient Assyrians, for example, preserved a ghastly, graphic record of human mutilation.

Timely answer to a timeless question

Why does God allow evil in the world? Anyone who has ever suffered tragedy wonders about this. Philosophers and churchmen have repeatedly asked the question. Theologian Harold Kushner, in his 1981 book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, rephrased the question: "Why



year-old former convict of murdering a 12-year-old girl. The perpetrator had spent most of his life behind bars and had been out of prison only three months when he entered the child's bedroom and abducted her at knifepoint in the presence of two playmates. He apparently had stalked the youngster and had planned his crime well beforehand.

Evidence at the trial established a pattern of sexual assault against women before he selected this child as his next victim.

do bad things happen to good people?"

Everyone asks this question at one time or another—theologians, philosophers, historians and even physicists. Let's look at some of their answers.

English theologian Edwin Hatch once put it: "How did a God who was almighty as well as beneficent come to create what is imperfect and evil?" (*The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages Upon the Christian Church*, 1995, Peabody, Massachusetts, p. 194). Dr. Hatch described the

quandary addressed by the early Church after the apostolic era. The apostles of Christ never wrestled with this issue, but those who came later did.

One possible explanation was offered by the gnostic Marcion early in the second century. Marcion believed that “two rival Gods existed: One was the tyrannical creator and lawgiver of the Old Testament, the other the unknown God of love and mercy who sent Jesus to purchase salvation from the creator God” (*Webster Encyclopedia*, one-volume edition, p. 561).

In Marcion’s view, the lawgiver God was responsible for the existence of pain and evil, and the work of the Savior was to deliver the world from the pain and evil caused by God. This heretical outlook was modified and refined by others but took root in the body of subsequent church doctrine, where its influence has fostered frequent confusion.

Some historians have addressed the seeming contradiction of a world created by God but replete with evil. Englishman Arnold Toynbee noted that “one of the conclusions that have been drawn by human

Love must be the creator of a manifestly ailing Universe, or the Universe must have been created by another God who is not the God of Love” (ibid).

Scientists ponder

Scientists study the physical realm, but some have pondered the imponderable. Physicist Paul Davies considers another side of the good-vs.-evil argument. He considers the issue of why God, if He truly is all-powerful, does not simply intervene and stop all evil.

“Is God free to prevent evil?” Davies wonders. “If he is omnipotent, yes. Why then does He fail to do so” (*God and The New Physics*, 1983, p. 143). Davies has a point: Why doesn’t God just ban all evil? If Satan is responsible, why doesn’t God in some way simply stop the devil?

The view of an atheist

Perhaps the main reason some people are atheists is that they cannot satisfactorily reconcile the problem of a good God and an evil world. Julian Huxley wrote about the existence of evil, that “its existence is a challenge to God’s moral character” (*Reli-*

For example, Toynbee writes that “God’s love is the source of Man’s freedom,” and “every challenge can be regarded equally as a call from God or as a temptation by the Devil” (*A Study of History*; p. 300). Professor Toynbee has touched on two truths. The first is that God allows evil in the world as a consequence of free will.

God gives free will, or personal choice, to every human being.

The second truth Toynbee mentions is that there is a devil, a being adept at tempting people to make all the wrong choices (Matthew 4:3).

The author of violence

Jesus confirmed that the devil seduces people into committing atrocities. We saw earlier that Cain was the first human who killed, but Jesus showed that murderous attitudes begin with Satan. In Christ’s day jealous men wanted to kill the very Son of God (John 8:40). Later these deceived and deceitful zealots succeeded.

Jesus clearly identified the source of their evil motivations: “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your



spectators of the moral evil of the Universe is that this chamber of horrors cannot be any God’s handiwork” (*A Study of History*, abridged version, 1957, Vol. XII, p. 300).

Did a good God create a bad world? If so, why would He do such a thing? If not, then how did evil and evil acts come to exist in a world created by God?

Toynbee saw that the Christian “finds himself compelled to choose between two . . . alternatives, both of which are grievously disconcerting: Either the God who is

gion Without Revelation, 1957, p. 109). Huxley concluded that divine revelation and a divine Revelator do not exist.

We find no shortage of eloquent descriptions of the dynamics of this problem. But we need answers. Mankind has concocted explanations. Some people have concluded that God doesn’t exist. Some adopt Marcion’s belief of a Godhead in conflict. Some man-made explanations are totally lacking in accuracy, but others give a glimpse of the biblical truth.

father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the Truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (verse 44).

The devil’s influence is powerful and pervasive. Through the centuries, people’s belief in the existence of a devil has waxed and waned. Europeans devoutly believed in him in the Middle Ages and throughout the Renaissance. But in modern times the idea

of a deceiving devil went out of style.

On this subject, however, the only information that really matters is what the Bible provides. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible tells us in the most solemn terms that the devil exists as a powerful being. Satan and his cohorts, the demons, are mentioned more frequently in Scripture than even the Holy Spirit.

The devil is destructive

A good word to describe the tactics and nature of Satan is *destructive*. Satan makes mayhem and murder, and he has been at it since the dawn of human history. The Bible reveals that at the close of this age Satan will still be actively attempting to destroy

Satan's name means adversary. He is so labeled because he became the adversary of God Himself and the enemy of all good.

humanity. Revelation 9:11 calls him *Abaddon* and *Apollyon*, names that mean “destruction” and “destroyer.”

He has many accomplices—demons who share his frame of mind. During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ encountered a man possessed by many demons (Mark 5:1-15). Mark’s Gospel account describes the man’s bizarre actions. Night and day “he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones” (verse 9).

The demons drove this miserable man to self-mutilation. Jesus felt compassion for the man and ordered the demons away. They then entered a herd of swine and drove the defenseless animals over a cliff into the sea (verse 13).

After reading and believing the biblical account, many have correctly concluded that evil in God’s creation exists because God gives mankind free will and that Satan’s deception is at the root of the suffering of human beings.

But believers in God still wonder why their Creator allows Satan’s seemingly senseless ways of destruction to continue unabated. After the senseless murders of the innocent children at Dunblane, headmaster Ron Taylor lamented, “We don’t understand it, and I don’t think we ever will.”

The origin of Satan

The Bible, however, tells why. It describes the beginning of Satan and why God allows him to continue to exist.

Satan was once a brilliant and powerful “covering cherub” (Ezekiel 28:16). Through rebellion against God, he corrupted himself and became Satan—whose very name means adversary. He is so

labeled because he became the adversary of God Himself and the enemy of all good.

We do not know when Satan rebelled, but his insurrection occurred at a distant time before the creation of man. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!” (Isaiah 14:12).

This is an amazing statement from the book of Isaiah with dual meaning. It applies at once to the wicked, Satan-dominated king of Babylon as well as to Satan himself. Jesus, referring to this event, said He “saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Satan had determined to

undermine and thwart every plan and purpose of God, beginning in the Garden of Eden with his temptation of Adam and Eve.

But this still doesn’t explain why God has allowed Satan to continue.

There is a reason, an astonishing one, that we can understand when we realize God’s plan for humanity. It is simply that God’s purpose is to give mankind eternal life. This is why Jesus Christ came and died. God’s gift to us “is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Before we can inherit eternal life, we have to be tested. “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

God’s reasoning for testing us is to give us the chance to resist and overcome the temptation to do evil.

All humans, when they sin, fall under the same sentence God pronounced upon Adam and Eve. That sentence is death! All have sinned (Romans 3:23) and come under the death penalty until they repent, because the “wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This is the condition in which we remain until we turn to God in humble repentance and accept Jesus Christ as our personal savior.

Satan is the ruler of the world by virtue of his pervasive influence (2 Corinthians 4:4). He has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). This is why the earth’s governments, dominated by evil regimes, can so readily gravitate to the dark side.

The meaning of the Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement depicts the tri-

umph of good over evil, of Jesus Christ over Satan and his legions of demons. In Leviticus 16 God gave instructions to the people of Israel concerning a ceremony He told them to perform every year on this Holy Day. The high priest was to select two goats, which were to symbolically bear the nation’s sins. “One was killed as a sin offering; the other was sent off into the desert to bear away the sins of the people into an uninhabited place” (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 588).

The first goat, which was slain (verse 15), prefigured the crucified Jesus Christ, killed to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind (John 1:29).

The second goat is called “the scape-goat” in some Bible translations (Leviticus 16:8, New King James Version) and *Azazel* in the original Hebrew. The *Azazel* goat represents Satan. Some scholars identify *Azazel* as the name of a demon inhabiting the wilderness (*Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 326). In the ceremony of Leviticus 16 Satan is symbolically made to bear responsibility for the sins of humanity (verse 22) because of the deception he foisted upon men.

Revelation 20 describes the future fulfillment of the event depicted by this solemn ceremony. When Jesus Christ returns to earth, He will immediately expel Satan from his position of influence over the world. Christ will place the devil into a condition of restraint and will lift the devil’s cloak of deception (Revelation 20:1-3).

Jesus’ act of deliverance prepares the way for “the restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). God’s servants “since the world began” have preached (although not always understood) this prophesied wonderful world of tomorrow (same verse). Christ will usher in a perfect world, a setting in which every innocent child will be protected from harm (Isaiah 11:8-9). God will eradicate from this world the appalling evil we see around us, and no devil will be there to tempt mankind.

Jesus Christ will bring in a world in which acts of love and obedience toward God, on the part of everyone, will result in a society that will always reward good and a world that ever restrains evil. God will put an end to the brutalization of women and the slaughter of little children and men. The great events depicted by the Day of Atonement will at last make love and peace a reality. **GN**

What Does the Bible Teach About Fasting?

Fasting—going without food and water—is mentioned often in the Bible. What can we learn from the examples we are given?

by Dean Wilson

What does the Bible teach us about fasting, or temporarily abstaining from food? The Bible records no commanded fast day except the Day of Atonement, one of God's Holy Days (Leviticus 23:26-32).

But many examples of fasting are recorded in the Old and New Testaments from which we can come to understand the principle and meaning of the practice for us today:

- After the Israelites were defeated by the men of Ai (Joshua 7:6), Joshua and the elders of Israel remained prostrate before the Ark of the Covenant from morning until evening *without eating*.

- On one occasion, the 11 tribes that had taken up arms against Benjamin, seeing that they would not stand against the inhabitants of Gibeah, fell before the Ark on their faces and so continued until the evening *without eating* (Judges 20:26).

- David fasted while the first child he

while He was on earth, it was not necessary for His disciples to fast, but after His death and departure *His disciples would fast* (Matthew 9:14-15; Luke 5:33-35).

During Christ's ministry and shortly after His death, He and the early Church dealt with the practice of setting aside certain days of the week or month to fast. The Pharisees bragged about fasting twice a week (Luke 18:12) and considered themselves more righteous than others for doing so.

Certain members of the Church at Rome appeared to be trying to enforce fasting on particular days on other Christians at Rome. Paul addressed the subject by pointing out that fasting was an individual matter (Romans 14:5-6).

Fasting is highly personal

Christ's statements concerning fasting are simple and straightforward. His disciples will fast (Luke 5:33-35), but He did not specify when, how long or how often. As Paul amplified in Romans, fasting is an

By humbling ourselves and seeking God's will, we are able to see mistakes that we may be making in our relationships with one another and with God. Once we repent of these mistakes, then we're ready to do God's will without the fetters and burdens that impede us.

had by Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, lay dying (2 Samuel 12:16).

- Moses fasted 40 days on Mount Horeb before God gave him the two tables of testimony (Exodus 34:28-29), during which time he neither ate bread nor drank water.

- Elijah fasted for 40 days during a trip from the wilderness to Horeb, the mountain of God (1 Kings 19:8).

- Jesus Christ fasted 40 days and nights in the wilderness while being tempted by Satan the devil (Matthew 4:1-3; Luke 4:2).

Christ knew we would fast

The disciples of John asked Jesus Christ about the subject. Christ's answer was that,

individual concern between us and Jesus Christ, who is our judge.

Jesus, knowing that His disciples would fast, left ample instruction in both the Old and New Testaments on how to go about it and the purpose of going for a time without food and drink.

In Matthew 6:16-18 Christ explains that fasting is not to be a show of our supposed righteousness before men, but that it is a personal affair between us and God and that by all outward appearances no one should be aware of our fasting. Our dress and demeanor should not broadcast to others that we are fasting, which is a matter between us and God and our service to Him.

In Isaiah 53:3-5 God further explains that fasting is not to be for selfish pleasure or gain. God takes no pleasure in our going without food and drink to importune Him for selfish gain at others' expense. God will not take note of someone who is fasting with a wrong attitude.

Undoing burdens

Why should we fast? The Bible does not enumerate the reasons for fasting, but, by studying the examples of those in the Bible who fasted, we can arrive at many of the reasons for doing so.

A close study of Isaiah 58:6-11 reveals one of the primary reasons for fasting and some of its results in our lives. As these verses reveal, fasting is to loose the bands of wickedness (sin), to undo heavy burdens, to come out from under oppression, and to break the yoke of bondage that besets all of us from time to time.

Verse 8 explains the end result: "Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard."

By humbling ourselves and seeking God's will, we are able to see mistakes that we may be making in our relationships with one another and with God. Once we repent of these mistakes, and are reconciled with God and our fellowman, then we're ready to do God's will without the fetters and burdens that impede us from time to time.

The biblical examples of the use of the tool of fasting are a big help in understanding when and why to fast.

David used the principle of fasting in a time of great sorrow, when he needed comfort and understanding from God. In 2 Samuel 31:11-13 and 1 Samuel 1:17-27, David lamented deeply over the death of King Saul, God's anointed, and Saul's son Jonathan, a beloved friend. In his fasting and lamentation, David remembered the

Continued on page E15

God's Judgment: Condemnation or Hope?

The good news is that the judgment of God on man has a better ending than most people think. This good news is revealed in the festivals of God.

by Bill Bradford

It has been said that the only sure things in life are death and taxes. But there's one more thing we can be sure of—the judgment. The idea that somehow we are accountable to God for what we do in this life is fervently believed by some, intuitively felt by others and disregarded by most. Perhaps our many jokes about it reveal that most people don't take seriously the idea of the judgment of God.

But judgment is something we ought to take seriously. Felix trembled when Paul detailed for him “the judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). The Bible also tells us that eternal judgment is one of the basic principles of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-2).

What is this judgment? Perhaps the most

few know what they are. Most lack this understanding, not realizing that judgment as described in the Bible is a *series of events* rather than a one-time occurrence.

The events surrounding the judgment of man are revealed in the Bible as occurring in a precise order. God helps us better understand these events through His seven annual Holy Days, which are listed in Leviticus 23. Many Jewish people still follow the instructions listed here to determine the times of their observance (see also Exodus 12:2; 13:4).

In the seventh month of this calendar, God instructs His people to observe four Holy Days: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and

told here why the day was to be celebrated with trumpet blasts. However, in other passages in the Bible, the blowing of trumpets carries the special significance of warning people of approaching danger. “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand” (Joel 2:1).

The blowing of trumpets in the Bible is associated with the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is a time yet future when God will intervene in man's affairs. Most people don't realize that God is not the god of this world. After Adam and Eve rejected God's revealed knowledge in the Garden of Eden, God allowed man an age during which to form his own governments and civilizations. The Bible speaks of this time as “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). Jesus spoke of His coming and “the end of the age” (Matthew 24:3).

The end of this age of man is marked by a period known as the Day of the Lord. As this present time is man's day, the future is the Lord's day—the time during which He will dramatically make His presence and power known to the world. Revelation 8 and 9 describe the blowing of six prophetic trumpets, each of which introduces massive upheavals in society and the world that signal the end of the age and the beginning of another. These events culminate in Revelation 11:15-18, which depicts the time of the seventh trumpet and “the kingdoms of this world [becoming] the kingdoms of our Lord.”

Revelation 6:16-17 tells of the judgment that takes place on the Day of the Lord, when people will want to hide from God's wrath: “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Paul speaks of this time in Romans 2:5. “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of

Since judgment is something we all must face, shouldn't we try to understand what this judgment of God is?

familiar picture of the judgment is our arrival at the “pearly gates” immediately after we die and then our receiving either our reward or punishment. Another popular idea is that all humanity will appear at one time on Judgment Day, at which time rewards will be handed out or sentencing will take place. There are, of course, also many variations of these ideas.

The Bible shows, however, that God's judgment is not what most people assume.

“It is appointed for men to die once, but after this [comes] the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Since judgment is something we all must face, shouldn't we try to understand what it is?

Revealed in the Holy Days

Does the judgment of God mean condemnation, or does it mean hope for you and your loved ones? If a person doesn't live up to God's standards in this life, is he or she lost forever? Is God's judgment on humans harsh and final?

There are answers to these questions, but

the Last Great Day (see Leviticus 23:24, 27, 34, 36).

The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (verses 5-8) occur earlier in the year, in the first month, and reveal what each person must do to receive salvation. The next festival, Pentecost, or the Feast of Firstfruits (verses 15-17, 21), pictures the calling of the first harvest of people in God's plan of salvation—His “firstfruits.” The firstfruits are the first ones to whom God is offering salvation in His great plan before offering it to everyone.

The last four festivals explain in their meaning God's plan for the rest of mankind. The time they picture is yet future, when the judgment of God will be complete.

Let's see how the events of the final judgment unfold in the revealed meaning of these four festivals.

The judgment of man's world

• *The Feast of Trumpets.* God told the Israelites that this day is “a memorial of blowing of trumpets” (verse 24). We are not

wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

On this Day of the Lord, God says, “I will also gather all nations, . . . and I will enter into judgment with them . . .” (Joel 3:2). Isaiah 66:16 adds, “For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many.”

The entire era of man’s rule of the earth will be brought into judgment by the One who is worthy to judge (Revelation 19:2, 11). Revelation 19 describes the final battle between Christ and the nations that will violently oppose His return to His rightful

place as ruler of the world.

The wrath of God is His judgment on the age of man. Man has rejected his Creator and chosen his own ways. God has permitted man his own allotted time to rule himself and write the tragic lesson throughout history that human rule, apart from God, brings suffering, destruction and death.

Jesus Christ, while returning in wrathful judgment of man’s deeds, will in reality *save* mankind from the destruction that man is about to bring on himself. Prophesying of this very time, He said, “If that time of trou-

bles were not cut short, no living thing could survive” (Matthew 24:22, New English Bible).

At the same trumpet that signals Christ’s return to earth, those who have been judged faithful to Him in this life will be resurrected to immortal life, receiving salvation. “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52). This event is called “the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5-6).

Continued on page E16

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GOD’S JUDGMENT?

God has always existed as judge over His creation. But we need to understand how He judges, when He judges and why He judges. Knowing how, when and why He judges helps us understand the kinds of judgment described in the Bible.

When God determined to punish Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, Abraham recognized that God is the judge of men’s actions (Genesis 18:20-25). In this case God passed judgment, issued a verdict and carried out the sentence.

Psalms 75:7 declares, “But God is the Judge; He puts down one, and exalts another.” Nebuchadnezzar came to understand this (Daniel 4:37), and Daniel passed on this truth to the blasphemous Belshazzar (Daniel 5:21-22).

In these cases God is not judging people to determine their suitability to receive salvation, nor is God making right every injustice. These instances show that God will intervene, however, to deal with injustices or sin for the benefit of mankind and to further His purposes. Judgment is not passed on the majority of people now in this age for the purpose of eternal salvation. This kind of judgment will occur later. Jude tells us that “the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all” (verses 14-15).

God’s ultimate purpose for man is that he will enjoy eternal life in the family of God. Since God is not calling everyone now (John 6:65), He is not judging every person now to grant or deny him eternal life (John 12:47-48). God reserves this

kind of judgment for humans until later, when they will fully grasp God’s truth as it is presented to them. Only then can they be fairly judged on the basis of that truth. God will not hold people accountable for what they don’t know.

Sin, however, is always judged to be worthy of death (Romans 6:23), and therefore the whole world is guilty before God (Romans 3:19), and death is upon all because of their sin (Romans 5:12). Hebrews 8:8-12 speaks of a time yet future during which people who are unaware of God’s truth will be brought into a new covenant with God, and then they will all know God, and their sins will be forgiven.

The judgment of God is also described in the Bible as a process, not strictly the rendering of a verdict or passing of a sentence. For example, Peter tells us that “the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). From this we can see that judgment is an evaluation process that has already begun for those who are a part of God’s Church—“the house of God.” This evaluation ultimately leads to a rendering of a decision or verdict.

Some of Jesus’ parables illustrate that judgment is a process that eventually leads to a decision and a reward or lack thereof. The parables of the pounds (Luke 19:12-27), talents (Matthew 25:14-30), laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) and 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) all help to clarify that judgment is a process after which comes a reckoning.

During the Millennium, God will judge people on how they live during that time; the 1,000 years will be a period during which God holds all people accountable (Revelation 20:4).

After this evaluation process, we will be judged according to our works (Revelation 22:12). There will be a reckoning only after a fair and ample process is complete (Matthew 25:31-34, 46).

When you really turn to God, you can confidently ask Him to step into your life in a powerful way. How God deals with you to fulfill His purpose in you is described in the Bible as a form of His “judgments.” When God is intimately involved in your life, He makes decisions about you daily. His decisions about us have to do with answers to our prayers, bestowing His blessings on us, protecting us and even allowing us to endure trials. God is deeply interested in us and how we are progressing toward fulfilling His purpose.

David saw God’s judgments in all His works and recognized that they were apparent throughout the creation (Psalm 105:5, 7). David knew all God’s decisions regarding him were right and in his best interest. Therefore David praised God continually for His faithful judgments in his life (Psalm 119:20, 62, 75).

God, the Judge over all creation, makes decisions. It is in His power to decide—and carry out—righteous and merciful judgments. We can be confident that God is a righteous judge (Psalm 7:11; 2 Timothy 4:8). *GN*

—Bill Bradford

How World Peace

God has promised us 1,000 years of peace. Yet human efforts to achieve enduring peace have always failed. Here is the amazing story of how God will usher in a golden age of lasting peace for all mankind.

He Will Come

by Roger Foster

Humanity's past has been a tragic chronicle of man's cruelty to man. Our present world is a witness to several intractable conflicts: Northern Ireland, Bosnia, southern Africa and the Middle East, for example. In 1995 alone, 30 armed conflicts were in progress around the globe.

In the book of Isaiah, our Creator sums up our tragic inability to live at peace with each other: "Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. *The way of peace they have not known*, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; *whoever takes that way shall not know peace*" (Isaiah 59:7-8, emphasis ours throughout).

What an apt description of our world, a world whose only times of peace are rare and brief interludes.

But it will not always be that way. Real, lasting peace is coming. But first we need a Peacemaker who is capable of enforcing an enduring peace. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is that Peacemaker. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called . . . *Prince of Peace*. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

God's government required for peace

Peace and good government are inseparable. To bring peace to the world, Jesus Christ must return and assume control of all the nations and peoples on earth. At that time "the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).

The prophet Daniel foresaw Jesus Christ and this Kingdom: "Then to Him was given dominion and glory

and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).

Jesus Christ is coming to change the world! And what a wonderful world it will be when He does.

Let's look into that wonderful world of the future. Let's see what it will be like and learn how Jesus Christ will bring about world peace. Let's also see why that peace will endure.

The world to come

God's first action to restore peace will be to send the Messiah; "that is, Jesus, who must remain in heaven until *the time of universal restoration* that God announced long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:20-21, New Revised Standard Version).

Jesus Christ will immediately begin a universal restoration of God's way of managing this earth and the

The promise of the universal restoration of God's government by Jesus Christ is the only lasting solution to the evils the prophets so graphically describe.

people on it. Throughout the prophecies of the Old Testament is this promise of restoration and the hope that is consistently presented as the only lasting solution to the evils the prophets so graphically describe.

Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4). He will assume rulership over the earth with Jerusalem as the capital of His government (verses 9, 17). Once established, His rule will produce worldwide peace and justice that will last uninterrupted for 1,000 years.

During that time the martyrs and other resurrected saints of God will share with Christ the supervision of this new era of peace (Revelation 3:21). The apostle John says that they will reign “with Christ for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

Jude passes along this prophecy: “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed . . .” (Jude 14-15).

And Daniel says, “Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be

“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.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” —(Micah 4:2).

given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Daniel 7:27).

Israel's role in the age to come

Jesus Christ will begin ruling from Jerusalem. The first people to experience the effects of His rule will be the peoples descended from the Israel of the Bible. Jesus will immediately establish a permanent relationship with them: “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst . . . Indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore” (Ezekiel 37:26-28).

“For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you . . . My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My *covenant of peace* be removed,” says the LORD, who has mercy on you” (Isaiah 54:9-10).

With Christ's throne established in Jerusalem, the people of Israel will play a momentous role in helping other nations implement God's ways. God will forgive all of Israel's past sins. Christ will use a humble and repentant Israel to disseminate the knowledge of God's law to other nations. All the world will be taught and gradually come under the administration of a unified code of justice, the law of God. This will all

be coordinated by Christ from Jerusalem.

Israel leads other nations in change

Concerning the descendants of Israel, God says He will “heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities . . .

“Then [Jerusalem] 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 33:6-9).

As the people of Israel learn to follow God's ways, their example will excite other nations to want to implement the same way of life and reap the same blessings. “Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you”’” (Zechariah 8:22-23).

Nations will see that keeping God's law works. They will come to Jerusalem to learn how they can apply it in their own lands. “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.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

During that time “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9)

Fruits of applying right knowledge

With Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, the city will become the center of learning for the whole world. God's Word, the Bible, will provide a solid foundation for the development of education and knowledge.

Notice some of the changes Christ will bring. Instead of reaping curses, people will see the land bring forth blessings. “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth

. . . It shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isaiah 55:11-13).

Prosperity will greatly increase. Crime and corruption will cease. “Instead of bronze I will bring gold, instead of iron I will bring silver, instead of wood, bronze, and instead of stones, iron. I will also make your officers peace, and your magistrates righteousness. Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders” (Isaiah 60:17-18).

Spiritual transformation of mankind

But it takes much more than mere knowledge to bring peace and cooperation to mankind. A *spiritual* change must occur in all people. This transformation in the people of Israel will inspire other nations to admire their way of life and seek to emulate it.

God tells Israel, “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 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 36:24-27).

The spiritual restoration of humanity is the most important change that will occur during this millennial period. The Spirit of God will enable people to willingly and enthusiastically obey God from the heart. “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; Hebrews 8:10).

God's Spirit in people will produce phenomenal social changes such as universal righteousness, honorable leadership and a stable society. “I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of *righteousness, the faithful city*” (Isaiah 1:26).

These changes will be permanent, last-

ing for generations. "Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever . . . A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time" (Isaiah 60:21-22).

Each new generation will be prepared to carry on this tradition of righteousness. "All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13).

Their example will be noticed and respected the world over. "Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed" (Isaiah 61:9).

Spirituality spreads

As people from other nations see what happens in Jerusalem and its environs, they too will want to become the servants of the living God and humbly obey His laws. "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer . . . ; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:6-7).

Finally the barriers between Israel and other nations will be broken. This will occur because they will all eventually realize that "it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16). God is the God of all peoples (Romans 3:29).

Deception disappears

This wonderful spiritual rejuvenation in society could never last if God allowed Satan to continue deceiving human beings. Immediately after Christ returns, Satan—and all the demons working with him—will be restrained. God will completely remove their influence over mankind for the next 1,000 years.

"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:1-2, New International Version).

By eliminating the source of the confusion that undermines and derails all attempts to bring peace to our world

today, the spiritual transformation of society in the Millennium will last.

As people all over the earth begin to obey God—first getting their spiritual priorities straight—they will realize unprecedented physical prosperity.

"Behold, the days are coming," God says, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it . . . They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them" (Amos 9:13-14).



"Behold, the days are coming," God says, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed . . . They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them" —(Amos 9:13-14).

Isaiah compares this time to a perpetual feast, offering the best of everything. "On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear" (Isaiah 25:6, NRSV).

Notice also this beautiful description of those blessings yet to come: "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the

days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

"They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD—and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD" (Isaiah 65:21-25, NRSV).

This is a vision of the world of tomorrow, a vision that is not an illusion but a promised

reality. If you believe in God and believe that the Bible is His Word, you have every reason to confidently expect these promises to be fulfilled. Jesus Christ will return to spiritually transform this world and usher in this literal paradise.

The combination of removing Satan's influence, giving humanity God's Holy Spirit and teaching the whole world the laws and ways of God will produce lasting world peace and a society blessed beyond our wildest dreams.

Yes, peace is coming. It's a sure thing! **GN**

Develop Your Spiritual Senses

Many want to avoid sin but don't know where to begin. By understanding the process of how sin occurs, you can better avoid it in your life.

by David Havir

Have you ever wondered why you sin? Have you ever noticed a pattern in the choices you make and the things you do? The Bible provides information vital to help you break destructive habits and develop Godlike character.

God created wonderful laws—laws that can guide the lives of people and that are in effect even if those people are unaware of them. For example, the law of gravity exists, even though most of us do not understand it.

The same is true of laws that reveal the pattern of sin in a Christian's life. There is a way of thinking and behavior that leads to sin. It is clearly described in the Bible and pertains to all of humanity. It applies to Christians, and a clear understanding of that pattern can help every Christian overcome and avoid sin.

Four transgressions

Following are examples of the sins of four biblical personalities whose lives repeated a pattern of developing sin. As you recognize these patterns in the pages of God's Word, reflect on your personal experiences with sin and recall how you

involved Simon the sorcerer, who witnessed God using the ministry of His Church to impart the Holy Spirit to believers. After desiring what he perceived to be a secret power, he offered an apostle money to participate in the process. His penalty is described in verses 20-23.

- The fourth example, in 2 Samuel 11:2-4, involves David. In this account we see the pattern of sin as no respecter of persons; indeed, it involved a servant of God. David saw a beautiful woman bathing. After letting his thoughts dwell on what he saw, he sent for her and sinned with her. Fortunately David repented, but the penalty for his transgression is described in 2 Samuel 12:10-14.

We can identify four parts in the pattern of sin: sensing, desire, action and incurring a penalty.

The process begins with the human senses and can quickly develop into lust. Sins of lust often lead to sins of action, and sin in any form accrues a penalty.

What can we learn from this?

Have you repented?

The foundation to overcoming sin is

Jesus Christ also described the difference between self-righteous prayers and humble repentance (Luke 18:9-14). Jesus' decision not to condemn a sinner included the admonition not to repeat the sin (John 8:10-11).

A Christian should be eternally thankful for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and God's throne of mercy. A Christian should accept the responsibility of understanding sin and the way it develops.

What do your actions speak?

When the people of His day heard Christ preaching, many believed in Him (John 8:30-31). He told them to continue in His Word if they wanted to be His disciples.

Christ taught that Christianity is so much more than religious talk (Matthew 7:21-23). Actually, by affecting a religious-sounding tone and cadence when we speak, we can deceive ourselves (James 1:26).

A wise Christian is described as a doer, not just a hearer (Matthew 7:24-27). Jesus taught that our actions will help determine the service opportunities in His future Kingdom (Matthew 25:21).

In a society that encourages people to reject God and His ordained laws of life, Christians must exercise vigilance over their actions. But oftentimes Christians are well aware of their shortcomings and frustrated about how to change their behavior.

By remembering that desires lead directly to actions, Christians can change their behavior by focusing on the desires that can precede a problem.

What do you want?

Jesus Christ taught that lust is a secret sin of the heart (Matthew 5:27-28). He knew that inappropriate desires can lead to wrong actions.

Some people foolishly conclude that, since they sin inwardly, they might as well let go of their inhibitions and sin outwardly. What a person in this frame of mind does not realize is that he is advanc-

have been ensnared by the same processes.

- The first example, in Genesis 3:6, involves one of our first human parents. Eve saw the forbidden fruit. Then, after she decided that she desired the wisdom it promised at any cost, she partook of the fruit. The penalty for her unwise choice is described in verse 16.

- The second example, in Joshua 7:21, involves Achan, who coveted physical possessions. After lusting after certain items, he took them and hid them in his tent. His penalty is described in verse 25.

- The third example, in Acts 8:18-19,

repentance. When King David finally faced the fact of his transgression, he repented before God (2 Samuel 12:13). Although God did allow David to suffer a serious physical penalty, the loss of a son, He commuted the death penalty. David's repentance is beautifully and movingly described in Psalm 51.

The prophet Ezekiel quoted God (Ezekiel 33:10-11) to show how much our Creator desires to impart life and takes no pleasure in exacting the death penalty for sin. Christ described the rejoicing in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10) when a sinner repents.

ing down the path toward greater anguish.

Instead of surrendering to lusts and letting them lead to ungodly action, a Christian must fight the battle at a fundamental level. And the battle can be fierce.

Satan works diligently to influence people to harbor lusts that lead to habits of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2-3). Consider the four examples mentioned earlier and notice that lust can take many forms.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan stirred up Eve's desire to the point that she defied her Creator. He attacked God's credibility with Eve to promote, within her, doubt about the Creator and to influence her to elevate herself. She felt a need to trust in her own wisdom to become self-sufficient. As lust consumed her, she trampled on God's simple instruction (2 Corinthians 11:3).

After the miracle at the battle of Jericho, Satan stirred up Achan's desire for physical possessions. Satan, who understands the coveting of merchandise (Ezekiel 28:14-16), influences people to love money and stray from the faith (1 Timothy 6:10). Christ warned about the cares of the world and the deceit of riches (Matthew 13:22).

Obvious intentions

Shortly after the martyrdom of Stephen, Satan enlisted a famous sorcerer in Samaria to gain prominence within God's Church. Although Philip baptized this man, his nefarious intentions became obvious to Peter. Satan influenced Simon the sorcerer to try to buy the power and authority God had granted to His apostles. Simon's attitude of promoting self within the service of the Church of God originated with the fallen being who had tried to overthrow God's throne thousands of years earlier (Isaiah 14:12-14).

When Satan saw the chance to influence David, he took special delight, since his favorite targets are chosen vessels who possess God's Spirit. Satan detected a weakness in David's character, and, when David lusted sexually after Bathsheba, his sinful desires led him to sinful actions.

Lust has a multitude of entry points. Self-sufficiency, wisdom, possessions, money, security, prestige, power, acceptance and sex are just a few.

Every Christian will fight the battle. Every Christian must face and conquer wrong desires. By remembering that sensations dwelt upon can lead directly to

desire, a Christian can stop and focus on factors feeding such appetites.

What do you see?

In the four earlier examples, the process leading to sin was affected by visual information. The pattern of sin began with the five physical senses.

God created mankind with the ability to absorb tremendous amounts of information. A small child learns by using the senses, which are the doorway to the

What do our eyes see on television and in movies? What are our eyes transmitting to our mind from books and magazines? What exactly are we observing on the computer screen? What do our ears pick up from radio or compact discs? What types of conversation are we listening to? Sin begins with the senses, and Satan will put tremendous pressure on our senses.

human heart and mind.

Since all five senses are valuable tools for learning, all five are also susceptible to Satan's influence. Our two primary means of gathering information—hearing and sight—are also two main targets of Satan.

Notice what Christ said about the importance of the eye: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matthew 6:22-23).

We must analyze and realize how we use our senses. What kinds of information are we letting into our mind? We need to know for certain that Satan is trying to entice us through our senses.

What do our eyes see on television and in movies? What are our eyes transmitting to our mind from books and magazines? What exactly are we observing on the computer screen? What do our ears pick up from radio or compact discs? What types of conversation are we listening to?

Sin begins with the senses, and Satan will put tremendous pressure on our senses. But notice that Christ endured the same pressure.

Jesus' perfect example

Christ faced Satan's temptation without sinning (Hebrews 4:15). Satan focused on some of Christ's physical senses during the temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). In a similar way in the process of conversion, we grow toward the spiritual maturity of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:13).

Notice the temptation and Christ's victory.

The temptation exploited the sense of smell and taste. After fasting 40 days and nights, Jesus was susceptible to the mind's ability to recall aroma and flavor, but He stressed—in His answer to His adversary—the value of spiritual nourishment to sustain His life.

Spiritual senses

In our reading of the temptation of Christ, we understand that fasting helped

Him resist Satan. Fasting is a tool that helps a Christian concentrate on spiritual issues. Effective fasting includes prayer, Bible study and meditation.

Fasting is a tool that we can use to re-focus our priorities. As we humble ourselves before God, we see our need for the power of God, and our desire for spiritual fruit grows.

When God strengthens us through His Spirit, we attempt and accomplish spiritual actions. The resulting spiritual behavior springs from spiritual desires. Spiritual desires are brought about by spiritual sensing.

The Bible records the faithful actions of some people (Hebrews 11) who wanted the blessings promised by God. These faithful followers of God focused on God's promises (verse 13).

Jesus Christ spoke a short parable about the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:44). The man in this parable sold all his possessions to invest his life in the Kingdom. Why would he take such a course of action? Because he experienced great joy and desire for the Kingdom. Why did he strongly desire it? Because with his Spirit-led mind he found the way to God's Kingdom.

If we joyfully desire it, we will invest our lives in the quest for the Kingdom of God. If we spiritually perceive it in an effort to find it, we will possess the necessary, joyful desire. The question is, are we seeing it?

We need to exercise our senses in a godly way and find the treasure of the Kingdom of God. *GN*

What Does It Mean to Have Freedom in Christ?

Jesus Christ spoke often of the freedom humankind would find through Him. But exactly what is the freedom that He promised His followers?

by Ranier Salomaa

With the dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent lifting of the iron curtain, Eastern Europeans jubilantly celebrated the freedom they had long been denied.

However, some of the first “freedoms” to be exercised in these formerly communist countries were indulgence in pornography, prostitution, drug abuse and organized crime.

Some people, needless to say, have erroneous concepts of freedom.

Theologically, some feel a similar sense of freedom in not observing what they feel are “Old Covenant” practices. They feel free from the law. They feel that the burden of the law has been lifted, and they are no longer under bondage. They believe they are free from “Jewish ordinances” and that Christ did everything for them, setting them free from any practices except a nebulous obligation to “love” God and their fellowman.

False freedom prophesied

Scripture warns about false promises of freedom. One such warning comes from Peter: “For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those

According to Jesus Christ, a person can't be spiritually free unless he has the truth, which is God's Word. Few have realized the freedom that comes from understanding God's Word.

who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’” (2 Peter 2:18-22).

No one argues that Christ didn't come to bring freedom. Luke writes that Jesus traveled to Nazareth, “where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD’” (Luke 4:16-19).

Jesus Christ brings true freedom

Christ came to free us from sin through His atoning sacrifice. Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us that Jesus “shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (New International Version, my emphasis throughout).

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Christ paid the death penalty for us, freeing us from death row through His sacrifice. We have been set free, but, as Paul wrote, this freedom does not give us license or permission to continue to do the things that brought on the death penalty (Romans 6:11-22). Paul wrote in Galatians 5:13, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

God's calling frees us from wrong spiritual concepts. Galatians 4:3-7 says: “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

A Christian is called away from superstition, error, bondage, deception, guilt, depravity, ignorance and a destructive life, from being a captive of

Satan and facing eternal death. He is called to liberty in Christ, receiving forgiveness of sins through His shed blood, now knowing freedom from guilt, an awareness of the truth of God and, as a free gift, the hope of eternal life.

The Scriptures do show, however, that real spiritual freedom has to include the following criteria, which are tied to Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. Let's briefly review these.

Freedom through God's truth

Christ engaged in a discussion with a group of people who were deluding themselves into thinking they were free. "As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

"They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, "You will be made free?"'" (verse 33).

Clearly, they were deceiving themselves, not admitting that even then their land was little more than an occupied territory under the subjugation of the mighty Roman Empire. All were well aware that they were a captive people.

In the next three verses Jesus replied, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

According to Christ, a person can't be spiritually free unless he has the truth, which is God's Word (John 17:17). Obviously, that person must understand that truth. Many have a Bible in their homes but either don't read it or can't comprehend it. Few have realized the freedom that comes from understanding God's Word.

Freedom through the Holy Spirit

The Scriptures point out that God's Spirit guides us to truth (John 16:13). It helps us to understand the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:10-14). This spiritual understanding leads to freedom.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

We know that the Holy Spirit is a precious gift that God grants based on repentance, the acceptance of Christ, water baptism, a willingness to obey and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38; 5:32; 8:14-17).

Freedom through the law of God

Everyone craves freedom, but we

quickly realize that freedom has its price. One person jokingly said, "Absolute freedom is being able to do what you please without considering anyone except your spouse and your kids, the company and the boss, neighbors and friends, the police and the government, the doctor and the church."

In a human society, chaos results if we consider just our own interests. Laws are necessary to guarantee freedom. This is also true with the spiritual law of God. Psalm 119 is a beautiful tribute to the freedoms that come through obedience to God's law. Notice verses 44 and 45: "So shall I keep Your law continually, forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts."

James calls God's law a "law of liberty," or freedom, when he says that "he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25). He continues in the next chapter: "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (verse 12).

Unfortunately, some claim religious freedom through Christ while denigrating His law and refusing to submit to it. Jesus Christ, as the perfect example of freedom, kept God's commands (John 15:10). True freedom cannot come apart from, but must come from harmony with, God's commandments. As Christ asks in Luke 6:46, "why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" Also: "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

Loving obedience to God's law is not an effort to attain salvation by works, but an honest, heartfelt response to want to serve and please the great God of the universe who gave His spiritual laws for our own well-being. It's not a matter of what's convenient, but of what pleases God. It is an irony that, as we gain freedom through Christ, we become His slaves, as stated in 1 Corinthians 7:22: "For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave."

Ultimately, true freedom comes through the resurrection at Christ's return. As Paul explains in Romans 8:21, "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

God speed that day! *GN*

Fasting

Continued from page E5

greatness of these men and his personal relationship with them. David sought comfort from God in times of sorrow at the loss of beloved friends.

David also used fasting at a time of serious illness, when with all his heart he sought forgiveness for his sins. He asked God to hear and answer his prayer and heal his child (2 Samuel 12:13-22).

David explained the whole principle of the reason for fasting on this occasion in verse 22: "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'" Jesus Christ explained to His disciples the need to pray and fast in dealing with healing and the casting out of demons (Matthew 17:14-21).

From these examples we can see the value and use of fasting during a time of serious illness or certain instances of demon possession: when we need God's help desperately, when we need to make sure that nothing has cut us off from God and that our prayers are being heard and answered.

Fasting important in seeking help

Fasting can be invaluable in a time of serious trouble, when we desperately need God's help. Jehoshaphat and the nation of Judah used fasting under these circumstances as recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:3-4: "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD."

Jesus made use of fasting to prepare for a time of testing recorded in Matthew 4:1-2: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry."

We note in the Bible the example of fasting used in seeking God's help in making major decisions. For example, the early Church fasted before deciding on ordinations and important regional or Church-assigned responsibility (Acts 13:1-3; 14:23).

Fasting is an individual matter between Christians and God, helping us to humble ourselves and draw closer to God. It brings us into a right mental and physical relationship with God to help us to know His will and to seek His answers to our prayers in time of need. *GN*

Judgment

Continued from page E7

The judgment of Satan

• *The Day of Atonement.* The judgment of God continues with the fulfillment of the events depicted by the next Holy Day, the Day of Atonement. This day pictures the next event of Jesus Christ's direct intervention in this world's affairs—the removal of Satan from his position of influence over humankind. Satan is “laid hold of” and “bound . . . for a thousand years . . . so that he should deceive the nations no more” (Revelation 20:1-3).

Jude tells us in verse 6 of his epistle that “the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”

Although the Day of Trumpets signifies a day judgment upon man, the Day of Atonement depicts God's judgment of Satan and the fallen angels. They are banished to a place from which they can no longer continue to influence humanity.

Judgment is Christ's righteous rule

• *The Feast of Tabernacles.* Judgment continues with the millennial reign of Christ's rule of the earth. Christ and His resurrected saints will rule those who have lived through the cataclysmic period at the end of man's age and continue His rule over their descendants for 1,000 years. Notice Revelation 20:4: “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.”

Paul confirms that those who are faithful to Christ will play a part during this judgment period. He says to the Church, “Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Corinthians 6:2).

The judgment to take place during the Millennium is not to be confused with the wrath of God at the end of man's age. The judgment of the Day of the Lord will forcefully reveal the true God and deal wrathfully with man's wrongs and the evil world he has built. The judgment by Christ and His saints during the 1,000 years, however, is a judgment of loving rule.

This righteous millennial rule of Christ is described in Isaiah 11:3-4: Jesus “shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth”

During this time God will judge people

for the purpose of salvation. Just as judgment in this sense is upon the Church of God now, in this age (1 Peter 4:17), so will people who live in the Millennium be accountable for making a decision as to whether they will come under Christ's physical and spiritual rule. With Christ Himself ruling the earth, all its inhabitants will be judged for salvation.

At that time “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). With Satan and his demons bound, as depicted by the Day of Atonement, humankind will not be deceived and influenced by the devil to sin.

All will have the opportunity to learn God's way of life. “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.’” Many will be judged and given salvation during this time.

Judgment of the dead

• *The Last Great Day.* This final Holy Day of the year pictures the time of the judgment of those who had died. Revelation 20:11-12 speaks of all the dead who lived in man's age but were never judged according to God's Word. They are pictured as standing before a great white throne, symbolic of their judgment. These dead are the “rest of the dead” who were not in the first resurrection (verse 5).

This judgment is not a time of sentencing, but a period for these newly resurrected to be considered “according to their works” (verse 12). Those in this resurrection had no previous opportunity to be called by God; thus they were never eternally accountable for their actions.

Remember, in the previous evil age God called only the firstfruits for His Kingdom. The vast majority of people have been deceived by the devil (Revelation 12:9) and never knew the truth of God, so they are not eternally accountable until God's truth is revealed to them in this resurrection, which is their time of salvation. They will be resurrected to physical, human life, and only then will they be given the truth of God and evaluated according to their works.

The festival period of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day (John 7:37) pictures the latter harvest of people who will be given the opportunity to be saved during the millennial period as well as the time of this second resurrection after the Millennium.

God's judgment of man is just. He will

judge all humans for their reward of eternal life only after they have received a full and fair opportunity to know the true God. The meaning of the Bible will be opened to people, and they will be judged according to their works by what is written in the Bible (Revelation 20:12).

How will we be judged?

Their judgment in the sense of reward or sentencing will come only *after* they have a chance to know and live by the Word of God. God makes it clear that every person will be judged by the same standard: the Word of God. Judgment in this case is not a sentencing, but a time over which a person is judged according to his works after having received the knowledge of God.

Only after each person has had a full opportunity to know and obey God will he or she be judged. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Those who experience their opportunity for salvation in this present age will receive their reward at the first resurrection and Christ's return to this earth. Those who gain their opportunity for salvation in the Millennium, as well as those resurrected to the judgment after the 1,000 years, will receive their reward later.

Will some fail?

There is a final sad, but necessary, chapter to the judgment of God. Revelation 20:14-15 speaks of a final resurrection, sometimes called a third resurrection, after which some will be cast into the lake of fire and burned up. That this “second death” can occur implies that these people enjoyed a full and fair opportunity to receive the salvation of God in a previous life.

The final punishment described here is an eternal death from which no one can be resurrected. The reality of this second death contradicts the commonly held belief that people who prove to be incorrigible will exist forever in the torment of an ever-burning hell.

Thus the judgment of God on every human being will end. All will have experienced a legitimate, equitable and even favorable time in which to be judged, and all will receive their due reward or the consequences of their failure to repent.

These Holy Days indeed hold the key of the knowledge of the judgment of God upon man. Those who observe these days as God commanded rejoice each year in God's great plan for man's salvation. **GN**