

The Good News

May-June 2013

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

The Mystery of Human Existence:

Why Are You Here?



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TODAY
UNDERSTANDING YOUR FUTURE

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A Gift and a Curse

Yesterday for the first time I got to meet the month-old firstborn daughter of friends. She mostly slept through the introduction, which was probably a good thing since the parents, being new to all this, could use the rest.

Although she's happy and healthy and perfect with her tiny fingers, toes, eyes and ears, I couldn't help but notice how fragile this tiny new life is. Like any newborn, she's totally dependent on her parents for everything, including life itself. And she's blessed to have parents who are totally devoted to her. I'm sure she has a bright future ahead of her—brighter than she or most people could possibly imagine!

After seeing her for the first time, I couldn't help but contrast that with the news I'd heard the previous day—that a New York judge

What does it say about a society when, on the grounds of protecting citizens' health, a city bans the sale of large sweetened drinks, but it allows, and even pays for, abortion-inducing drugs for its schoolchildren?

had tossed out any restriction on the age a person has to be to purchase, without a prescription, a "morning-after pill" to terminate a pregnancy.

Prior to his ruling a woman had to be at least 17 to legally get the drug. If his ruling stands, a girl as young as 12 or 13—or her male partner—can buy a pill that will cause her body to spontaneously abort her "problem," ending that unborn life.

This follows on the heels of a 2012 decision by the New York Department of Education to make morning-after pills available to schoolgirls as young as 14 without parental consent.

Ironically, if that same 14-year-old were to go her school nurse to get an aspirin for a headache, the nurse would have to get parental permission to do so. But courtesy of this education department, children can be given abortion-inducing drugs without their parents ever knowing.

What a horrifying message to send to girls who are little more than children themselves—that destroying an unborn human life is of such little consequence, or *none at all*.

What does it say about a society when, on the grounds of protecting citizens' health, a city bans the sale of sweetened drinks larger than 16 ounces (a third larger than the most common size), but it allows, and even pays for, abortion-inducing drugs for its schoolchildren?

In what kind of twisted universe does that make sense?

This is the kind of blind and perverse reasoning we see when a people and their leaders increasingly turn their backs on God. As our Creator, He gave us an instruction manual in the form of His Word, the Bible. But rejecting its revelation for how we should live and what makes for a peaceful, purposeful, well-ordered society, we've increasingly decided to create our own rules and ignore the lessons of history—bringing curses on ourselves in the process.

But *you don't have to go that way*. You can learn from God's Word the awesome purpose of human life, and why abortion is so wrong in His sight. You can know why you are here and why you were born, as described in the cover article of this issue. And you can learn why my friends' tiny newborn daughter, their precious gift from God, has such a bright and wonderful future ahead of her!

—Scott Ashley, Managing editor



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The Mystery of Human Existence:

Why Are You Here?

What is the meaning of life? Why were you born? What is your ultimate destiny? There is a real answer to these questions. The Creator God made you for an awesome purpose—a purpose He has revealed in the Bible. *by Tom Robinson*

Have you ever studied your own hand—how it moves and operates? From our modern viewpoint we might see it as an utter marvel of robotic technology. Yet its origins lie far back in the ancient past. Of course, every part of the human body and how it operates evokes wonder.

Perhaps you've looked *beyond* yourself while wandering along mountain paths, taking in breathtaking scenery of snow-covered peaks looming above grassy hillsides and valleys, with eagles soaring overhead. Or have you stood on the seashore, hearing the pounding surf and

feeling the ocean spray while feeling so small before the ceaseless waves and endless wide waters?

No doubt you've lifted your gaze to the horizon at sunset, when the sky becomes a beautiful canvas streaked with red and purple. Or what about a clear, moonless night away from the city—the sky strewn with countless blazing stars piercing the blackness?

Why is it all there? Why are you here? Why are *any* of us here? Deep down, even if we try to deny it, we know that all these wonders did not arise by themselves through random processes. They are the

product of design by a master artist—the Artist, the Maker of all things.

But to what end? The amazing truth is that our Creator lays out the underlying purpose for our existence in His revealed Word to mankind—the Holy Bible. It involves the awesome destiny He has planned for us as part of the relationship He desires to have with you and me.

Man's place in the universe

Three thousand years ago, Israel's King David reflected on the apparent insignificance of human beings compared with the grandeur of the heavens. He recorded his prayerful thoughts to God on the matter in Psalm 8: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" (verses 3-4, English Standard Version).



Exploring God's Word

However, David recognized that God does care about human beings, having delegated to mankind a certain authority over part of the created realm. As the psalm continues: “Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him *dominion* over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all

the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

The “Us” and “Our” here denote a plurality in God. As explained in John 1:1-3, there were two entities who together were God—God and the Word, who was also God. These two were later revealed as God the Father and Jesus Christ. We will return to this matter of plurality in the one God, as

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”

sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas” (verses 5-8, ESV, emphasis added throughout).

David was reflecting on the dominion God gave man at creation, using some of the same language as Genesis 1:26. Here God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all

it’s central to understanding man’s purpose. Let us first, however, note David’s focus on the heavens in mentioning the dominion God has given to man.

All things not yet put under man’s dominion

David’s words in Psalm 8 are quoted in Hebrews 2:6-7: “But one testified in a certain place, saying: ‘What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have

crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’”

But the next verse in Hebrews further explains: “For in that He put *all* in subjection under him, He left *nothing* that is *not* put under him. But now we do *not yet* see all things put under him” (verse 8).

At first glance, it might seem from what David had written that only earthly creatures were subject to man. Yet the passage in Hebrews stresses that David mentioned “*all things*” having been committed to mankind’s rule—yes *everything*, the whole universe. However, it also points out that the whole universe has *not yet* been placed under man. But the incredible implication of this statement is that it *will* be.

David and the writer of Hebrews, likely the apostle Paul, surely knew of the promise God had made through Moses that “the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven . . . the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage” (Deuteronomy 4:19).

So man is destined to share rule with God over the entire created universe! But that’s only part of a bigger picture. The statement that man has been made “a little lower” than the heavenly beings is sometimes translated “for a little while lower” (see “Made Lower—but Only for a While”).

You are gods?

Let’s get to the heart of this matter. The Jews of Jesus’ day accused Him of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God: “Because You, being a Man, make Yourself God” (John 10:33).

Notice His intriguing response: “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law [in Psalm 82:6], “I said, ‘You are gods’”? If He [God] called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God”?’” (John 10:34-36).

In other words, said Christ, “if Scripture outright called human beings *gods*, why are you upset when I merely state that I am God’s *Son*?”

Yet are human beings actually gods? What did He mean?

“Made Lower—but Only for a While”

Note David’s statement in Psalm 8:5 that man has been made “a little lower than the angels” or “heavenly beings,” as the English Standard Version translates it. As mortal, material creatures, it would seem that we are in fact far below the power and glory of spirit beings in the heavenly realm. So instead of “a little lower,” perhaps a better rendering is the translation of the quoting of David in Hebrews 2:7 in the ESV: “You made him *for a little while* lower than the angels.”

This makes even more sense when we realize that in Hebrews 2 Jesus Christ is being shown as the representative human being inheriting what God has promised. Man as a whole has not yet been exalted to such a high position, “but we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor” (verse 9, ESV). Just as Jesus is no longer lower than the angels, being resurrected into divine glory, so will other human beings destined to follow Him no longer be lower than the angels when they are resurrected in the future.

In fact, in the Hebrew of Psalm 8, the word translated “angels” or “heavenly beings” is *elohim*—a word typically translated as “God.” The book of Hebrews uses the Greek word for angels instead—likely in following the common Greek translation of the Old Testament in existence at the time and also in making the case for Christ’s superiority to the angels. The wording in Hebrews is not wrong, but is essentially a paraphrase that likely does not encompass all that was implied by David in Psalm 8. What David seems to have been saying is that man was made for a little while lower than *God*. This means that man would not *always* be lower than God—just as Jesus is not now lower than God, having returned to divine glory with the Father.

This is truly staggering if we grasp what this entails!



In Psalm 82:6, from which Jesus quoted, God says to human beings, “I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High.’” The Hebrew word translated “gods” is *elohim*. It literally means “gods” or “mighty ones”—although it is often rendered as “God” (that is, the true God) in the Bible. That’s because, although plural in form, the word *elohim* is often singular in usage.

Some have argued that the word in this context should be translated “judges” (“mighty ones” being seen by some here as simply powerful human beings). But the original New Testament manuscripts translate Christ’s quotation in John 10 using the Greek word *theoi*—“gods.”

Indeed, it is obvious that Jesus must have meant “gods.” If He had meant only “judges,” His logic would not follow. Notice: “If Scripture called them judges, why are you upset that I claim to be the Son of God?” That makes no sense. Only when the word is rendered “gods”—and understood to mean that—does Christ’s logic follow.

But, again, can human beings legitimately be referred to as gods, as Jesus said? How are we to understand this?

Scripture reveals a divine family

The key here is the word *children* in Psalm 82. We must understand that God is a family—a divine family of more than one person. There is one God (the God family) comprising more than one God Being. (This is thoroughly explained in our free booklets *Who Is God?* and *Is God a Trinity?*)

The God family from the beginning comprised two divine Beings, as mentioned earlier—God the Father and God the Word who became flesh as the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And, after His human life and death, Jesus was resurrected to divine spirit existence as the “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18) and “firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). Thus Jesus was spiritually born in the resurrection as the first of many “brethren” or children to follow later.

Indeed, from the beginning God intended to add many children to His family. Let’s look again at Genesis 1:26. It was after creating plants and animals to reproduce each “according to its kind” that God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”—showing that man was created according to the “God kind.”

To help us understand the parallel with God creating man in His image and likeness, Genesis 5:3 says that the first man Adam later “begot a son in his own like-

ness, after his image, and named him Seth.” So God was essentially reproducing Himself through humanity.

The apostle Paul told the men of Athens, “. . . As also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (Acts 17:28).

Psalm 82 is much easier to understand in this light. In verse 6 the word *gods* is equated with “children of the Most High.” That makes perfect sense. When any entity bears offspring, its offspring are the same

kind of entity. The offspring of cats are cats. The offspring of dogs are dogs. The offspring of human beings are human beings. The offspring of God are, in Christ’s own word, “gods.”

A restricted sense for now

But we must be careful here. Human beings are not *literally* gods—not yet, at any rate. Indeed, people initially are not literally even God’s children, except in the sense that He created humanity and did so

Deification As Children of God

The wonderful truth laid out in this article will surely come as quite a shock to those who have heard only the traditional view of mainstream Christianity regarding the ultimate reward of the righteous. Yet those who might be quick to assail this teaching will perhaps be even more surprised to learn that many early “church fathers” of mainstream tradition—not so far removed from early apostolic teaching—*did understand* this incredible truth, at least in part.

Notice the remarkable explanation of the early Catholic theologian Tertullian, writing around A.D. 200: “It would be impossible that another God could be admitted, when it is permitted to no other being to possess anything of God. Well, then, you say, at that rate we ourselves possess nothing of God. But indeed we do, and will continue to do so. Only it is from Him that we receive it, and not from ourselves. For we will be even gods, if we deserve to be among those of whom He declared, ‘I have said, ‘You are gods,’” and ‘God stands in the congregation of the gods.’ But this comes

of His own grace, not from any property in us. For it is He alone who can make gods” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, p. 480, quoted in “Deification of Man,” David Bercot, editor, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, 1998, p. 200).

(Many other examples of this early teaching, known as deification or divinization, can be found in our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*)

C.S. Lewis, perhaps the most popular Christian writer of the last century, stated this truth clearly in his well-known book *Mere Christianity*. Notice: “The command *Be ye perfect* [Matthew 5:48] is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures

that can obey that command. *He said (in the Bible) that we were ‘gods’ and He is going to make good His words.*

“If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. *He meant what He said*” (1996, p. 176).

Of course, this matter requires some important clarification. There is only one God. The term *gods* is really meant to distinguish multiple God Beings constituting the one God—the one God meaning

There are at present two fully divine members of the God family—God the Father and God the Son. And, as incredible as it sounds, there will be more to come.

the one God family. As mentioned before, there are at present two fully divine members of the God family—two distinct Beings—God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. And, as incredible as it sounds, there will be more to come.

In fact, there are many more whom Scripture counts as already being members of the God family (Ephesians 3:14-15; 1 John 3:2). Now having a small *measure* of the divine through the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, they are in the *process* of deification—though not yet truly divine. But one day, if they remain faithful, they *will* be. And ultimately all of mankind—that is, those who are willing—will follow in the same course.

in His image and likeness.

God is eternal spirit. Human beings are mortal flesh, albeit with a spiritual component—the human spirit that gives us understanding (Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11). This is an important distinction and helps us see what God was actually saying.

The human beings God addressed in Psalm 82 stood in the place of God in judgment as *elohim* (verse 1). God, however, challenges them for their wrong judgments and lack of understanding (verses 2-5). Yet in verse 6, the verse Christ quoted, God confirms that they are indeed *elohim*. Verse 7: “But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.” Thus, being physical and subject to death, they were *elohim* in only a very restricted sense—the sense of being created in God’s image and likeness as well as having the ultimate *potential*

Holy Spirit is the agency of spiritual conception. (To see that the Holy Spirit is not a third person of the Godhead, as many contend, but is the projected power, mind and life of God, send for or download our free booklet *Is God a Trinity?*)

The Spirit-begotten Christian is a child of God, an actual member of *elohim*, the family of God—but not yet in an ultimate sense. There is still a *development* process we must go through in this life—a period of building godly character, becoming more and more like God in the way we think and behave. And at the end of this life, in the resurrection at Christ’s return, true Christians will be changed into divine spirit beings like the Father and Christ.

The apostle John wrote, “Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we

and Christ now are—though, again, forever subject to Their loving authority.

Indeed, even though saved human beings truly will be elevated to existence at the divine level as real children of God and full members of the God family, they will never challenge, individually or collectively, the preeminence of the Father and Christ as leaders of the family. Truly, all will be subject to Jesus, except the Father, and Christ will Himself be subject to the Father (see 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). The Father and Christ will remain at the top of the family forever, reigning supreme even with the addition of billions of divine children.

This, then, is *why you and I were born!* It is the ultimate potential destiny of all mankind. It is the awe-inspiring purpose for which we were created!

The Bible begins and ends with reference to this amazing purpose. We’ve already seen Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion . . .’” This verse shows God reproducing Himself through mankind and sharing rule over creation.

Now let us turn to the back of the book. God says in Revelation 21:7: “He who overcomes *shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.*” Again, we see that our destiny includes rule over all things and divine sonship! Incredibly, therefore, as these verses at both ends of Scripture and many others in between show, God wants to have a close family relationship with us in which He will ultimately share with us both *all that He has* and *what He is!*

This is the true meaning of life—wonderful beyond all imagination. Cherish it, live for God with all your heart, and receive the awesome destiny for which you exist! **GN**

The Spirit-begotten Christian is a child of God. And at Christ’s return, true Christians will be changed into divine spirit beings like the Father and Christ.

of becoming the same kind of beings the Father and Christ now are.

In fact, God often “calletH those things which be not as though they were” (Romans 4:17, King James Version)—looking on His purpose as already accomplished. Amazingly, God’s purpose is to *exalt human beings* from this fleshly existence to the *same level of divine spirit existence* that He has, as we will see.

Transformation leading to divine glory

This involves a process of *spiritual* reproduction in which God fathers us as His children. It starts with His Spirit joining with our human spirit: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16, KJV). Through this miraculous union, we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

Indeed, Christians are described in 1 Peter 1:23 as “having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed [Greek *sperma*—that is, not of a male sperm cell fertilizing a female egg to produce only mortal, perishable life], but of incorruptible [seed], through the word of God, which liveth and abideth” (American Standard Version).

This incorruptible, imperishable life to which they are led by Scripture comes by God implanting His Spirit within them, for “the Spirit alone gives eternal life” (John 6:63, New Living Translation). Indeed, the

know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). In fact, we are told in numerous passages of Scripture that we will receive the divine glory of the Father and Christ (Romans 5:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Peter 5:10).

Moreover, as coinheritors with Christ, we will receive dominion over all things, including the entire vast universe—dominion just as Christ has (Romans 8:17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:5-9; Revelation 21:7). To truly exercise dominion over all things requires the omnipotent power of God!

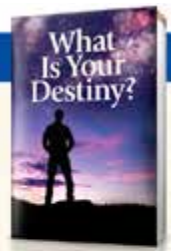
Indeed, at that time, like Jesus, we will at last be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19; compare Colossians 1:19; 2:9). How can someone be filled with all the fullness of God and be anything *less* than what God is? Therefore, at our ultimate change, we too *will be divine*—though the Father and Christ will forever be greater than us. (See “Deification as Children of God” on page 6.)

We’re born to be God’s literal children!

“I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:18). And *He means it*. The Father intends to bring us forth as *His full children*, to transform us into the very kind of beings that He

Learn More

Although Scripture is quite clear about why we exist and our ultimate destiny, few really understand it—and even fewer actually believe it. Yet that awesome truth should guide everything we think and do! To learn more about the incredible future God has in store for you, download or request your free copy of *What Is Your Destiny?* today!



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THE ABORTION DEBATE: What Does God Say?

Every year a staggering 44 million abortions are carried out around the world. Each day about 120,000 lives—enough to populate a medium-sized city—are terminated by abortion, a practice legal in most countries. But how does God view the taking of the lives of millions of the unborn—or even one, for that matter? **by Darris McNeely**

Forty years after being declared legal in the United States, abortion remains a polarizing topic in society and in politics. Judges nominated for the country's Supreme Court are analyzed for their views on the issue. It becomes a public feeding frenzy that excites emotions and splits society into opposing groups. Emotions become raw.

The continuing abortion debate reveals deep fears and division. It is tragic that such a matter as the life of a child in its mother's

womb, something that should bring people together, continues to divide and tear the moral fabric of a people.

In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled in the landmark case *Roe v. Wade* that a woman's legal right to privacy extended to her decision to have an abortion. This effectively legalized abortion. The result has been more than 50 million abortions in the United States over the last 40 years—a number equivalent to the entire populations of the states of Alaska, Arkansas, Con-

necticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming combined.

Each year more than a million babies are aborted in the United States—a number greater than the population of any American city other than the nine largest and roughly equal to all the military deaths in all the wars in the nation's 237-year history.

Worldwide, the annual number is many, many times that—an appalling 44 million. China alone admits to more than 13 million per year. And since 1980, an estimated 1.2 to 1.3 billion abortions have been carried out around the globe—a number equaling more than one sixth of the current world population. This is far greater than all those

killed in all wars in recent centuries.

Our minds reel at such figures. But what should we think about this issue? Where do you stand on the issue of abortion? Do you support it as a woman's right over her own body? Do you support it only in the case of rape, incest or where a woman's life may be endangered? Or do you, as many do, oppose it in any form? Who has the right to judge this matter?

Much more than just politics

Abortion is an emotional issue. It's also a legal issue where states make it so. It's also a moral issue. But most of all it's a *spiritual* issue. Regrettably, most don't recognize this. God is the Creator of life. What God says is the final word. His Word issued from His throne in heaven is the ultimate "supreme court"—a judgment no man or court of men could ever overrule.

The debate about abortion, the taking of a life from the womb of a mother, must be understood within a framework that starts with what the Creator of life says about His creation. God's Word, the Bible, is our foundation—our starting point for understanding.

The taking of life is not a mere political

issue. If you think it is, you're wrong. It's a moral and ethical matter because *life belongs to God*. He created life, and He sustains all life on this planet. So His Word alone is where we begin to truly understand this issue.

Let's go to the Bible, to its beginning with the record of creation and then beyond, to understand what it says about life. Let's notice what is recorded there for us:

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Here we are told that it is God who created human life. His breath animated Adam, the first man. God as Creator of life holds the judgment about life.

In Exodus we find the Ten Commandments. The sixth declares, "*You shall not murder*" (Exodus 20:13, emphasis added throughout). The Sixth Commandment speaks strongly to the sanctity of created life. Only God who gave life has the authority to take life or order others to take it.

What about the unborn?

Does this verse apply to the unborn? You'll see that it does if you consider the unborn child to be human, to have life.

God takes great care in these founding documents for mankind. These writings were forged in a different world than ours, and they map out His view of human life. Scripture says that human beings are created in His image. Life began when He breathed it into the first man. Human life is of God. Therefore, it is sacred.

God took great care to show that human life must be protected, even in the womb. Notice this example, again in Exodus: "If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely . . . he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine" (Exodus 21:22).

The description here is of a pregnant woman "*with child*"—a human life, not a mass or blob of tissue!

Verse 23 continues, "But if any harm follows, then *you shall give life for life*." In other words, if the injury to the woman results in the death of the unborn, considered here a life, then it is called *murder*—with the penalty being a life for a life.

The Bible considers the unborn in the mother's womb to be a human life—nothing less. It's considered murder to take an action that destroys that unborn life!

Child Sacrifice: We're Not So Different Today

Of all ancient practices of pagan religion, the most hideous were those that involved child sacrifice. In the lands of the Middle East and areas around the Mediterranean Sea, this involved the ritual murder of children, often in fire and presided over by a priesthood with the approval of the worshippers.

A child could be placed on an open fire or into an open burning chasm of a metal idol representing gods such as Baal or Molech. Done to appease a god and to gain favor for an abundant harvest, victory in battle or the defeat of one's enemies, these cruel acts litter the ancient world.

One well-known cemetery, full of the bones of thousands of infant sacrifices, has been found at the site of ancient Carthage in North Africa. Burials of infant bones and skulls with signs of violent death have been unearthed. Sadly, even the Bible tells of a time in the biblical kingdom of Judah when child sacrifice was carried out in Jerusalem under certain kings.

Any modern nation that chooses to commit child sacrifice in the name of "pro-choice," "family planning" or "abortion rights" should learn a lesson from these examples. The lesson is this: Any culture or people that has participated in child sacrifice has declined and disappeared from history. Ancient Carthage was destroyed by Rome. The Romans sowed salt into its land so it would never rise again. Idolatry eventually won out in Judah, and it was invaded and destroyed by Babylon—its temple razed and the people deported.

We're not so different today. While ancient people would murder their children to please a false god, modern people do the same in honor of a different kind of god—the god of *self*. This is a hard saying, but it is the truth. The unborn are slaughtered in the millions when they interfere with the pursuit of selfish pleasure and the gods of convenience.





Another key reference in Scripture about life in the womb is found in the story of Jeremiah, one of the major prophets of the Bible. In Jeremiah 1:5 God tells him, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5).

There are enough references in the Bible to the life of an infant in the womb to give understanding that God considers the unborn child to be a human life. Consider also John the Baptist leaping for joy in his mother Elizabeth's womb when her cousin Mary came near carrying Jesus in *her* womb (Luke 1:39-45).

The argument that an unborn child is not human or not really life is one of the most insidious arguments used by abortion proponents. To be blunt, it's an argument meant to *remove any guilt that the decision to abort is the taking of innocent human life.*

God, the Creator of all life, sees all aspects of life within His creation. He considers the life of a child in the womb to be something known by Him even at that stage of development. If God knows the child in the womb, it's a life that should be protected and cherished.

The amazing purpose for human life

How important is a human life? How vital is life—*every* human life—to God the Creator?

The answer is that human life is *the center focus of God's plan and purpose for the universe.* Notice this all-important passage King David wrote in the Psalms:

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands; you have put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:3-6, English Standard Version).

In Hebrews 2 this passage is quoted and developed with a fuller revelation and explanation of man's destiny:

"For in that He [God] put all in subjection under him [mankind], He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:8-9).

The next verse goes on to explain that part of Jesus Christ's mission and purpose was to *bring "many sons to glory."* But what does that mean?

God's purpose for human beings is to expand His divine family with "sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:18) created through a process ending in a change from physical flesh to glorified spirit through a resurrection. *This* is the divine reason for life, and the human act of reproduction is a model of that great process that will lead to the birth of children into God's immortal spirit family.

When human beings decide for themselves to intervene in and terminate the process of human life, they wrongly take for themselves the decision to end the life of one created to ultimately become part of the family of God! (To learn more, read "The Mystery of Human Existence: Why Are You Here?" beginning on page 4.)

A culture of self-deification and death

Abortion is the deliberate taking of inno-

How important is a human life? How important is *every* human life to God? The answer is that human life is *the center focus of God's plan and purpose for the universe.*

cent human life. It is murder. The arguments that seek to split hairs about when life begins and whether a child in the womb of a woman is "viable life" are the height of human pride. The arguments over "rights" and "freedom" of a woman's power over her own body, and whether any human government can define life, is a modern tower of Babel—an insult to God and His divine Word. It is a modern form of idolatry where *the self*—and the supposed *rights* of self—are worshipped and esteemed higher than God.

In abortion we have created a culture of self-deification. We have made ourselves "like God" (Genesis 3:5). We say we will determine what is good and evil, right and wrong. We say that human life is nothing more than meaningless tissue that can be disposed of at will and at any time during the nine months of pregnancy. We say that a man and a woman can decide the power of life or death on a growing child created in the image of God with the potential of becoming God's own son or daughter.

If you know someone who is considering abortion, have them read this article or get reputable counseling. The life of unborn children should be regarded as precious and protected—not something to be callously

extinguished through this terrible act.

It must begin *with* you and *in* you. You can decide to change. You can decide to turn from this culture and evil and death and choose to follow life. You can turn to the God of life. The Creator of all life offers you the chance to choose to love Him and obey His teachings.

By making this conscious choice you can increase the quality of your life. By grabbing hold of God, His teachings and His laws you can begin a journey back from this abyss created by a lawless world. You can turn from the self-centered culture that dares to redefine life on its own terms.

What we are asking you to do right now is examine your values and turn to God for help. Read what the Bible tells you about your destiny. Look into God's plan for your life and begin today to live with His purpose guiding your steps.

Have you chosen in the past to end a pregnancy? God offers forgiveness and hope. His grace is available when there is

repentance and change of heart. You can move on from that decision and build a life based on God's knowledge.

God, the Creator of life, has set before us the most incredible promise of divine life within His family. The life He sustains on this planet today is the seed for His eternal spiritual family. All human life is precious to God, even the life of unborn children. We cannot and must not compromise on this point!

God laid out the teachings that protect life. He tells us to *choose life*. When we do, we honor life's Creator. **GN**

Learn More

To understand why abortion is so wrong, we need to understand why God's purpose for human life is so right! Few understand what that purpose is, but it's spelled out in the pages of your Bible. Request or download your free copy of *What Is Your Destiny?* to learn the great purpose for human beings and what our Creator has in store for you!



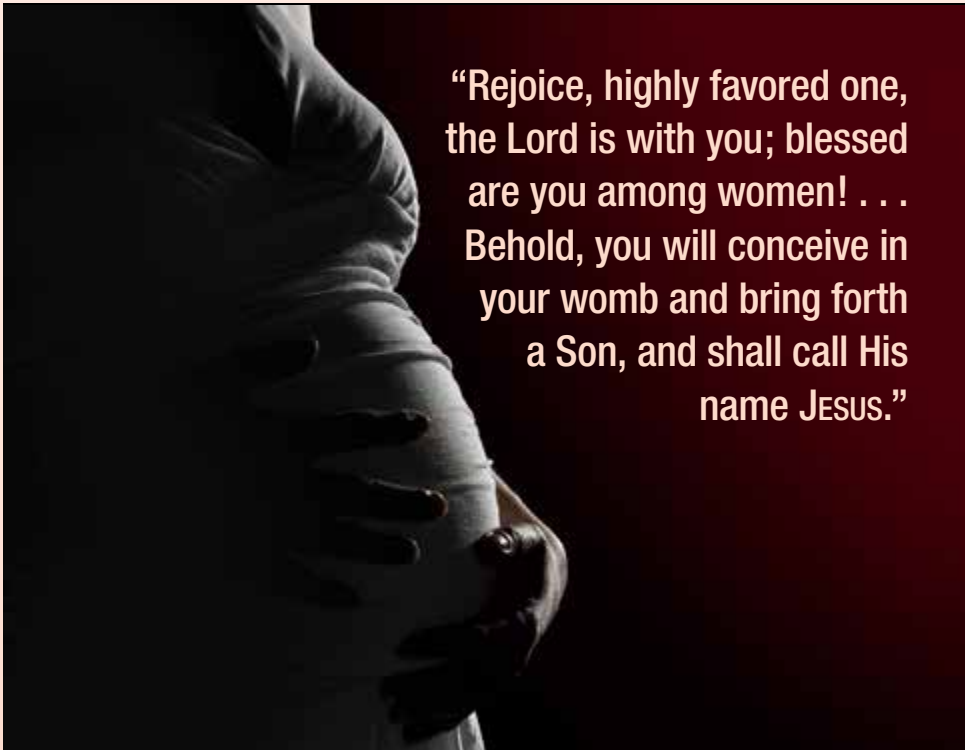
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A Lesson About Life From Mary

We can learn a significant lesson about human life (and its implications for abortion) by examining the most unique pregnancy in all of history—the birth of Christ to a young woman named Mary. Some of the main elements we see in today’s debate about abortion are found here.

Let’s look at it in the New Testament book of Luke, where Christ’s birth is announced: “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!’ . . .



**“Rejoice, highly favored one,
the Lord is with you; blessed
are you among women! . . .
Behold, you will conceive in
your womb and bring forth
a Son, and shall call His
name JESUS.”**

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS’ . . . Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’” (Luke 1:26-34).

This pregnancy was unplanned by Mary. She was a young woman with no sexual experience. She was “betrothed,” similar to our modern form of engagement, to a man named Joseph. While the two had committed to each other, the formal wedding had not taken place. In that day and culture such a pregnancy out of wedlock held lifelong consequences. Mary was on the verge of becoming a single, unwed mother consigned to a life of poverty and shame, or possibly being stoned to death. First-century Israelite society was less forgiving than our modern cultures. The temptation to terminate the pregnancy could have been strong.

Joseph, her husband, had some initial doubts and embarrassment. Mat-

thew’s account tells us He “was minded to put her away secretly”—to break their betrothal agreement and cancel their upcoming marriage—because he did not want to bring embarrassment on the family.

But after the appearance of an angel to him in a dream as he slept, Joseph accepted that Mary’s pregnancy was of God in fulfillment of a divine plan (Matthew 1:18-25). He may not have understood every detail, but he accepted his role. By accepting this, his life was forever changed. He accepted responsibility for the life of a son who was not biologically his. Joseph’s act was one of the most noble that a man, a true man, can do. He accepted the role of fatherhood.

Mary’s decision to keep the child growing in her womb also says something to

a modern mind. In Luke’s account, after Mary learns her life has been turned upside down by this unexpected event, she accepts her role and says to the angel, “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Notice these words: “Let it be”—simply let it be.

What if today, so many who become pregnant, for whatever reason, would simply say, “Let it be”—out of respect for God, life’s Creator?

Mary and Joseph held a high regard for God and for life. Here in this example we see the foundational truth to frame a discussion about abortion and life at any time and in any place. It is the *sanctity* of life.

And here we must also point out the life Mary held in her womb was not just *any* life. It was the life of the one called “the Son of the Highest” (verse 32). He was the one called “the Word” who had been “with God, and . . . was God” (John 1:1). He was the One who would live a perfect life and die for the sins of the world. He was the Christ, the Messiah.

Here is what is vital for you to understand. This key event—the conception, birth, life and death of Jesus Christ—had to occur in history

just as it had been prophesied long before in the Scriptures. Without this event occurring, there would be no hope of salvation and eternal life for any man, woman or child from any race and time. This pregnancy had to go full term. This life, forming in the womb of Mary, was the answer to man’s greatest yearning—eternal life. Without it there was, and is, no hope!

Consider also: When did Christ’s human life begin? When did the Word become flesh—at His birth or nine months earlier at His conception in Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit? (John 1:14; Matthew 1:20.) Clearly it was at conception.

Do we understand then this vital lesson from the life of Mary? What if she had decided to abort her child? What if this birth had not happened? It may sound academic and merely an argument for the sake of argument, but it raises an uncomfortable issue for the modern mind.



Current Events & Trends

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

Global scope of crises leading toward prophesied “Beast”

When news breaks today of a crisis condition in some part of the world, it often turns out that a number of nations are affected.

More than 80 years ago Winston Churchill wrote a four-volume history of World War I titled *The World Crisis*. Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the shooting of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in the Balkan city of Sarajevo, igniting the fires of the First World War in 1914. Even more so today than at that time, points on the globe previously thought insignificant can suddenly be vaulted into newspaper headlines by an emergent crisis with continental and even global implications.

London's *Financial Times* noted that “the latest crisis [in Cyprus] draws in Britain, Greece, Israel, the US and Turkey, not to mention Germany as the Eurozone's indispensable decision maker. The tremors hitting Cyprus could shake the world” (March 23-24, 2013). A *Newsweek* drophead pointed out, “The financial crisis in Cyprus has global ramifications” (Steve Hanke, “Little Island, Big Problem,” March 22).

We live in a shrinking world of globalism made ever smaller by incredible technological breakthroughs like the Internet with its countless websites and e-mails. A global economy propelled by a one-world government is not impossible, even during our chaotic, confused and divided age of human misrule. Passages in the biblical book of Revelation indicate that is precisely where man's governments will finally wind up.

A supranational power bloc centered in Central

Europe will eventually emerge, according to Bible prophecy. Both this power and its totalitarian leader are referred to in the Bible as “the beast.” Scripture tells us, “*And all the world marveled and followed the beast.*” When this happens, people will wonder: “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (Revelation 13:3-4, emphasis added throughout).

But just how dictatorial and globally influential will this charismatic dictator of a coming world superpower become? Scripture shows that his power and influence will astonish the whole world. A union of 10 national or regional leaders will temporarily be fully behind this prophesied beast power. Although his murderous reign will be relatively short (see Revelation 17:12), while it lasts true Christians will find themselves in mortal physical danger.

The prophecy further states of the coming ruler: “*And authority was given him [by Satan the devil] over every tribe, tongue, and nation*” (Revelation 13:7; see also verse 4). Clearly an economic stranglehold will be a vital part of his virtual mesmerization of whole populations. “He causes all . . . to receive a mark . . . that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (verses 16-17). (To understand what this passage symbolizes, request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*.)

Thankfully, these horrendous troubles will all end with the second coming of Jesus Christ. At that time, it will be announced, “The kingdom of the world has

become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15, English Standard Version).

The *Financial Times* article mentioned earlier speaks of “new anxieties about the geopolitical impact of the [largely economic] instability in Cyprus. This island is not only physically divided between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, but is located in a combustible region where the military, diplomatic, energy and financial interests of at least a dozen powers collide.” Large foreign bank deposits are at the center of the island nation's economic difficulties. (Sources: *Financial Times*, *Newsweek*.)

Cyprus crisis' impact on Europe

How could a small island nation with a population accounting for barely a fifth of one percent of the eurozone nations possibly be at the vortex of a pan-European crisis that, according to Ambrose Evans-Pritchard in *The Daily Telegraph*, even calls the long-term viability of the euro into question?

This little Mediterranean isle has mostly earned its keep by being an outsized banking center for massive foreign deposits from other countries, Russia in particular. But as in other southern European states, financial reverses during the last few years have been severe. The current crisis surfaced when the country was finally forced to ask for a massive bailout from the European Union and the EU responded with some unusually harsh terms—leading Cypriot leaders to consider raiding private bank deposits.

The Cypriot population responded with massive street protests, labeling the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Frankfurt-based European Central Bank a *troika* or threesome—these three institutions sharing the irksome task of negotiating eurozone bailouts.

Fears quickly emerged that personal bank accounts could easily be raided across southern Europe, particularly in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and even the northern Irish Republic. Noted British author Max Hastings, writing in the *Daily Mail* March 26, labeled the bank raid called for in Cyprus “one of the nastiest and most immoral political acts of modern times” (these words from his article also forming its title).

He added, “It has struck fear into the hearts of hundreds of millions of European citizens because it establishes a dire precedent.” Good questions would be: What would a truly powerful United States of Europe do? What will the prophesied Beast power do? (Source: *Daily Mail*.)

Margaret Thatcher: Giant in an era of decline

One of the great leaders of modern times died on April 8, 2013. Noted author Max Hastings summed up the legacy of Margaret Thatcher: “She



Margaret Thatcher

was Britain's greatest peacetime prime minister of the modern era . . . It was her achievement to halt a national economic and industrial decline that had seemed irreversible.”

When Thatcher became prime minister in

1979, Britain was sinking in socialism. She strove for privatization and free exchange and soon found an ideological soul mate in U.S. President Ronald Reagan. Together they championed liberty and strengthened the special relationship between their two countries.

Somehow this person of simple truths and humble roots, raised by her parents to believe in the traditional virtues of thrift, family values and hard work, served as Britain's prime minister for 11 consecutive years. She loved her country with patriotic fervor and warned the British people about the dangers of

becoming entangled in a federal Europe.

Hastings remarked about “her impassioned hostility to the march of the European Union toward what she saw, with remarkable prescience, as a federal state rather than its proper role as a trading bloc.” Baroness Thatcher actually stated, “In my lifetime Europe has been the source of our problems, not the source of our solutions.” Hastings concluded, “Her fears about the dire consequences of an attempted integration appear highly vindicated by events.”

Imbued with far-seeing vision, she was not afraid to speak out, however unpopular her views might have been. But how did she develop these traits? Lord Griffiths, former head of Mrs. Thatcher's Downing Street Policy Unit, stated that “it quickly became clear in private meetings that her strong personal faith was the basis for her world view and her approach to public policy.” For instance, she believed that “we are all created in the image of God” (*The Times*, “The Iron Lady,” special supplement, April 9).

Historian Paul Johnson further noted that Margaret Thatcher believed in the Ten Commandments and especially telling the truth—qualities all too rare in political leaders. (Sources: *Daily Mail*, *Financial Times*, *The Times* [London].)

The stark reemergence of German power

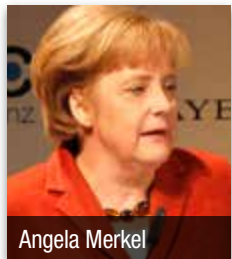
In several past issues we have noted a number of times in this feature how Germany has gained more power among the European nations over the past several decades. This began after World War II with America's Marshall Plan (1948-1952) helping to set West Germany back on its feet. Startling economic successes followed in its wake. The next big step was the reunification of East and West Germany following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

After a number of troubling years of absorption, Berlin has now emerged as the economic engine that propels the European Union. So far Germany remains the only country that has largely escaped the effects of recession.

Already uncomfortable with the growth of German power (acutely remembering Berlin's war-making role in the first half of the 20th century), the media in much of Europe and Britain has reacted negatively to Chancellor Angela Merkel's role in the Cypriot crisis. She wants to save the euro in Cyprus and stabilize this currency for the European Union.

Gideon Rachman of the *Financial Times* gave this assessment:

"Yet growing German power—and growing resentment of that power—are now the main themes of European politics. This is a historic irony, given that the main purpose of the whole European project [the EU], from the 1950s onwards, has been to end forever the idea that Germany is simply too powerful to coexist comfortably with its neighbours. The stock phrase—in Berlin, as much as in Paris or Brussels—was about the need for a 'European Germany, rather than a 'German Europe.'



Angela Merkel

"After the Cyprus crisis, however, it looks increasingly like a German Europe—because the direction of a continent in crisis is being shaped, above all, by the ideas and preferences of politicians and officials in Berlin" ("The Making of a German Europe," March 25, 2013).

The German economy, however, slowed considerably in the last quarter of 2012. If that trend persists, bailing out countries in southern Europe may become increasingly politically perilous for Chancellor Merkel at home. For now, though, she is unquestionably the leading political figure in Europe, successfully weathering several political and economic crises so far. (Source: *Financial Times*.)

China's worrying military ambitions

A major feature article in *The Sunday Times* of London showed that, as its drophead states, "the test of a new missile is heightening concerns over Beijing's arms build-up" ("China's Carrier Killer Unnerves US Navy," March 24, 2013). The article continues, "China has successfully tested a 'carrier killer' missile designed to change the military balance of power in Asia by deterring American aircraft carrier operations up to 1,250 miles from Chinese shores."



Chinese DF-21A missile and transport

Clearly the Chinese military has its aggressive generals. China's *Liberation Army Daily* opts for an end to "romantic pacifism" and urges "full preparation" for war. A headline in *The Wall Street Journal* reads, "For Xi, a 'China Dream' of Global Military Power" (Jeremy Page, March 14). The article that follows presents new Communist Party and military chief Xi Jinping as appearing to embrace the hawkish worldview of the nation's generals.

Are we going to see a new, updated version of World War II's old Axis Powers, with China in the role of principal Asian foe rather than an "Americanized" Japan? In World War II the Japanese army invaded China. Will the reverse occur in the future? Time will tell.

Isn't it troubling that the Republic of China holds so many billions of American dollars in its own treasury? Why is America being challenged on so many fronts today—military, economic and otherwise? What is America doing wrong? The answer, as revealed in the Bible, is clearly revealed in our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. (Sources: *The Sunday Times* [London], *The Wall Street Journal*.)

Fifty years of North Korean threats

Threats of nuclear and conventional strikes on one's territory and its allies can be every bit as important as economies going awry in Europe, if not much more so. A list of recent headlines included: "North Korea Approves Nuclear Strike on US," "North Korea Says It Has Approved the Use of Its 'Cutting Edge' Nuclear Weapons," "North Korea Nuclear Weapons Usher in Perilous New Era of Instability," and "Kim Jong Un Dismantles Years of Diplomacy."

A sidebar to a March 26, 2013, *USA Today* article titled "North Korea Threatens Guam, Hawaii, Rest of U.S." recounted 24 major North Korean provocations from 1965 through 2012. They continue today unabated.

The text of the main *USA Today* article counters: "'The U.S. is fully capable of defending ourselves and our allies against an attack' by North Korea, Pentagon spokesman Lt. Jack Miller said. 'We are firmly committed to defending the Republic of Korea [i.e., South Korea] and Japan'" Hopefully, if tested, this commitment would turn out to be genuine.

In reality, however, America seems to want to rely on China to calm the reckless outbursts of Kim Jong-un, supported by his unruly rogue regime. Have we forgotten that Red China came to the rescue of North Korea after U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur's forces had driven the North back inside their own territory?

This five-star general belonged to an old world, traditional school of thought. He understood, along with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, that the objective of war was victory. MacArthur was willing to use the full power of American military might to achieve total victory in Korea.

America and Britain had the power, but at that time had begun to lose the will to wield that power for decisive victory. God told ancient Israel that He would "break the pride of your power" (Leviticus 26:19), and this prophecy certainly applies to Jacob's descendants today in both America and Britain. (See our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* to learn more.)

Rightly or wrongly, President Harry Truman did not agree and fired Gen. MacArthur. The end result, however, is that the North Korean threat stubbornly remains very much with us today—some 60 years since the Korean War ended by dividing North and South at the 38th parallel on the map. An agreed-on armistice had ended the fighting, but periodic North Korean threats continued.

Of course, while the increased threats of recent days may be mere bluster and bravado, the fact that these are coming from an emerging nuclear power means they must be treated very seriously. (Source: *USA Today*.)

How can you make sense of the news?

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Lines in the Sand: Iraq 10 Years Later

Ten years after the invasion of Iraq, America considers what it's lost as Iraq struggles to redefine itself within the ever-boiling cauldron of the Middle East. **by Darris McNeely**

In the last issue of *The Good News*, my article titled “The Middle East’s Family Feud,” adapted from a *Beyond Today* TV program I wrote, traced today’s problems in the Middle East back to the turmoil among the family and descendants of the biblical patriarch Abraham. In the article I noted: “The present religious and political turmoil in the Middle East is at its heart a family feud between Abraham’s descendants. It’s a dispute prophesied to erupt into a larger conflict much sooner than we might think . . . These are ancient wounds that will not be healed by peace treaties.”

Real peace in the Middle East continues to elude the diplomats and leaders engaged in efforts to solve the intractable problems there. Passing the decade marker since the Iraq invasion by coalition forces in March 2003 brought many articles analyzing what went wrong and the present state of the country. Where do things stand?

Attention now on Syria and Egypt

Iraq continues to face serious problems, but this is presently overshadowed by what is happening in Syria and Egypt.

Syria has been tearing itself apart for the past two years as rebel forces—including

many Islamists—attempt to unseat the regime of Bashar al-Assad. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed in the fighting. Iran and Russia supply arms to the Assad regime. The United States has been involved in supplying aid to the rebels but is in no mood to place troops on the ground as it did 10 years ago in Iraq. And no other Western nation is willing to send troops to assist the insurgent movement either.

Egypt continues to spiral downward politically and economically. Nearly three quarters of the under-30 work force in the country are unemployed. Inflation is raising costs for basic needs such as food, inviting further unrest.

The Muslim Brotherhood may have its man in the presidency, Mohamed Morsi, but he has done little to show he can guide the nation out of its deep problems. Egypt is a ticking time bomb that threatens the wider security of the region. It is the largest Arab state with the largest standing army. What happens in Egypt or, more relevant today, what *doesn’t* happen in Egypt with regard to solving its problems threatens the stability of the whole Arab world.

Boundaries drawn by outsiders

The nations just mentioned and others

such as Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, are currently dealing with the effects of decisions made by outside powers. These decisions are not only recent decisions but some that stretch back nearly a hundred years.

Thinking about America’s decision 10 years ago to invade Iraq took me back to David Fromkin’s excellent history of the region, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (1989). In the concluding pages of this well-documented story of how the lines of the present-day Middle East were created, Fromkin shows that the same mistakes made in the aftermath of World War I are present in today’s politics:

“The Middle East became what it is today both because the European powers undertook to re-shape it and because Britain and France failed to ensure that the dynasties, the states, and the political system that they established would permanently endure.

“During and after the First World War, Britain and her Allies destroyed the old order in the region irrevocably; they smashed Turkish rule of the Arabic-speaking Middle East beyond repair. To take its place, they created countries, nominated rulers, delineated frontiers, and introduced a state system of the sort that exists everywhere else; but they did not quell all significant local opposition to those decisions” (p. 563).

Fromkin’s book covers the postwar meetings, high conferences and treaties between 1914 and 1922 that gave birth to the modern Middle East as a replacement



World News & Prophecy

to the corrupt and failed Ottoman Empire. European leaders thought they had created a solution along the lines of European thought and governance.

They failed, however, to truly consider and understand the religious, cultural and ethnic factors of the people around whom they drew lines that created nation states. The mistake they made was thinking that the ancient tribal and religious feelings could be contained within such a modern concept. They couldn't. Fromkin concludes, "Even today there are powerful local forces within the Middle East that remain unreconciled to these arrangements—and may well overthrow them" (ibid.).

Fromkin wrote these words 24 years ago in 1989, and they describe the headlines of the region today. Iraq, as well as any of the other states, presents people "unreconciled" to the arrangements decided by outside powers.

Ten years ago, in explaining the reasons for invading Iraq, U.S. President George Bush gave a speech in which he stated that his goals were "to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger." He concluded by promising, "We will bring freedom to others, and we will prevail."

In May 2011 President Barack Obama echoed the same thought when he stated his views of the so-called Arab Spring. "There's no straight line to progress, and hardship always accompanies a season of hope," he said.

"But the United States of America was founded on the belief that people should govern themselves. And now we cannot hesitate to stand squarely on the side of those who are reaching for their rights, knowing that their success will bring about a world that is more peaceful, more stable and more just."

Substituting one tyranny for another

Of course, peace and freedom are notable goals. But conceptions of these differ. And the aims of the Arab Spring have not ultimately been what many Westerners hoped.

The same is true in Iraq, where democracy has set the country against the West and delivered it into Iran's sphere of influence. Sadly, since adopting its democratic constitution in 2005—wherein Islam is established as the state religion and sharia is declared a main source of legislation—Iraq has become one of the world's worst

violators of religious liberty.

It would be wonderful if the Arab peoples could experience real freedom denied to them through the decades by a combination of corrupt leaders, flawed theology and failed ideology. But as other articles in the previous *Good News* pointed out, it looks like things are going to get worse before they get better. The invasion of Iraq removed a tyrant, but a different kind of tyranny has taken his place. True and lasting freedom has yet to prevail.

The elusive path to true human freedom will not be found in the treaties and agreements crafted around the tables of today's leaders. Not until the leaders of the region are willing to lead their people back to the teachings and way of life of their father Abraham will they find peace.

A descendant of Abraham, Moses, stood before the tyrant of his day, Egypt's pharaoh, and said, "Let my people go." The path of the Exodus, opened by God through the Red Sea, led Israel to a law and a way that represented true peace and freedom. The Exodus story, told every year at Passover time in the spring, contains the true heart of the issue.

God intervened in history to deliver Abraham's descendants from bondage. While there are deep spiritual lessons in this story, there is also the plain fact that God's deliverance of the people shows Him to be a God who intervenes in history. This fact, that the God of Abraham is not an empty idol or absentee or derelict in commitment, shows us the only way to a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Blood and treasure

Ten years after the invasion of Iraq it is clear who lost. Saddam Hussein, a ruthless dictator who viciously oppressed and pillaged his countrymen, was removed and brought to justice at the end of a rope. In exchange the country received an uncertain leadership yet to find a full footing within the region along with a slide toward Islamic fundamentalism. A generation of leadership has been compromised and lost.

America lost more than 4,000 service men and women in Iraq, with thousands more wounded. Beyond the human toll there is also the loss of credibility within the region and the world. The Iraq war distracted from the war in Afghanistan, diverting attention and keeping it from

permanently disabling the Taliban insurgency. Combined, this has resulted in a major blow to national pride and America's ability to project power in the world.

These wars of the past 11 years have dealt a major blow to American prestige. The period has also seen America dramatically increase its national debt, further weakening its global role.

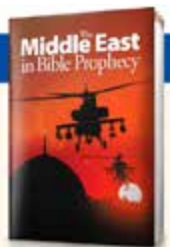
And there is another, near mortal blow that has developed. In 2000 America went through a bitterly divisive presidential election cycle that resulted in the election of George Bush as president. His foreign policy decisions, forced on him by the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on New York and Washington, created further opposition within the American political scene and in other world capitals.

America is seen today as a crippled giant, still alive and a force to be respected, but the gray hairs are showing. With the protracted struggle in and withdrawal from Iraq, America is seen as incapable of projecting power in a manner that can mold or shape a nation or a region. This is what stands evident 10 years after the U.S. intervention.

The lines in the sand that represent the contours of the modern Middle East are changing. New power blocs and alliances will emerge, creating a new set of challenges for the world. Circumstances will grow dire. The God of history has prophesied that world powers will one day converge upon the region in a final conflict—but that then Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will return in power and glory to rule the nations. Not until then will true freedom settle upon the peoples of the Middle East and the rest of the world. **GN**

Learn More

The Middle East is a crucial region of the world. Birthplace of the three major monotheistic religions—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—it is also the source of much of the lifeblood of the world's economy, oil. Why is this area in so much turmoil? Where will it lead? Be sure to read our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy*.



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A New Pope: Looking Ahead

Pope Benedict's sudden and unexpected resignation has been called the Catholic Church's most stunning development in the last half century. Will the choice of a new pope bring significant changes in church culture, manners and even certain aspects of doctrine? More importantly, does Bible prophecy indicate the Roman church's ultimate destiny? *by John Ross Schroeder*

The Catholic Cardinals bypassed Europe and reached all the way across and down to South America for a new pope. The near 120-strong assembly of Cardinals convened in Rome chose a Jesuit from Argentina in the southern hemisphere—76-year-old Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

He chose the name of Francis for his pontifical reign after the famous Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), founder of the Franciscan order of priests and famous for self-imposed poverty, simplicity of life and care for the poor. (The Jesuits, while typically known for intellectualism, like the Franciscans take a vow of poverty in following the founder of their order Ignatius of Loyola. Yet Francis is more well-known in this regard.)

Given that whoever occupies the papal seat wields great influence on the world stage—the Catholic Church having a billion members and many countries having Catholics as large, even majority, percentages of their populations—it's important in our watching of world events that we give attention to this matter.

What is the new pope's focus going forward? And what, ultimately, is the future of the papal institution and the Roman church?

A far-seeing church

Despite being beset by alleged corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency and tarnishing scandals, the Roman Curia, the central governing body of the Catholic Church including the pope, usually remains well ahead of secular nations in reading trends and seeing opportunities that others may miss. Francis' emphasis on helping the poor

focuses on a growing global problem—the widening gap between rich and poor.

The new pope's reign will very likely see this age-old gap worsen, especially if a serious recession reemerges in several key countries. By emphasizing this global issue, the Catholic Church may well attract much greater numbers and exert an even more profound influence among the nations.

While declining in truly committed members and overall influence in secular Europe, Catholic growth has mushroomed in Latin America, Africa and even parts of Asia. A revolutionary shift in the church has occurred in the last 50 years or so. And Catholic leaders, including Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, have not been slow to recognize its profound implications for the future. Latin America and Africa suffer no paucity of sheer numbers and poor people.

John Paul II in particular possessed a sweeping global vision, extending far beyond the continent of Europe. He greatly expanded Catholic numbers and influence in the developing world—mostly in Latin America, but to a large extent in Africa and Asia as well. Non-Italian appointments to key church positions increased considerably. He was a forward-looking pontiff in understanding that the numbers and doctrinal conservatism he favored had to come not

from an increasingly secular and doctrinally liberal Europe or even the United States, but primarily from third world countries.

Indications are that Francis reflects the global trend of focusing on the rich-poor gap even in his private life.

The new pope's personal qualities and beliefs

Francis' early behavior as pope strongly indicates that he intends to show Rome what Vatican spokesmen and commentators have called “a new way [or style] of doing things.” During his first day in office he traveled in a standard black sedan rather than the expected Mercedes. As much as possible, the new pontiff dressed simply and even performed mundane tasks himself such as personally collecting his luggage and paying a hotel bill.

So far it looks very much like he wishes



What will happen to the Roman Catholic Church when all the dust settles on the present euphoria of somewhat unrealistic possibilities?

to bring a simpler lifestyle to the papal court. While archbishop of Buenos Aires, he traveled by bus and lived in a one-bedroom apartment, preparing his own meals.

Margaret Hebblethwaite—formerly of the British Catholic magazine *The Tablet*, but now a missionary teacher in Paraguay—visited Cardinal Bergoglio in Argentina. She wrote, “He came over as a man who was not only passionately committed to the gospel of poverty, but also highly intelligent

and cultured” (“The Pope Francis I Know,” *The Guardian*, March 14, 2013).

Doctrinally the new bishop of Rome reflects Catholic tradition. Differing sharply with Argentine President Cristina Fernandez, Francis’ views on gay marriage remain staunchly traditional.

He correctly labeled this relatively new trend as a device of the devil who “deceitfully intends to destroy the image of God: man and woman, who received the mandate to grow, multiply, and conquer the Earth. Let us not be naive: it is not a simple political struggle; it is an intention [which is] destructive of the plan of God” (quoted by Andrew Brown, “Pope Francis Will Not Yield on Doctrine, but His Emphasis Will Be on the Poor,” *The Guardian*, March 14). He is also against abortion and ordaining women as priests.

inside and judge our true intentions.

The papal view of poverty

Augusto Zampini, an Argentine priest now studying in London, stated: “He [the pontiff] works every day in trying to see the world through the eyes of the poor. He told us as young priests, you have to work hard as priests to get the view the poor have of the world. And if that’s the case, we will be a different church in the 21st century” (quoted by Brown).

Wall Street Journal writers reported from Vatican City that “the Catholic Church’s first New World pontiff began his ministry Tuesday [March 19] with a call for politicians, priests and others in positions in power to protect society’s weakest and poorest members” (“Pope Francis Celebrates Inaugural Mass,” March 19). Clearly poverty is the

appropriately controlled . . . to *guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied*” (“Bloomberg View: Pope Francis and the Poor,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, March 14, emphasis added throughout).

But such a guarantee of everyone’s needs being met can only come about with the second coming of Jesus Christ bringing a Millennium of peace and unparalleled prosperity to this planet through great miracles, including transforming human hearts on a global scale. During this age of man, in contrast, the Old Testament tells us that “the poor will never cease from the land” (Deuteronomy 15:11). Jesus Christ reiterated the point: “The poor you have with you always” (John 12:8).

We clearly have a Christian obligation to help the poor. But human effort will never bring utopia to the earth. Only the coming rule of the Kingdom of God on earth can do that. Attempts to control the marketplace invariably fail. Central planners cannot omnisciently provide for everyone’s needs and wants. And human regulatory efforts are often more destructive than helpful, ultimately enabling tyrannical government.

The Bloomberg editorial also shows that our fast-changing technology guarantees serious practical problems for future workers and attempts to oversee all the ramifications: “The coming revolution in robotics and automation could cause immense disruption for the world’s workers. Imposing an ethical framework on this new world will require the kind of supple thinking that hasn’t always come naturally to the Vatican.”

The new pope’s perceived task may prove gargantuan, an uphill struggle virtually impossible to fully ascend.

Other arduous challenges ahead

What will happen to the Roman Catholic Church when all the dust settles on the present euphoria? John Cornwell, author of various books on the papacy, wrote in *The New Statesman*: “Under the ultra-conservative Benedict XVI, the Vatican was racked by intrigue, confusion and decay. Can a new pope lead the Catholic Church in a new direction?” (March 18-24).

After Pope John Paul II died, Cornwell was quoted in the *Financial Times* as stating, “His successor will inherit a dysfunctional Church fraught with problems” (“The Next Pope Faces the Challenge of Holding Catholic Church Together,” April 2, 2005). The same could be said about Francis. In that sense, not a lot has altered in the nearly eight years since this was said. Perhaps

Comprehending Counterfeit Christianity

Jesus Christ clearly stated: “Take heed that no one deceive you. For many will come in My name . . . and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:4-5). Most people assume that even those who nominally bear the Christian name generally follow Christ’s beliefs, teachings and practices. Nothing could be further from the real truth. The New Testament plainly tells us that not everyone who accepts the name of Christ is really a true Christian.

Jesus foretold that many would claim His name but deny Him by their works and actions. He said that such would “call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do the things which I say” (Luke 6:46; compare Matthew 7:21).

Christ and His apostles spoke of false prophets, false apostles and false ministers even during the first century (see 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). They revealed that two opposing, ostensibly Christian

religions would emerge.

One would dwarf the other in numbers. But the smaller (the “little flock,” Luke 12:32) would be led by God’s Holy Spirit and remain faithful to Christ’s New Testament teachings. The other would be guided by a satanic spirit of deception, accepting the name of Christ and yet denying His message by twisting His teachings to create a convincing counterfeit that most people would fall for.

The New Testament itself presents a concise historical sketch of the roots of these two manifestations of Christianity—one true and one false. Christ’s apostles depicted the origin of each and their fundamental qualities and characteristics.

To know much more, request our free booklet *The Church Jesus Built*—one of the most important publications we have ever produced. Ask for your free copy today.

Opinions about Pope Francis have been divided. As Hebblethwaite explained: “One sees him as humble, the other as authoritarian. One as progressive and open, the other as conservative and severe.” Critics have charged him with a lack of courage during the dark days of an Argentine dictatorship, but defenders state that he opposed a brutal military junta.

Of course, only God, “the Judge of all” (Hebrews 12:23), can see us clearly on the

new pontiff’s battlefield of choice.

As for the business world, Bloomberg editors hope that Francis “will act in the best tradition of Catholic economic thought . . . The Church’s social teaching has focused intently on ways to impose moral order on economic activity and mitigate the effects of unrestrained commerce on the poor.”

They point out that John Paul II “argued that a just society ‘is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be



Benedict XVI resigned simply because he couldn't cope with all these awesome challenges at the advanced age of 85, though it's possible there are other factors that have not been made known.

No church of people can be immune from the influence of the general direction in which the world is traveling. We have shown our readers again and again in *The Good News* the pervasive decline in this world's morality and where many troubling trends are taking us.

Also, no organization can be immune from what *Almighty God* is doing in working out His prophetic plan and purpose for humankind. God says: "*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*" (Isaiah 46:10). Biblical prophecy will ultimately triumph over all of man's intentions, honorable or otherwise. Remember that our Creator has the whole world's best interests at heart.

So what is going to happen?

As the Bible tells us, basic fulfillment of key biblical prophecies will center in Europe and the Middle East—and will indeed involve the world's biggest church and its leader.

Events not generally expected

A pivotal biblical prophecy deals with a final revival of the ancient Holy Roman Empire as foretold in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Scripture prophesies that a group of 10 kings or national leaders will give rise to an awesome geopolitical union centered in Europe. The Hebrew prophet Daniel foretold this future hundreds of years before the time of Christ. His inspired prophecies were later complemented in the book of Revelation, revealed by Christ to the elderly apostle John near the end of the first century.

Unlike today's increasingly secular, multicultural Europe, this new world superpower will be strongly undergirded by a pervasive religious element—being influenced by a great false Christian religious system (see "Comprehending Counterfeit Christianity" on page 17).

The Bible names this false system "Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5). It is portrayed as sitting on seven mountains and ruling over the kings of the earth. The seven mountains are a clear reference to the famed City of Seven Hills—Rome. They also represent seven successive kingdoms through history—revivals of the Holy Roman Empire, the last of which lies still ahead (verses 9-10).

Astounding satanic miracles will be



As the Bible tells us, fulfillment of key biblical prophecies will center in Europe and the Middle East—and will indeed involve the world's biggest church and its leader.

performed by a leading charismatic figure in this false religious system the Bible calls "the false prophet," who will even possess power to cause fire to come down from heaven (Revelation 13:3).

This man will join hands with a possibly even more charismatic individual the book of Revelation calls "the beast," who will head a world-changing dictatorship—the coming revival of the Holy Roman Empire, which is *also* referred to in Revelation as the Beast. The world as a whole will fall under the spell of these leaders, and deceived people will even worship the Beast power (verse 8)—an unholy union of church and state.

Those who mastermind this worldwide deception will openly blaspheme the true God of heaven (verse 6). The authentic saints of God will be severely persecuted by a church gone wrong (verse 7). In the long run, crucial events concerning the Roman Catholic Church will find their prophetic fulfillment.

On the surface these developments may initially appear as a positive force for good in a chaotic world. But in reality the final product will result in a great deal of evil for mankind. All who have the courage to resist and oppose this confusing Babylonian system, including true Christians, will be ruthlessly persecuted and oppressed—even to the point of martyrdom.

We are living in momentous times, but even more momentous times are still ahead. Only the second coming of Jesus Christ will rescue humankind and save this world from human extinction (see Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 11:15).

As to whether the new pope will have any involvement with these final events preceding Christ's return, there is no way to know at this time. His current lifestyle would seem out of character with his participation. He could be gone from the scene before these things begin to happen—or he could have a role to play that we are not able to envision at this time. In any case, we need to stay watchful, keeping our eyes open to what's happening (see Luke 21:34-36). **GN**

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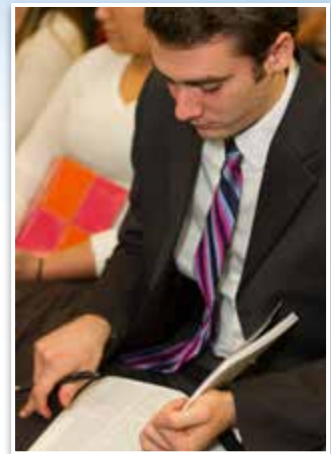
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Are Deadly Infections an Indicator of Worse to Come?

Doctors and hospitals are increasingly sobered by deadly new strains of “superbugs” that are largely invulnerable to today’s most potent antibiotics. Is it possible we could see epidemics of incurable infections? *by Mike Kelley*

Almost lost in the deluge of news of advancements in the medical world is the revelation of new strains of bacteria that challenge all we have learned over the past century about fighting disease organisms.

A strain of antibiotic-resistant bacteria known medically as *carbapenem-resistant enterobacteriaceae*, or CRE, has jumped to the forefront of the medical world’s attention due to one very disturbing fact—their near-total resistance to an entire family of drugs known as carbapenem antibiotics makes them nearly impossible to treat once they infect a patient.

Emerging recently in hospitals and nursing homes, they attack the most vulnerable—weaker and elderly patients. And once they get a foothold in a hospital or nursing home, they are virtually unstoppable.

In the face of these and other rising health threats on a national and global scale, we need to consider what’s happening and where our primary focus should be.

“Nightmare superbugs”

No less an authority than the renowned Centers for Disease Control and Prevention refers to these lethal bacteria in terms not normally used in the staid medical world. CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden, in a March 6, 2013, *USA Today* story, says these “nightmare superbugs” present a triple threat. “They’re resistant to nearly all antibiotics. They have high mortality rates, killing nearly half of people with serious infections. And they can spread their resistance to other bacteria,” Frieden said.

What worries Dr. Frieden and so many others is that antibiotics known to the medical world today have virtually no effect on these superbugs. He and other bacteriologists fear it may be too late to stop their onslaught, which has killed up to 70 percent of patients

infected by CRE. Doctors fear they are running out of options to slow or stop the spread.

Frieden warned that the United States has only a “narrow window of opportunity” to take action before it is too late to halt the spread of the bacteria. He envisions a scenario in which antibiotics could become powerless against such common ailments as diarrhea and respiratory and urinary tract infections.

Thus far, CRE infections have been reported in 42 states. As of late last year, about 4 percent of U.S. hospitals had reported at least one case of CRE infection, with that rate jumping to 18 percent among acute-care hospitals.

Even such renowned facilities as the National Institutes of Health’s Clinical Center near Washington, D.C., are not immune. Last summer a CRE strain struck the center where it killed seven, including a 16-year-old boy. And there have been worse outbreaks.

Intensive care patients seem to be at the greatest risk, especially those on ventilators or hooked up to central intravenous catheters. Organ transplant patients and those undergoing chemotherapy seem particularly vulnerable. And health officials fear that continued mutation of CRE bacteria could produce varieties that could make even common infections virtually untreatable.

We report this not to dissuade readers from seeking needed medical care, but to increase awareness of the problem. All of us must consider what’s happening in the world and exercise wisdom.

Unexpected effects stymie experts

What has brought this alarming state of affairs?

Medical observers have noted that the *overuse of certain antibiotics* in hospitals and nursing homes has had an unexpected effect: Many of the *Enterobacteriaceae* have become resistant to most of the anti-

otics in general use today. As a result, where just over a decade ago only 1.2 percent of bacteria were antibiotic-resistant, today that number has grown to about 4.4 percent. Ironically, the bugs have become resistant to the very carbapenem antibiotics developed as an answer to weaker earlier antibiotics.

“This has been bred in hospitals and nursing homes because of the way we use antibiotics,” said Dr. Carlos Nunez, chief medical officer for CareFusion, a company which markets an infection surveillance system used in many hospitals. “You go to a place where you are supposed to get better and you get an infection where you have a 50 percent chance of dying. It’s a nightmare scenario.”

The pathogens’ ability to survive and become resistant to antibiotics has stymied medical experts. Overuse of antibiotics to kill CRE in past years has produced strains of drug-resistant germs that not only survive, but are able to pass along survival traits to other bacteria found in hospitals.

The growing alarm over the CRE threat has placed hospitals and nursing homes on the defensive. CRE can be transferred from patients to the environment and to the hands of the care providers, such as doctors or nurses, when care providers touch patients or touch them with medical equipment, then touch other patients. To counter this, stricter enforcement of hand washing has become required practice in medical facilities.

Procedures in many hospitals now call for patients considered high-risk for CREs to get special screenings on arrival. Hospital officials now warn hospital visitors to wash their hands thoroughly and insist that anyone who touches them also wash their hands.

CRE infection of a patient triggers additional precautions to reduce the likelihood of its spread to other patients. Under the use of “contact precautions,” patients are essentially quarantined, transferred to separate rooms to which the patient is confined and from which visitors are barred. Nurses and other caretakers can be required to wear gloves and gowns each time they enter the room.

Old diseases on the return

For more than a century, America and

the Western world have made what seemed to be unstoppable progress on the road to eradicating sickness and disease. One by one through the decades, such dreaded maladies as smallpox, yellow fever, whooping cough and tuberculosis began to disappear as medical research discovered their causes and ways to prevent them.

The 20th century featured a parade of medical advances. One by one, diseases that plagued mankind for centuries fell before the advances of medical science.

Major milestones were the discovery in 1900 of the cause of yellow fever by two U.S. Army doctors, Walter Reed and James

and surgery as a last resort, have resulted in cures or partial cures for millions.

But are we now beginning to see a reversal of that trend? Are we starting to lose ground, even retreat, in the face of illnesses where bacteria and other microorganisms mutate to the point they become resistant to the vaccines and antibiotics of modern medical science?

Tuberculosis, once thought to be nearly eradicated, is making a comeback among some sectors of the U.S. population, according to series of recent reports. A current CDC fact sheet reported on the rise of “multi-drug resistant tuberculosis,” which

ous reflection and assessment. We might ask whether we’ve taken modern “wonder drugs” for granted, assuming that science will always find a solution for our problems. Does your Bible have anything to say about this?

Notice the words of Moses to ancient Israel: *“If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written in this book . . . then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues—great and prolonged plagues—and serious and prolonged sicknesses . . . all the diseases of Egypt . . . Also every sickness and every plague . . . will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed”* (Deuteronomy 28:58-61).

Moses also warned of incurable illnesses as punishment for national sins earlier in this passage: *“The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, and with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed”* (verse 27). That last phrase strikes a familiar chord with our situation today.

Increasingly, medical issues take the forefront of our concerns. Millions in the Western world, especially those entering late middle age and older, spend more time concerned about the effects of illnesses and what will happen if they have to go into a hospital.

But the God who designed and created the human body has some good news for us. He forgives and heals! Of course, this requires turning to Him and following His ways. Still, the timing remains up to Him. In some cases, He will deliver us immediately. But even if He does not completely heal right now—as He knows what is ultimately best for all of us—He nevertheless has a plan in place that will eradicate sickness and disease forever.

Notice this good news in Revelation 21:4: *“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”* (New International Version). And even prior to that, a time is coming when the earth, under the reign of Jesus Christ, will be largely free of pain, sickness and disease. Not only will hospital-born killer germs be eliminated, but there will no longer be a need for hospitals themselves.

If this sounds too fantastic to be true, write for or download our free booklets, *Why Does God Allow Suffering?* and *The Road to Eternal Life*. You’ll find the Bible has much more to say about the scourge of disease. **GN**



“Nightmare superbugs” present a triple threat. “They’re resistant to nearly all antibiotics. They have high mortality rates, killing nearly half of people with serious infections. And they can spread their resistance to other bacteria.”

Carroll. The 1920s saw the development of vaccines for whooping cough, diphtheria and tuberculosis, and the uses of insulin to treat diabetes. Dr. Jonas Salk astounded the medical world in 1955 with his discovery of a vaccine to prevent polio, which had paralyzed millions. Vaccines for measles, mumps and rubella followed in the 1960s, as did heart and other organ transplants.

And while some diseases, such as cancer and heart disease, have not been stopped, medical science has made great strides in treatment. Survival rates for cancer have improved tremendously since 1960.

A 2009 survey in the United Kingdom showed five-year survival rates for leukemia, prostate, melanoma and several other common cancers to be as high as 84 percent. U.S. five-year survival rates for bladder cancer are as high as 80 percent, and more than 50 percent for lung cancer. Aggressive treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation,

seems to be on the rise among many immigrant groups.

These strains of TB have developed resistance to all of the most effective TB drugs, leaving patients the only option, in the bland wording of the report, “to pursue treatment options that are much less effective.”

Once thought to be eradicated, scarlet fever has recently been found to be on the increase. The discovery of penicillin in 1943 did much to virtually eliminate the disease, which ravaged America in the 18th and 19th centuries in massive outbreaks. But a new, more virulent form resistant to penicillin has arisen, and outbreaks have occurred in China, where reported cases tripled in 2011. A flurry of new cases broke out in Michigan last year, concentrated among immigrant communities.

Where is our trust?

It’s time that all of us start doing some seri-

God's Appointment With You

Did you know that God set aside a special day so you can have meaningful, lasting contact with Him? Nearly 6,000 years ago our Creator declared the seventh-day Sabbath a day of rest and fellowship with Him. *by John Ross Schroeder*

On any given week our fast-paced, modern lives may embrace several appointments, some of which we don't relish keeping. Few people look forward to a tooth-extraction date with the dentist or even a periodic medical checkup. There's no telling what our physician may discover.

Of course most health-care professionals seek to lengthen our lives and make them more pleasant. Yet no matter how capable and competent, they cannot deal effectively with the wide-ranging scope of our human anxieties and uncertainties, along with our financial, work and marital problems.

Only God has the inherent ability to deliver us from all our problems. Only His Word can tell us what our priorities ought to be.

Driving us far from God

Yet modern society is not designed to begin, build and enhance a proper relationship with our Creator. Instead, our society mostly widens the gap between God and ourselves—driving us far away from the divine help we all need to cope with life in an increasingly complex, fast-paced world.

Many today are in a state of perpetual confusion, being weighed down with various problems and anxieties. "Hurry sickness" is one symptom and has become the malaise of our Western world. Life in the fast lane is taking a tragic toll.

One journalist began a piece on the subject frankly confessing: "I am pathologically impatient and incapable of waiting for anything. I'm always stomping out of shops, bars or restaurants because the [line's] too long and I can't be bothered to wait" (India Knight, "The Can't Wait Society," *The Sunday Times*, March 26, 2006). Today we hear of road rage—and

even supermarket-cart rage! As a result of our chronic impatience and always being in a hurry, some become miserable, lonely, stressed-out and sick.

Too many of us don't sleep all that well. Many continually gorge on fast foods, not taking the time to prepare healthy meals.



We always seem to have so much to do that we find virtually no time left for regular contact with our Creator.

We've allowed time to become an *enemy* rather than a friend. We are badly misusing one of our most valuable resources. Most of us have lost the knack for properly budgeting our time. We don't realize how important the biblical admonition on "redeeming the time" is to our whole well-being (see Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5).

We always seem to have so much to do that we find virtually no time left for regular contact with our Creator. The world has largely cast aside the biblical keys that would unlock the door to God's presence and help in our lives.

A God-like view of time

A psalm attributed to Moses gives us some much-needed perspective. "Lord," it begins, "You have been our dwelling place in all generations . . . Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:1-2). When God takes center stage in our minds, we start to think differently—to mirror His thoughts rather than our own.

But all of us grow older every day, and the clock is ticking. Our physical lives are composed of just so much time. Many today are already past the 70 years the psalm mentions and are wondering just

how much time is left to them.

As the psalm states: "We finish our lives like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (verses 9-10).

Our Creator wants us to grasp the implications of the fact that we won't live forever in the flesh. We all need to learn to use our time properly: "*So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*" (verse 12, emphasis added throughout).

Our visionary thoughts should extend to

a future time beyond our physical lives. God offers the gift of eternal life to those who meet His conditions and surrender their will to His. But we have to take sufficient time *now* to think about our real future in the age to come.

Enter God's seventh-day Sabbath!

A day devoted to God

Leviticus 23 is one of the great chapters of the Bible. When we truly understand its implications, it becomes a divinely revealed map of God's plan and purpose for humankind.

It begins: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: *"The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations [sacred assemblies, NIV], these are My feasts"*'" (verses 1-2). God is the Revealer of truth, and Moses is the agent speaking directly with the people on His behalf. These are God's festivals, and He has exclusive rights to them. They belong to Him and not to any person or group of people.

The Hebrew word translated "feasts" here is *mo'edim*, which means "appointed times" (verse 4), or "appointments" as we would say today.

The first one mentioned is the weekly Sabbath—to be observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings" (verse 3).

The rest of the chapter is devoted exclusively to seven yearly festivals containing seven Holy Days (annual Sabbaths). As verse 4 states, "These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times." The intriguing explanation of their significance is beyond

the scope of this article. To help you better understand them, we recommend that you read our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

Here we concentrate on your divine appointment with God set for every seventh day.

Observing the Sabbath day

We all need rest from our general labor and occupational work. So the Creator commands us to rest every seventh day (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). The Sabbath commandment *actually dates from creation* since God Himself rested on that first seventh day and sanctified it—set it apart—as an example for all mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:1-3).

Spiritual fellowship with others of like mind is one of the most beneficial tonics to the human psyche. We all need it! Of course, this can succeed only in and through our fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). Successful relationships, whether with God or other people, all require *quality time*.

A weekly day of rest enables us to use the other six days much more profitably. People who work seven days a week generally burn out sooner rather than later. As well as physical and mental rest, we need sufficient time to meditate, thinking about those matters that bring us special meaning and divine purpose.

The Sabbath provides time and space for families, couples and friends to draw closer together. This seventh-day rest provides precious time for prayer and to read and study the Bible, the book that tells us how to live in ways that are infinitely rewarding, purposeful and fulfilling. It is also a time for assembling with others for collective worship, as the term "convocation" in Leviticus 23:3 denotes a *commanded assembly* (compare Hebrews 10:24-25).

Observing the Sabbath is an integral part of the Ten Commandments. It is no less valid a commandment than those six specifically designed to cover our relationships with other human beings—do not murder, do not steal, do not commit adultery, etc. It is one of the vital first four that help us to express love to our Creator, worshipping Him in a proper and respectful manner.

All too many in mainstream Christendom are either dismissive or ignorant of this weekly get-together with their Creator and are missing out on the spiritual edification that observing the seventh-day Sabbath provides. Why not start keeping your weekly appointment with God? **GN**



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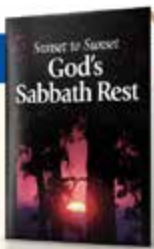
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Most people think the Sabbath day is obsolete or commanded only for the Jewish people. Yet the Bible shows that Jesus, the apostles and the early Church observed the Sabbath, and it will be observed worldwide after Christ returns to earth to establish His Kingdom. Learn much more, including the importance of keeping God's weekly appointment with you, in our free booklet *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*.



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The Remarkable Lesson of God's Feast of Firstfruits

If Jesus Christ came to save mankind, why is the world in such sad shape? The answer is found in a little-understood festival God revealed in the Bible. *by Bill Bradford*

Jesus Christ Himself said He “did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (John 12:47). He also said that “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). But in a world in which hundreds die every day from violence, starva-

tion, disease and natural disasters, in which injustice, immorality and every godless act abounds, in which thousands die daily without having ever heard the name of Jesus Christ or even seen a Bible—can we truly say that Christ’s mission was successful?

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This feast that celebrated the harvest of the firstfruits reveals one of the major phases of God’s plan for salvation.

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Was He mistaken? If Jesus intended to save the world, then has the world truly been saved? Is it logical to conclude, when we observe man’s inhumanity to man on an unprecedented scale, that the world is saved?

These questions have always posed an enigma to those willing to face the facts. If the Christian Church had as its mission to take the message of Christ to the world so the world could be saved, why is the world in such religious disarray? Further,

14:12.) Or are the opposing forces simply too powerful for faithless mankind?

The answer is *none of the above*.

However, there *are* answers to all these questions—and they are illustrated in a festival called the Feast of Firstfruits (Exodus 23:16). This observance, along with the rest of God’s annual Holy Days, is commanded by God in Leviticus 23:15-21.

In describing these sacred observances, God said, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are *My* feasts’” (verse 2).

Later, we find that the Church Jesus founded also observed this particular festival, known by Jesus’ followers as the Feast

of Pentecost. As a matter of fact, the New Testament Church began on this very day, accompanied by miraculous events (Acts 2:1-41). The festival has great relevance and importance for Christians today.

God had a reason for Israel to keep His festivals and for His Church to do the same. Through these observances, God reveals the stages of His plan of salvation for humanity. In particular, this feast that celebrated the firstfruits of the wheat harvest in ancient Israel (see Deuteronomy 34:22) has a meaning that reveals one of the major phases of God’s plan for salvation.

Common, but erroneous, assumptions

Most churches assume that God intended for everyone alive to hear the message of salvation, starting immediately after Jesus Christ’s resurrection. Most also believe that every person hearing that message would then have his opportunity for salvation now, in this life. The mission of Christ’s followers was thus understood to involve bringing this message to every living person, giving them the opportunity to accept Christ before it would be too late.

Thus many churches believe they must bring as many people as possible to accept Christ as Savior immediately, regardless of the depth of their interest or commitment.

But how many people have never accepted Christ—or never *truly* accepted Him? And how many millions over the centuries have never even heard of Him?

If salvation is only a matter of accepting Christ during this physical lifetime, what is the fate of the countless people who lived and died before He was born and for whom it was impossible to accept Him as Savior?

Faced with these questions, must we conclude that the power Jesus promised His disciples simply never translated into the saving work He envisioned? No, we should not doubt the saving power of Jesus Christ. Instead, perhaps we should *examine our understanding of His intentions*. Perhaps God has had something else in mind all along.

How this feast fits in God’s plan

What does the Feast of Firstfruits have to

do with these all-important questions?

There is great significance in the name *Feast of Firstfruits*. By its very name, this festival indicates some harvesting occurring before *later* harvesting. As we will see, this festival foreshadows God's inten-

tion to reap first a small harvest of people for salvation (called "firstfruits" in the Scriptures), and to later call a vastly greater number of people to salvation.

One might say that God put into use a systematic procedure to lead the vast major-

ity of mankind to His light and salvation—bringing first the firstfruits, and later the greater harvest of humankind, to salvation.

Let's notice this amazing truth as demonstrated by the divinely revealed festivals of God. God timed His feasts to coincide

Who Are God's "Firstfruits"?

The firstfruits of God's plan are those who are called now, in this age, and are having their minds and attitudes changed to become like Jesus Christ through God's Spirit working within them. The apostle James noted that God has "brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures [i.e., of those He's created]" (James 1:18).

Paul well understood that those called and converted in this age between man's creation and Christ's second coming are the firstfruits of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. He referred to several first-century Christians as the firstfruits of God's calling in specific locations (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15). Looking ahead to the resurrection of those who remain faithful to their calling, he said, "We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [that is, full rights of sonship], the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

However, the firstfruits of God's plan, those who are called now, find themselves in a vastly different situation from that of those who will follow in the later spiritual harvest period.

Jesus said that those who are His followers in this age are not to be "of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:16). They are called out of the world and are expected to develop the character of Christ, while the rest of mankind is deceived (Revelation 12:9) and following values abhorrent to Christ (1 John 2:15-17).

The present evil age

The firstfruits—God's people—are called and strive to obey God while living in "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4), of which Satan is the actual ruler (2 Corinthians 4:4). The harvest of firstfruits is small, for at this time relatively few will accept God's calling, repent, be converted and remain faithful to His way of life. That is why Jesus said, "Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:14).

After Christ's return, which will usher in a new age, the world—society as a whole—will learn to live by the laws and values of God. In that age, God will bind Satan and no longer allow him to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:2-3). Without Satan's influence, the world will at last come to know peace. Everyone will know the Lord (Hebrews 8:11).

Those who have not conformed to the world

(Romans 12:2) will be those who assist Christ in bringing all nations to His truth (Revelation 20:4). They will have overcome the world just as Jesus overcame the world, and Christ will use them in bringing all other people to serve Him (Revelation 2:26; 3:21).

Gift of the Holy Spirit

God enables His people to fulfill His purpose for them. But how?

Significantly, God chose the Day of Pentecost to begin His Church in an important sense by sending the Holy Spirit to His few faithful disciples (Acts 1:15; 2:1-4). Many think of a church as a building. But the word translated "church" in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, meaning "called out (ones)." This Greek word was typically used to denote an assembly of people—those called out to meet together. The Church is the collective body of people who are called out of the world to serve God.

Through the Holy Spirit, which God gives to those who are part of His Church, members are empowered to overcome the world. It is through God's Holy Spirit that the Church can preach the gospel to the world and make disciples of all nations (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20). It is this Spirit that enables a person to belong to Jesus Christ and be a part of the Church (Romans 8:9). For the New Testament Church to exist, it was necessary for God to send His Holy Spirit.

The firstfruits of God's plan for salvation are those called to be in God's Church in this age. The Church, also spoken of as "the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27), is made up of individuals in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. They have repented of their sins and turned to Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. They have committed themselves to obedience to His holy and righteous laws. They are willing to give up everything to remain faithful to Jesus Christ (Luke 14:33).

Firstfruits follow Jesus Christ

Revelation 14:4 speaks of God's people who are "firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." The preceding and succeeding verses provide insight into the character of those who are the firstfruits and why they accompany Jesus Christ.

Why are they so valued by God? They are described as having the Father's name written in their foreheads (verse 1); God is foremost in their mind and thoughts. These have not been seduced

by a false religious system (Revelation 14:4), which is depicted as an immoral woman seducing humanity (Revelation 2:20-22; 17:1-6).

The firstfruits have come out of and avoided the political and religious system that has dominated the world (see Revelation 17:1-6). When they were called by Jesus Christ, they understood that they were to come out of this system (see Revelation 18:3-4).

In addition, the firstfruits "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (Revelation 14:4). They are faithfully devoted to Jesus Christ. They will allow nothing to entice them from their personal loyalty to Him. Since Jesus will use them to assist Him in teaching His ways to the world, it is vital that His firstfruits will forever be true to Him.

They "have been redeemed from among men" (same verse). They have been purchased by God with the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). Having been bought by God, they know that their lives no longer belong to them, but rather to Jesus Christ, whom they are to turn their lives over to completely, body and spirit (see Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 6:20).

Also, "in their mouth was found no deceit" (Revelation 14:5). They have learned to deal with the malice commonly found in the hearts of men. There is no deception, plotting or feigning in their actions or words. They have learned about the genuineness, sincerity and simplicity of Christ. They have, in short, come to grips with the deceit of their own hearts and have fully submitted to the pure and undefiled life of Christ dwelling in them. Forgiven of sins and having grown in godly character, "they are without fault before the throne of God" (verse 5).

Picturing the plan of God

This most important step in God's plan for the salvation of mankind is revealed in the observing of His Holy Days. Naturally, those who are of the firstfruits will be observing the very day that pictures the calling and harvest of the firstfruits of God's plan, the Day of Pentecost.

They will gratefully observe the very day that celebrates another milestone in God's great plan, the founding of the Church through the granting of God's Holy Spirit.

We now live in the age of the firstfruits, the time during which God is preparing a special, chosen people to reign with Christ in His Kingdom (1 Peter 2:9). Are you part of that group? You will be if you heed the counsel of the apostle Peter when he admonished us in 2 Peter 1:10 to "be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure!"



with the agricultural cycle of the two major harvest periods in the Holy Land—one in spring and the other at the end of summer—to teach His people an important lesson.

The Feast of Firstfruits coincided with the spring wheat harvest in that area (Exodus 34:22). The Greek name for this feast is *Pentecost*, meaning “fiftieth,” in this case implying “fiftieth day,” so named because it was celebrated 50 days from the harvest of the first sheaf of grain. This period of seven weeks gives the festival yet another name—the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:9-10).

On this day, the Israelites offered two loaves of bread made from flour taken from the new grain of the harvest. These loaves were called “the firstfruits to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:16-17). The people were to “do no customary work” on this day and to gather for a sacred religious assembly (verse 21). This was a very significant occasion.

A festival that came later in the year, the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering (Exodus 34:22), coincided with the conclusion of the later harvest when other types of produce, including cucumbers, melons, lentils, chickpeas, nuts and especially dates, figs, olives and grapes had all been gathered in. This, too, was an event of great significance marked by sacred religious assemblies and cessation from work.

These two feasts both represent major stages in the spiritual harvest of mankind for salvation. The Feast of Firstfruits symbolizes the calling and preparing of the Church in this age. This is the early phase of the spiritual harvest.

The later part of the spiritual harvest will take place in the age to come. God’s initial harvest of people occurs in preparation for that coming age when Jesus Christ will bring His Kingdom to the earth.

The physical depicts the spiritual

The spiritual significance of the first harvest period, celebrated by the Feast of Firstfruits, is made clear in the Scriptures. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23: “Now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep . . . For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: *Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming*” (emphasis added throughout).

The wave sheaf offering, which began the barley harvest 50 days prior to Pentecost, pictured Jesus Christ being presented to His Father after His resurrection as the first of the firstfruits. The offering of the firstfruits

of the wheat harvest on Pentecost (Leviticus 23:17) was then symbolic of the other firstfruits that would follow in God’s harvest of humankind for salvation. And these would be followed later by still other people.

Did you notice that Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 clearly states that God will resurrect the dead *in a specific order*? First was Jesus Christ, who was resurrected as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,” to be followed by others at His return.

Paul states that the resurrection of the saints at Christ’s coming, when they will receive immortal, spirit bodies (verses 44, 53), will take place “at the last trumpet” (verse 52)—the mighty, supernatural call that will announce the return of Jesus Christ to rule the earth (Revelation 11:15).

At that time, God will resurrect the dead who had previously been faithful to Christ, and also change to immortal children of God those who are still alive and have likewise been faithful (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

This miraculous event is described as “the *first* resurrection” in Revelation 20:6: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

The world under Christ's rule

During this reign of Jesus Christ and the resurrected saints on earth (Revelation 5:10), the later harvesting of humanity for salvation will begin. God’s knowledge will at last be widely available: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). All people will experience firsthand the wonderful Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ proclaimed during His earthly ministry (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14; Luke 4:43).

Isaiah 2:2-3 provides us a picture of the beginning of this latter and great harvest period: “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s 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.”

Humanity will then have the opportunity to learn and live according to God’s ways: “No more shall every man teach his neigh-

bor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

But what about those who have lived and died in the past, having never known anything of God the Father and Jesus Christ? Revelation 20:6, quoted above, shows that God’s faithful saints are in “the first resurrection.” But, if there is a *first* resurrection, there must be another!

And indeed there is. The book of Revelation makes it clear that there will be *another* resurrection of the dead. After the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ and His resurrected followers from this age, “the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5).

This will continue God’s great second harvest of humanity for salvation. At that time, all who have ever lived but did not have the opportunity to learn of God’s ways or hear of Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice will enjoy their opportunity for salvation.

This resurrection of countless millions of people to a physical, perishable life is described in Ezekiel 37:1-11, Matthew 12:41-42 and Revelation 20:5, 13. These people will then be given the opportunity—for the first time—to repent and be converted through God’s Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 3:19). Then they, too, will inherit eternal life.

We see in this wonderful plan the fulfillment of God’s desire for “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9), and through His plan all who have never had the real opportunity for salvation in this age can at last be saved! **GN**

Learn More

More and more people are discovering that the biblical Holy Days, far from being obsolete or something just for the ancient Israelites or Jews, in fact are God’s teaching tools for revealing to us His plan for the salvation of mankind! You need to learn what they’re all about. Download or request our booklet *God’s Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. A free copy is waiting for you!

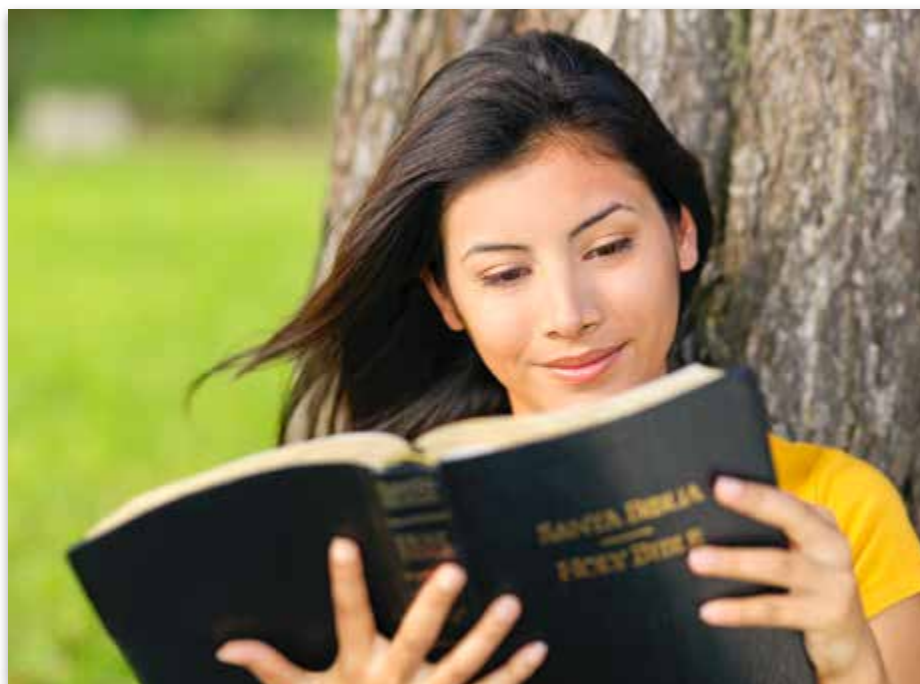
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The Answer to the Madness

How is your world right now? How is it working for you? If you're like many people, it sometimes seems overwhelming and frightening. So what's the answer? *by Janet Treadway*



Despite the madness in the world around us, there is good news! There is an answer to the madness we feel, and it's written for us in the pages of the Bible.

We all have so many concerns these days. We have to care for our families, putting food on the table, shuffling bills, shuffling time. We have concerns about our shrinking paychecks with the rise of taxes, pay cuts and perhaps even job loss. Add to that the rising cost of health insurance or maybe even health issues. Not only are we concerned with our own debt, but the national debt hangs over us. Will our nation go under with all the debt? Will we lose our freedoms?

It seems everyone is at war with one another. We have to be politically correct in

how we speak. Lawsuits prevail. Everything must be put in writing because people don't keep their word. No one seems to be able to come together to solve the big issues we all face. And then we have to worry about our safety, protecting our prosperity and our most prized possession, our children.

While the news media adds to our fears with negative reporting, they are followed by seemingly endless commercials capitalizing on our fears while recommending solutions to counteract our uncertainties. They offer special medications, antacids, identity protection. On and on the list goes.

Referred to as "fear appeals advertising,"

such commercials are often successful. The reason is simple, says Todd Van Slyke, an advertising instructor at the Illinois Institute of Art-Schaumburg. "Fear appeals strike a nerve with people who have doubts about things or do not know about things," he explains. "They play on our inherent fears of the unknown or that something is going to kill us. This is why scare tactics are stunningly effective" (quoted in "The Four-Letter Word in Advertising: Fear," Ai [Art Institutes] InSite, Jan. 27, 2010).

Living in this crazy world makes you just want to pack up and move to an island. But wait—that costs money.

Is there a genuine solution to all this madness? Years ago, a television commercial for a particular scented bath product took advantage of our stresses by claiming that in using it we could relax and lose our cares. If only it were that simple!

But there is good news! There is an answer to the madness we feel, and it's written for us in the pages of the Bible. The Bible shows you what to do when faced with the emotions of fear, alarm and confusion.

The apostle Paul wrote, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

And Jesus said: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles [the nations] seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:31-34).

Turn to God with all your heart and pray to Him, asking Him to give you His peace. Earnestly study the Bible. Discover God. He can deliver you from the anxiety, worry, stress and fear. Despite everything going on, you can live in peace knowing God will take care of you no matter what may come in this crazy world! **GN**



God's Spiritual Family: Will You Be in the Picture?

While many people treasure photographs of family events and celebrations, there is one “family picture” God would like you to esteem more than any other. This marvelous image has everything to do with the astonishing future that awaits you. **by John LaBissoniere**

A favorite picture of mine sits on a small table in my office. It's a framed photo of my lovely wife Linda, taken just a few months after our wedding in September 1979. Since that time we've snapped many family pictures. They fill our photo albums and dot the walls in our home. We love looking at those photographs, and I appreciate seeing my special picture of Linda nearly every day.

You probably also have family photos that you cherish and enjoy sharing with others. Maybe it's of you with your newborn baby, or maybe your family at a high school graduation.

While photos like these are often greatly prized, there is one “family picture” God would like you to enjoy more than any other. It's not one you can hang on the wall, display on a table or put in a photo album. But it's just as real. What is that picture? It's a *spiritual* picture of the coming divine family of God.

Your incredible purpose and destiny

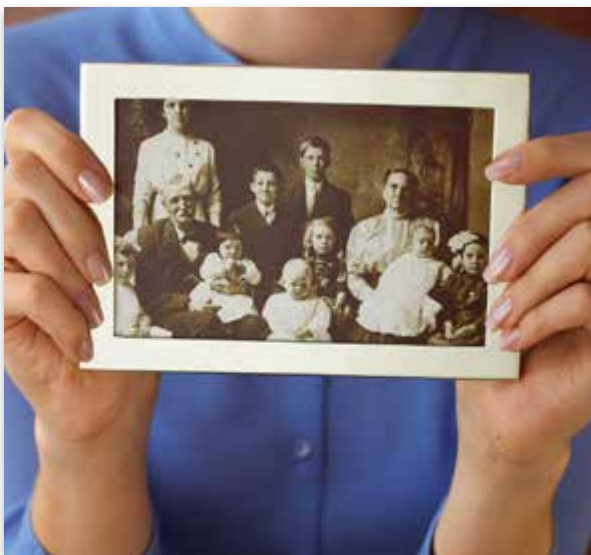
The Bible reveals that long before God created the first human beings, He planned to add children to His spiritual family (Genesis 1:26). While beginning His creation with *physical* beings, God will miraculously transform every individual who loves and obeys Him into a *spiritual* being (Philippians 3:21).

This means *you* were born for an incredible purpose. Your destiny is to share in the “glory and honor” of your divine Father (Hebrews 2:7). His intense desire is that you choose to live and serve with Him and your elder brother Jesus Christ, as a member of Their divine household (Psalm 8:5; John 1:12). In other words, God wants you to be in His family picture! (For more on your destiny, be sure to read “The Mystery

of Human Existence: Why Are You Here?” beginning on page 4.)

When you as a child of God are gloriously transformed at the time of the resurrection, you will be “filled with all the fullness of God” and know the “love of Christ which passes knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19). Upon this spiritual birth into God's family you will inherit His very likeness, nature and character (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:10).

What will it be like in His family when He raises you to His level of existence?



Unlike troubled homes today, there will be no dysfunction then in God's family. Every member of His divine household will work together and enjoy each other's company in complete peace and harmony (Isaiah 9:7; 32:17). Can you imagine such a delightful picture? Your heavenly Father desires that you would value *this* coming “family portrait” more than any earthly interest, activity or purpose (see Matthew 6:33).

God's faithful forerunners

In fact, this portrayal of God's divine

family was what highly energized and motivated biblical figures such as Noah, Joseph, Moses, Hannah, Daniel, Ezekiel and many others. Knowing that their physical lives were temporary, these righteous men and women hungered deeply for the permanence of their eternal spiritual life with God.

Speaking of these faithful forerunners, we read: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a bet-

ter, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

These righteous individuals stayed passionately devoted to God even as they encountered suffering and travail. They looked far beyond their mortal lives to picture their radiant spiritual future in God's promised Kingdom and family.

How you can remain faithful

What about *you*? Can you grasp the same vision? Since God is offering you

the opportunity to be part of His spiritual family forever, what choice will you make? If you decide to follow God, how can you remain faithful while facing life's troubles in this age of unrighteousness? The answer should be no different for you than it was for those who came before us in the faith. You must clearly picture yourself in God's coming “family photo” and never allow it go out of focus (Hebrews 12:1).

A physical photo can kindle memories of satisfying earlier times while igniting hope for happy days ahead, and God's spiritual

family picture does something similar. The biblical record provides you with prior virtuous human examples. It also shows you how to live successfully now, while promising you a bright, joyful future beyond today (Psalm 16:11).

In looking to the past, you have the perfect model to emulate in Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus was the Creator who faithful men and women of old worshipped and obeyed (see John 1:1-3, 14; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Christ came to earth as a human being to show you not only the path to spiritual salvation, but also how to live a meaningful physical life today. He said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Living by every word of God

Your perfect Designer knows exactly how you should live so as to obtain every blessing imaginable (3 John 2). His Word, the Bible, is like an “instruction manual” for your life. To live well now and be glorified in His family later, God wants you to make wise choices today (Deuteronomy 30:19).

He wants you to repent of sin and live by Jesus’ example of righteous obedience to His Father (John 15:10). In this regard, let’s look at a statement Christ made that explains how you can put His character into practice.

Before He began His earthly ministry,

sisters, Mary and Martha, in their home (Luke 10:38).

While Mary sat and listened carefully to Christ’s teachings, Martha was busy serving her guests. She was overwhelmed with the work and complained to Jesus that she needed her sister’s help. It seems like a reasonable request. But notice Jesus’ response: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42).

Your spiritual and physical priorities

Jesus’ point was that what is spiritual and eternal is most important. His followers must *prioritize* their lives properly. It’s another way of saying, “Seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

A critical element in living a fruitful, joyful life now, as you prepare to enter God’s Kingdom later, is to make that Kingdom your number one goal. God wants you to build and maintain a close relationship with Him through constant prayer and Bible study, always obeying Him (1 Peter 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:15). He also wants you to grow in grace and knowledge as you unselfishly serve others (2 Peter 3:18; Galatians 5:14).

Jesus said: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will wor-

teous leadership (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 11:15). At the same time, Satan and his demons will be imprisoned in “the blackness of darkness” (Revelation 20:1-2; Jude 13). At that moment the world will, at last, be freed from its long, wearisome captivity to ignorance, violence and wickedness (Romans 8:21).

This will also be when God’s spiritual family begins to save the world at large. At the time of Christ’s arrival His faithful servants, either living then or resurrected from the dead if they’ve died, will be transformed into immortal spirit beings. They will be clothed in stunning glory and granted everlasting life (Psalm 93:1; Revelation 3:5). They will also be given vast responsibility under Him to govern on the earth as kings and priests (1 Corinthians 15:21, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 20:6).

Jesus and His divine family will bring magnificent changes to the world. The earth’s wastelands will be fully transformed into gorgeous, productive areas (Isaiah 41:18; 51:3; Amos 9:13). The nature of wild animals will be changed to become tame (Isaiah 11:6). People will experience God’s loving compassion through miraculous healings (Isaiah 35:5).

Humanity will never again suffer the anxiety, cruelty and devastation of war (Micah 4:3). Nations will live in genuine peace as the knowledge of God fills the entire world (Isaiah 11:9). Can you picture it? God is giving you the opportunity to help bring it all about!

While physical photographs will fade, the picture of God’s family and Kingdom will never fade away (1 Peter 1:4). Your destiny is to share in God’s glory as a member of His divine family on His level of existence. He wants it to mean more to you that anything else in your life. What will you do? Remember, God is creating a spiritual family. And He wants *you* to be in the family photo! **GN**

Family photos are often greatly prized, there is one “family picture” however God would like you to enjoy more than any other—it’s a spiritual picture of the coming divine family of God.

Jesus fasted 40 days in the Judean wilderness. He was tempted by the devil at this time. In the first temptation, Satan challenged Jesus to feed Himself by miraculously changing stones into bread. What was Christ’s insightful response? “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4, emphasis added throughout).

What Jesus said, quoting a passage He had earlier inspired in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 8:3), focuses on what you can do to live in a way that pleases God. How do you spend your time? What motivates you—spiritual things or material things? Jesus asked these same questions one day as He and His disciples visited two

ship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23). You have the remarkable opportunity to fulfill Christ’s words at this time (Ephesians 1:18). For many others, their chance will occur after His second coming in the wonderful, new peaceful age of His Kingdom (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4).

For thousands of years the world has struggled under satanic rebellion, deception and oppression. But after Jesus returns to earth in awesome glory to intervene in human affairs, He will put an end to every evil (Matthew 25:31).

An awesome future awaits

Mankind’s evil rule, influenced by Satan, will ultimately be replaced with Jesus’ right-

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Lessons From the Parables

Stay With Me: The Parable of the Persistent Widow

Faith is in the prayer we utter with our faint voice in the darkest moment of our lives. When our voice is weakest is when we hear God's—the still small voice of hope. *by Darris McNeely*

The seat of power changes anyone who sits upon its lofty height, whether by choice or by chance. Christ painted a picture of this in His parable of the persistent widow.

"There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man," it begins (Luke 18:2). Judges hold significant power over the lives of people who appear before them in court. Most judges run a tight ship. They command respect and order. People stand when they enter the courtroom and address them as "your honor."

All this is heady stuff. It can easily go to judges' heads, and if they're not careful it can impact their adjudication of the law in their courtroom. Because they are to render justice it is vital that they "fear God" and "regard man."

Christ describes a judge who seems to be weary of his job. Too many people with endless complaints and needs come to him for decisions, advice and assistance.

After awhile it does become just a job rather than a calling or duty. The sense of purpose in the role can be lost. A judge fills a key role in a community, and one who judges cannot allow himself to become burned out or jaded.

The widow

As Christ's story goes, within this judge's city lived a widow who had a problem. She loved God, but the problem was bigger than she could handle. This caused her great concern since she was self-reliant and able to look after herself.

Someone took advantage of her condition and the result was an adversarial situation she was unable to rectify. Her only recourse under the law was to go to the judge and plead her case.

She pleaded for justice, for the judge to listen and see that she was in the right and

Through this example of faith Christ is showing us to be persistent in our walk with God. Don't give up. Don't stop believing. Don't ever begin to think He is not there.

to intervene for her. It seems she made multiple trips to the judge to plead for help, but he wouldn't listen.

Some time went by. The widow's pleading was persistent and unending. She needed help. She needed relief. Would the judge, would someone, anyone, help her? It seemed hopeless!

A crack in the facade

Even the hardest heart that will not yield to sympathy at another's plight can be worn down through sheer bother. There came a moment of exasperation when the judge realized he did not want to see this woman appear before him again.

He concluded he would fairly hear her case and dispense the needed justice. He had no desire to be exhausted or embarrassed by the lingering case. Maybe there was a twinge of guilt, but it was overridden by a desire to be finished with this woman and her case.

The day came when the judge issued his ruling in favor of the widow. The case was over, and the woman returned to her home. She had learned a valuable lesson about human justice. Above all she had learned

to stay with a cause—to not give up—to be persistent. In the end, right will prevail.

Wisdom from an unjust judge

Christ tells us to "hear what the unjust judge said" (verse 6). In the judge's conclusion there is a lesson. Not a lesson in the type of judge to be, one who is hard and

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arrogant, but a lesson in how we should approach our relationship with God.

It isn't that God is unjust or uncaring. Jesus wants us to learn something about how He and the Father administer Their "courtroom." God is the righteous judge of all the earth, and His judgment is always fair and impartial, and His timing is always appropriate.

Jesus then gives His point: "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?" (verse 7). The elect are God's people, called and chosen and faithful members of the body of Christ. For a moment Christ focuses on this group He calls "His own."

Not to exclude His prerogative to answer anyone's prayers at any time or place, but this statement has a message for those called by the Father to be part of His Church. There are moments when even the elect of God will question whether He hears their prayers and understands that they need immediate answers. They make their daily requests before the throne of God, pleading for justice, for healing, for peace of mind or for forgiveness and a clean heart.

When sleep escapes them and they wake in the middle of night unable to sleep, they pray, seeking understanding and comfort. They yearn for the soft touch of God's loving hand bringing them to a wide place or a green pasture where still water may be found.

God hears it all. Christ said, "He bears long with them" (verse 7). He knows instantly, before we appear in His presence, what we need. He hears every word of our prayer. His ear is not deaf.

Then Christ says something we can find a bit hard to believe: "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (verse 8).

Speedily? We might argue with that. We might even think that God doesn't hear or is very slow to respond. But we would be wrong. Because the real purpose for this parable is in the question, "Will He really find faith on the earth?"

Faith is what the persistent widow had. Faith that her cause was just and she was in the right. Faith that the law was on her side



Christ's parable of the persistent widow teaches a vital lesson about how to approach our relationship with God.

and the law was good and would ultimately serve those who are victims of injustice. Faith that even the hardest-hearted old judge could be reached with the plight of a widow like her and could, from the recesses of his heart, be induced to act as he ought to.

Through this example of faith Christ is showing us to be persistent in our walk with God. Don't give up. Don't stop believing. Don't ever begin to think He is not there, or He's distracted, or He's uncaring.

God is there, and He hears. What we may think is a "delay" is not so with God. Time with God is not the same as with us. Remember, Christ said God "will avenge them speedily." God is always right on time—His time.

"Stay with Me"

What Christ is saying to us is "Stay with Me." Go back to the beginning of the parable where Luke gives the reason for the lesson: "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (verse 1, emphasis added).

The widow didn't lose heart. She kept going to the judge and seeking justice. We are to keep going to God in prayer for every need and every want. We cannot lose heart and fall back in despair and quit.

God is going to finish what He started in each of His elect (see Philippians 1:6). He is just and fair and is going to answer our prayers (Matthew 7:7-11). He has said it, and He will do it. It's up to us to keep coming back to His throne of justice and mercy

and keep asking. God doesn't grow weary of hearing us. He's not playing some game with us to see how long or how many times we will keep returning.

His promise is to hear us and not neglect us. He is saying: Stay with Me when you're healthy and happy and your needs are met. Stay with Me when you have a job and your bank account is full. Stay with Me when the sun is shining and life is good and the wind is at your back. Stay with Me when you have the answers, the friends and the applause of the crowd. Stay with Me when you're confident, wise and sound.

Stay with Me, He says, when life is good, and then you'll learn to fear Me in all things, and the wealth and goods you have will serve you and others well.

But also: Stay with Me, He says, when you're lean and hungry and don't know where the next meal will come from. Stay with Me, He says, when your health fails or an accident happens and you suffer as never before. Stay with Me, He says, when all you have worked for crumbles before your eyes and those whose friendship you coveted cannot remember your name. Stay with Me, God says, when you are so lonely and afraid the thought of getting out of bed each day presents a near impossible struggle.

Stay with Me, He says, one more day, one more time and one more prayer. Stay with Me because there is no other.

This is what a story of a persistent widow teaches us about prayer and faith and not losing heart. We can lose a lot in this life, but don't ever think of letting your heart be lost to despair and unbelief. Guard your heart. Be persistent like the widow going to a human judge, believing truth and justice will win in the end.

Stay with Me, God says, because I will bring you into My everlasting Kingdom. I will finish what I started in you. Be patient and never lose heart! **GN**

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So, What's Keeping Us From Christ?

The example of one man and his determined circle of companions can teach us a great deal about what it means to heed Jesus Christ's invitation of "Follow Me." *by Robin Webber*

Have you ever heard a noise coming from your roof or attic and wondered what it might be? Many of us have probably said to ourselves, "What's going on up there? Is it a cat, rats, possum, raccoon, kids playing around? Maybe birds that have made a nest somewhere up there?" Sometimes the noise becomes so irritating you are ready to go into action, especially when it seems that whatever is up there might be about to come right through the ceiling!

Thinking about this common occurrence sets us up to learn valuable spiritual lessons in seeking and heeding Jesus' call of "Follow Me." Because 2,000 years ago at a house in a village on the Sea of Galilee

This was the same miracle worker who had recently cast out a demon from one of their own villagers and healed others (Mark 1:21-45). Now He was back! Clearly this Teacher was special, and people didn't want to miss one word of what He was saying. The house in which He spoke was filled, and the overflowing crowd spilled out into the street and blocked any entrance to this spontaneous assembly (Mark 2:2).

At this point the story transitions from the enthusiastic curiosity of the crowd to one man's quest for access to answers for His life. A quiet procession is making direct movement toward the house where Jesus is teaching, and it will not be derailed or denied.

Four men are walking together while

Followers of Jesus need to be resourceful. Faith doesn't happen in a vacuum. God expects us to do what we can, while believing He will perform what only He can do.

something was not only *up on* the roof, but came *right through* the ceiling and landed in front of the Teacher from Nazareth!

Understanding the lessons surrounding this story of long ago about someone coming right through a roof can create some valuable breakthroughs in our lives today.

Determination finds a way

There's much to learn here about not allowing people and personal circumstances to become ongoing obstacles between ourselves and what only God can supply. Sound familiar? Perhaps too close for comfort? Well, let's break right into the story.

Important news was sweeping through the small town of Capernaum in which everyone knew everyone else's business. The Rabbi from Nazareth had entered one of the homes and was about to teach (Mark 2:1).

holding the corners of a matted bed bearing a paralytic man unable to come by his own means. But they're confronted by a wall of humanity. There is no access or courtesy to step aside, for in that day people with infirmities were looked down on as being punished for perceived sins. The man's hope is dashed for the moment. He can't see, much less hear, this Man with godly power.

Suddenly his determined friends veer away from the crowd and go around the side of the house to the stairs with access to the flat roof above. What are they going to do?

In ancient Israel, roofs were commonly an extension of the household and used as places for peace and quiet. Up the group ascends, step by step, precariously carrying the lame man. They tap on the roof to find the support beams and then go to work digging into the hard clay exterior, which has

been mixed with vegetable fibers, packed, and baked in the sun to create a hard, waterproof surface.

Did Jesus know they were up there? Did He hear the footsteps? I'll let you answer that. But just imagine what happens next as the indoor ceiling starts crumbling and particles start dropping on the crowd and dust comes down, perhaps on Jesus' face as He looks up to see what's going on.

Then suddenly a hole appears in the roof above the startled crowd and a burst of light comes from above. The hole quickly grows larger and larger. Suddenly a man on a matted bed is lowered by rope and lands at Jesus feet! If ever there was collective astonishment this had to be it. And if ever Jesus cracked a wide smile that broke into a grin, this is the snapshot moment!

"Your sins are forgiven you"

While the crowd is brushing off the dust and dirt from their faces and clothes, Jesus doesn't waste a second in this incredible teaching moment. What He is about to proclaim is more bewildering to the audience than everything else leading up to this moment.

He greets the paralytic with an affectionate greeting of "son" or "child" (*teknon* in Greek). It's a welcoming verbal embrace after such a struggle to gain His acquaintance! Jesus continues by saying, "Your sins are forgiven you" (verse 5). This causes a stir with some in the crowd, because their minds begin to churn: "Who is this man that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (verse 6).

What should have been a joyous moment was turning sour in the hearts of these religious critics. They smelled blasphemy in the air. They were ready to pounce!

But Christ was undeterred. What those around Him saw was a crippled sinner and a group of his friends, but what Christ saw was "*their faith*" (verse 5).

Mark, the Gospel writer, comments that Jesus perceived the critics' thoughts (verse 8). Therefore, He turned His attention from the men of faith to the scorers and said: "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic,

'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house'" (verses 11).

This powerful declaration had a twofold purpose. For the audience, Jesus was not only making a bold statement regarding His divine authority to forgive, but demonstrating that it was true and that the man was forgiven—otherwise how could he walk if he were still apart from God?

Also in doing so, Jesus was not only penetrating the callous disbelief of the onlookers, but taking the former paralytic to a deeper state of understanding that when God works with us it is not from the outside in but the inside out, and we are healed in an awesome manner beyond what we even came to request.

Gaining a heart of wisdom

So let's ask ourselves some very personal questions and gain a heart of wisdom to better respond to Christ's invitation of *"Follow Me."*

The biggest question is this: What's keeping us from Christ?

Is it people? Crowds can block your access if you let them. Just one person standing between you and Christ can seem like an impenetrable wall—again, *if you let them.*

An important lesson of this story is that Jesus is always ready to receive you in whatever condition you are and from whatever direction you come. You simply have to see the need and pray to God to grant your desire to be greater than the human landscape around you.

One of the first things God told the young prophet Jeremiah when placed into His service was: "Do not be afraid of their faces" (Jeremiah 1:8). Why? Because naturally we look at others to see their reaction!

Yet God's answers often lie on the other side of that initial panic we experience. The apostle Peter always strove to be as close to Christ as possible even with some of his well-known foibles. Whether walking on water while everyone else watched, waiting alone in a courtyard while companions were nowhere to be seen or jumping out of a boat and swimming to shore because



The paralyzed man's friends proved quite resourceful, lowering him through the house's roof so he could be healed.

Christ was there, Peter realized there was no substitute for being close to Christ.

We learn from this story the necessity of selecting friends who will go the distance with you—friends who are not only faithful to you, but also to God. Remember the account says Jesus saw *their* faith—the faith of the friends as well as the paralytic.

I picture four faces peering down from above and witnessing the healing of their friend. These four are a testament to God's encouragement in Ecclesiasts 4:9-13: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls. For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

What does your current fellowship circle look like? Are you surrounded by acquaintances who draw you closer to Christ or lead you farther from Him?

Followers of Jesus are not only people of faith, but they need to be resourceful. Faith doesn't happen in a vacuum. God expects us to do what we can, while believing He will perform what only He can do.

Christ was more than willing to heal the paralytic man, but the man needed to come to Him. And he needed the help of His friends. Living faith is a joint venture!

Come to expect the unexpected

This simple story constantly reminds those who have heeded Christ's invitation of "Follow Me" to have a state of spiritual anticipation to come to expect the unexpected from Him.

What do I mean? The lame man sincerely came to Jesus to be healed of his paralysis—yet the first thing Jesus did was to grant forgiveness, healing him from within. This allowed him to walk uprightly before God, as well as receive bodily healing and walk physically before men.

God is always molding us to move beyond the confines of even our sincere agendas and grow in grace and knowledge. Be prepared for the next step. It's coming!

When we strive to be wherever Christ is, whether in person with the living Word of God like the lame man or opening the written Word of God today, expect things to happen, and be prepared to immediately do what God says to do.

After forgiving and healing the man, Christ told him, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." He not only spoke to him, but also gave him something to do. Notice the healed man's response and God's reason for giving that assignment: "Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this'" (verses 11-12).

God has not gone out of the miracle business in the 21st century. He still forgives sin and miraculously heals those who believe in Him. So, what's keeping you from Christ?

He awaits your arrival, as much as the men of Capernaum long ago. Never limit God and never limit how God might use you to glorify Him before others as you respond to Jesus' call of *"Follow Me."*

Wise—and yes, persistent—men and women still seek Him! **GN**

Learn More

What does it mean to have faith? And what *is* faith, really? The Bible tells us that we are to *live* by faith, but what does that mean? How did the many figures of the Bible live by faith? Discover the answers in our free booklet *You Can Have Living Faith*. Request or download your free copy today!



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Change Your Life Story

You may not realize it, but your life is likely going in a very different direction than God intended. Yet your Creator wants to heal the damaged aspects of your life and lead you to a more fulfilling way of living. First, though, you have to understand what needs to be changed. *by Beyond Today host Gary Petty*

Have you ever turned on the television and found yourself in the middle of a movie? You don't know the characters, setting, time period or plot. You try to pick up a story line to make sense of the various scenes, but you can't figure out what's going on.

Is this similar to how you see your life? You were born into the middle of a story. What is the plot? Who writes your life script? How does it end?

It's not supposed to turn out this way

Rachel and her husband live by a script they learned when they were young. They worked hard, saved for the future, and raised a family in a suburban home. But things aren't working out the way they expected. They didn't plan for health problems or an adult child facing the devastation of divorce.

Rachel worries about the economy and how the money is getting a little tight. She's distressed by a constant barrage of bad news on radio and television. Her husband seems withdrawn, and the spark has gone out of their marriage.

Even though Rachel isn't a churchgoing person, she is becoming concerned about the immorality in society and the increasing uncertainty of life. She asks her Christian friends if they think we are entering the apocalyptic last days foretold in Bible prophecy. Their answers don't seem to give any real hope. Her story wasn't supposed to work out this way.

Everyone has a story, of course. In many ways each story is different. Whether you are male or female determines various aspects of your life. Your family back-



The overarching truth is that all of our individual stories are part of a greater story. Your life is a thread in a great tapestry that tells the story of *us*.

ground, various talents, your shape and size, where you live—all these factors combine to make your life script unique.

But the overarching truth is that all of our individual stories are part of a greater story. Your life is a thread in a great tapestry that tells the story of *us*. This narrative began before you were born and extends into your future.

The beginning of your story

To understand how your life fits in this great human narrative, let's start at the beginning: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created

him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).

Human beings are different from any other creation. We were created in the image of God. You probably haven't thought of yourself as being made in the image of God. So at this point you might be saying, "My life's a failure. How can I be in the image of God?" Or, "With all my problems and unhappiness it's a joke to say that I'm made in God's image."

What you need to realize is that you are a *damaged* image of God. The only way you can ever experience spiritual healing is to first understand where your life fits in the greater story, comprehend why you were born, and accept how you became damaged. Only then can you turn to God, who can make you whole again.

Let's look at five ways you were created in God's image:

1. You have the ability for self-conscious thought or reason. You know you exist, and you want to find meaning in your existence.
2. You have the ability to experience joy, empathy, grief, sorrow and other unique emotions.

3. You have imagination and creativity—the ability to think in abstract concepts and create art, architecture, literature, music, build machines, do mathematics and study science.

4. You have free will, which is the ability to make decisions.

5. You were created to interact and share life with God and with other human beings. You are designed to live in intimate relationships with others.

Repairing our damaged state

According to Genesis, the first human beings were totally dependent on God. They



were happy. There was no strife or violence. But something caused them to change. They then became spiritually, emotionally and mentally damaged. They became fearful and learned anger, hatred, greed and sorrow.

Just like those first human beings, you were created for a divinely ordained purpose, but in your damaged state you are unfit for that purpose. The message of the whole Bible, reflected in the gospel of Jesus Christ is about how you can be restored to your God-designed purpose. Let's look at the five ways you were made in the image of God and see how each of us is a marred image.

1. *Reason.* Every human attempt to solve the world's problems and create an equitable society has failed. Every government, every religion, every ideology has failed. Listen to what God said though the prophet Isaiah:

"Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:6-9).

At the core of every human being is a faulty reasoning process. You will never experience spiritual healing until you accept God's ways instead of following a flawed way of thinking that seems right and natural to you.

2. *Emotions.* Human beings are filled with all kinds of negative emotions that aren't aspects of God's nature—destructive anger, hatred, envy, strife, arrogance and jealousy. At the core of who you are is a faulty emotional process that can't be trusted.

The prophet Jeremiah was inspired to write: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Your emotions deceive you into self-destructive decisions.

3. *Imagination and creativity.* Human beings take the wonderful creative energies God gave us and all too often produce

war, oppressive governments and arts that degrade civility. At the core of who you are is a faulty system of imagination and creativity. Until you face how damaged you really are you will continue to use your creativity to hurt yourself and those you love.

4. *Free will.* Human beings continue to make bad decisions in spite of the destructive consequences. At the core of every human being is a faulty system of decision-making based on wrong motivations and goals.

5. *Relationships.* Human beings are relationship-oriented beings, yet we continue patterns of behavior that destroy our ability to have close, intimate, meaningful relationships. At the core of every human being is a faulty concept of how relationships work—including our relationship with God, our marriages and interaction with children, parents, friends and coworkers.

We are all damaged people. All of our stories are similar to Rachel's story. She didn't think her story would be like it turned out. You would have never written cancer, poverty, a broken marriage or alcoholism into your life script.

How you can be healed

To really understand where you fit in the greater tapestry of human history, you must know the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This story is not a myth. It is the beginning of your story, my story, *our* story.

The first human beings had a wonderful relationship with their Creator and with each other. What happened to change their lives?

God told them not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He was impressing on them the fact that as the Creator of life He knows how life works and establishes boundaries of behavior that are good for life. Living in accordance with these boundaries, or moral laws, produces happiness and peace.

Yet God allowed Satan to influence the children created in His image. Satan didn't sneak into the garden and surprise God. Free will is the ability to make decisions. And in coming to learn the difference between good and evil, Adam and Eve would have to choose between good and evil—and God would allow the choice to come right away.

Many people not only relegate Adam

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Word Network Sun 1:30 a.m. EST, 12:30 a.m. CST, Sat 11:30 p.m. MST, 10:30 p.m. PST
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New Ulm ch. 3, 14, Mon 11:30 a.m.; Tue 12:30 p.m.;
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North Carolina

Durham ch. 18, Wed 7:30 a.m.

Oregon

Eugene ch. 29, Tue 2 p.m.
Medford ch. 15, 95, Sun 5 p.m.
Milwaukie ch. 19, Tue 5:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.
Oregon City ch. 23, Fri 7:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.
Portland ch. 21, Sun 7:30 p.m.

Texas

El Paso ch. 15, Mon, Fri, Sat 1 p.m.

Wisconsin

Kenosha ch. 14, Sun & Mon 7:30 p.m.
Milwaukee ch. 96, Mon 2 p.m.; Tue 7 p.m.; Wed 2 p.m.

CANADA NATIONWIDE CABLE TV

Vision TV Sun 10:30 p.m. EST, 9:30 p.m. CST, 8:30 p.m. MST, 7:30 p.m. PST, 11:30 p.m. AST, midnight N-L

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AUSTRALIA

Ch. 4ME—Digital 74 Metro, Digital 64 Regional
Sat & Sun 6:30 a.m. (NSW, VIC, ACT)
Sat & Sun 6:00 a.m. (SA)
Sat & Sun 6:30 a.m. (QLD)
Sat & Sun 4:30 a.m. (WA)

and Eve to mythology, but they also deny the reality of the fallen angel the Bible calls Satan. This is a dangerous thing to do. Satan is a real being. Whether you believe in his existence or not, he has played an important part in your life story. (See our free booklet *Is There Really a Devil?*)

Satan told Eve, “God knows that in the day you eat of it [the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5).

Eve, and then Adam, ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They rejected God as the source of knowledge and took upon themselves the right to determine what produces good results and what produces bad results. The outcome was a change in their nature. Their reason, emotions, creativity, free will and relationships became damaged, and they served a new god named Satan—a god who did not love them as a Father, but hated them as inferior beings.

You were born into a story filled with lies. The crime, poverty, unhappiness, abortion, addictions, broken marriages and damaged lives of our world are the result not of God’s ways but of Satan’s rule over humanity.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Adam and Eve’s story is the opening scene of our collective story. Satan is the god of this age. Because of Satan’s influence in the world, you have unwittingly absorbed aspects of his nature into your life. Much of your reason, emotions, creativity, free will and relationships reflect characteristics of *Satan’s* values, not God’s.

God’s ultimate purpose for your life

God wants to save you and restore you to your original purpose. Contrary to what you may have heard, salvation is more than just intellectually accepting Jesus. Salvation is *re-creation*. It is God restoring you to His image so that you can have a relationship with Him as your Father and Jesus Christ as your Brother. The astonishing truth of the gospel that is seldom told from the pulpit is this: *God is creating a family to live with Him forever.*

If you want to become a child in God’s family, it means that you can’t keep living

life by your own rules, making the same decisions, ending up in the same bad consequences and going to church once in a while and pretending that God is changing your life. Repentance means to turn to God, to change your mind and to walk a different path. Christianity without deep, personal repentance is not real Christianity. There are plenty of “believers.” What Jesus Christ wants are dedicated disciples.

This means that if you want to be healed from your broken marriage, destructive addictions, meaningless sexual encounters, anxieties and fear, you’re going to have to allow God to change both your behaviors and thinking patterns that led you to your

The astonishing truth of the gospel that is seldom told from the pulpit is this: *God is creating a family to live with Him forever.*

present condition. Too many times, what we want is to write our own life’s script, following a plotline of tragedy, and then expect God to just fix the bad consequences.

God will rewrite your life story, but you first must grasp the reality of your spiritual and emotional damage, be willing to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and be willing to submit to God’s re-creation.

How God will restore you

Let’s review the five ways you were made in the image of God and see how God wants to restore you to your original purpose.

1. *Reason.* As mentioned, at the core of every human being is a faulty reasoning process. You will never experience spiritual healing until you accept God’s ways instead of following a faulty way of thinking that seems right and natural to you. God wants to teach you to give up selfish thinking for *outgoing* thinking, short-term thinking for *eternal* thinking, and disobedience to God’s law for *obedience* to His way of life.

2. *Emotions.* How much is your life controlled by anger, hatred, feelings of hurt, envy, fear and anxieties?

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:31-33).

God wants to replace your fears with peace and your anxieties with faith.

3. *Imagination and creativity.* In another part of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

If you want to get off the meaningless sexual merry-go-round, or overcome your addiction to pornography, you must first deal with your damaged imagination. I hope you’re beginning to see how damaged you really are, and how God wants to heal you!

4. *Free will.* The storyline of your life is a composite of your decisions. You can’t keep

making the same flawed decisions—you will simply arrive at the same dead-end destinations. Isn’t it time to attempt something different? God wants to replace your short-sighted, self-destructive decision-making process with one that produces happiness.

5. *Relationships.* All of us long for a deep, meaningful relationship with God and others. You were designed with those needs. If you will allow God to heal your relationship with Him, He will teach you how to heal your relationships with others.

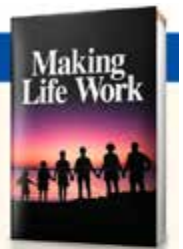
This is the script God wants to write for your life. You exist because the Almighty God wants children—children who are like Him. You were made in His image, but you have become a damaged image of God. Salvation is God saving you through His Son Jesus Christ and restoring you to your original purpose. This is an aspect of the gospel that is missing from so many religious messages—the wonderful news that God is creating His own true family! **GN**

Learn More

God’s Word contains lots of practical, down-to-earth guidance on how to avoid many of life’s common hardships—guidance we’ve compiled into a free booklet titled *Making Life Work*. And to learn more about the incredible *future* God has in store for you, download or request your free copy of *What Is Your Destiny?* Both are yours free for the asking!

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our website.

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Letters From Our Readers

“Will the World See a New Caliphate?”

I am quite impressed with the articles in the March-April edition of *The Good News*, especially “Will the World See a New Caliphate?” While without doubt Islamists are working hard to bring their goal to fruition, ultimately it will utterly fail. All earlier attempts to establish a New World Order over all mankind have failed, beginning with the plain of Shinar (see Genesis 11:1-4) and onward to our post 9/11 era. Look at what happened to the Tower of Babel. Look at what happened to the Nazi pipe dream of a Thousand-Year Reich. And now, Islamists are gearing up to impose their own New World Order upon all mankind.

D.C., Victoria, Australia

The Good News is an excellent magazine. I really enjoyed the article “Will the World See a New Caliphate?” I am a strong supporter of Israel (I have been there twice) and the Jewish feasts. Christians in general are not taught correctly. They hear too much “Replacement Theology.” Please keep sending me the magazine.

S.D., Doncaster, England

Our free booklet The Middle East in Bible Prophecy comprehensively explains where this region of the world is ultimately headed along with an account of the area's long historical background.

“Israel: A Nation in Constant Peril”

The Good News is an excellent source of information, particularly in regard to what is going on in Israel. I read every issue with great interest and am very grateful for the work you do.

P.B., Bridport, England

“Hummingbirds: How Do They Do That?”

I just read the *Good News* article about hummingbirds in the last issue. It had me in tears. What an awesome God we have!

J.D.R., Penzance, England

“Did Jesus Fulfill His Prophecy of How Long He Would Be Entombed?”

I was very happy to see this article. It confirms everything I have been telling people about the crucifixion and the resurrection. Most people still think that Jesus was entombed on Friday and arose on Sunday. I have come up with the same timing found in this article, mainly through lots of investigation into this subject. Thank you for a very informative article. I will use it when talking to others about the resurrection.

J. D., Medford, Oregon

Beyond Today viewers in Canada

Please accept the enclosed offering in support of the United Church of God. I have watched numerous *Beyond Today* programs and find them inspirational and insightful. Thank you for the messages you deliver to so many and for the work that you do which gives us so much meaning in life and about our relationship with God. May God bless you all for helping me understand today's world through the lens of the written Word of God in the Bible and giving us hope in the world *Beyond Today*.

Reader from British Columbia

Beyond Today is one of the best programs on Vision TV. I would like the booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?* and *The Good News* magazine.

Reader from Saskatchewan

I am writing in response to the *Beyond Today* program I recently viewed. On this program the presenters spoke about understanding Bible prophecy. I found this subject very interesting, so much so that I am hopeful that you could send me the free booklet *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. I look forward to studying it with the scriptures it refers to.

Reader from British Columbia

Readers from Australasia and New Zealand

Thank you for *The Good News* magazine. It truly contains the truth and an understanding of God's Word. The articles are very enlightening, with God's Word made clear like a lamp to our feet so we do not totter in this world of darkness.

Reader from South Australia

I just wanted to tell you how grateful I am for your magazine. My friend and I read it together, and we are just so happy to be receiving it. My friend wasn't religious. I guess you could say she was an atheist up until I started sharing *The Good News* magazine with her. Now she has recently purchased a Bible and is very enthusiastic about everything that you write.

Reader from Australasia

The Good News is a truly wonderful magazine. It tells us the things that are going on in the world that our news media does not bother mentioning. Everything is now pointing to the return of the King of kings and Lord of lords. May God bless you greatly and give you the courage to speak the truth.

Reader from New Zealand

Helping a bereaved reader

Please find enclosed a cheque as a special donation toward the support of your work in bringing the Scriptures to those who are committed to understand and practice New Testament Christianity—and to those who desire to share God's way of life and to follow our Saviour Jesus Christ. In my state of severe grief after losing my beloved wife to cancer two years ago I enrolled in your free *Bible Study Course*. This course gave me unimaginable delights and the true meaning of death, which not only helped me to come to terms with my loss, but also strengthened my psychological resilience and belief in Jesus Christ.

D.K., Nottingham, England

Our readers may wish to request or download our free booklet What Happens After Death? The title of the last chapter is “Steps in Dealing With Grief.”

Is God a Trinity?

Thank you for your booklet *Is God a Trinity?* I have prayed to the Lord our God concerning this teaching among other topics in my search for the truth. God has informed me of several truths as I diligently walk with Christ. I have been reading your booklet. The conclusion on page 7 is the same conclusion that I came to. I thank you for your obedience to the Lord our God in delivering this message to me. I will be in touch with you concerning my progress.

T.M., Raleigh, North Carolina

The United Church of God

I have recently moved to Hawaii and was looking to find a church to attend. I have never belonged to a church. I was deployed throughout the Far East for the past 12 years and it was difficult to find a church. I was given your website by a friend, and I found that there is a United Church of God in Hawaii. I was wondering how tithing works. I have had a hard time understanding how much and when to tithe. I've read an article but wanted to be crystal clear about it. I enjoy reading the magazine articles and seeing the media programs.

Reader from Hawaii

We have sent you the church pastor's contact numbers in Hawaii. We also recommend that you request our free booklets The Church Jesus Built, This Is the United Church of God and What does the Bible Teach About Tithing?

My wife, daughter and I are interested in attending the Feast of Tabernacles with the United Church of God this year if possible. We are familiar with and have accepted the doctrinal beliefs listed in the topic session of the United Church of God website. We have kept the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days for a number of years. What are the requirements to attend the Feast of Tabernacles with the United Church of God?

Internet Reader

We have sent the nearest church pastor's contact numbers. He will help you with any questions you may have. Readers who would like to know more about these annual biblical festivals may request or download our free booklet God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to *The Good News*, P.O. Box 541027, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1027, U.S.A., or e-mail gninfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).

Choosing LOVE



Hollywood may tell us we're helpless when it comes to falling in love. But the reality is we can rule over our emotions and make wise choices. *by Frank Dunkle*

I was watching a popular TV drama that portrays several heart-wrenching situations of unrequited love and of broken or damaged relationships. At the climax of the show, the lead character had a heated discussion with another person in which she shouted out tearfully, "You can't choose who you love!"

This, then, was supposed to be the great truth illustrated in this drama: Love brings highs and lows. It can be wonderful or devastating. In the end, we have to take what we get because we don't get to choose whom we love.

Almost as soon as the words came out of that character's mouth, I shouted, "That's not true!" at the television.

It wasn't listening, so I vented my frustration to my wife instead. "We do have a choice. Love isn't just some accident we have no control over. These TV writers say these things and tell fictional stories as so-called proof. Then people believe them,

and their lives get ruined!"

Yes, I do have strong feelings on this subject. It's because many young people believe the myth that you can't choose whom you love. They miss the happiness that could light up their lives. The idea of "accidental love" simply isn't true! You have much more control than you think. Choices in love are tied to making choices with your time.

What love is

To make choices about love, we need to understand what love is. You may already disagree with me because you have "fallen in love," and it does seem to come out of nowhere and to be completely beyond control. Everyone experiences that at some time or another, and it's a wonderful, exhilarating thing. But there's more to love than that—much more!

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary lists 24 different definitions

under the entry "love." Obviously the word is used in many different ways.

The base definition is "a feeling of warm personal attachment," but we often intend this one: "profoundly tender or passionate affection for a person of the opposite sex." And we'll focus on this shortly. Of course, used as a verb, to love is to experience such feelings. Let's look beyond dictionaries, though, to understand that love—real, deep love—is more than a feeling.

Vertical thinkers look to the Bible as the ultimate source of truth—and it has a lot to say about love! It shows that love includes *feelings*, but that there is also a focus on *doing*. The apostle John wrote what could be called a Bible definition of love when it comes to our relationship with God: "This is love, that we walk according to His [God's] commandments" (2 John 6, emphasis added throughout).

Inward feeling and motivation must translate into action. As John also wrote, "Let us not love in word or tongue, but *in deed and in truth*" (1 John 3:18).

In other words, "Talk is cheap; you show love *by what you do*." Doing something requires a commitment of a portion of our limited time.

A song from a while back contains these words in the chorus: "Love is not a feeling, it's an act of your will." I partly disagree with that because love does include feeling—a deep feeling of affection and outflowing concern—but it's much more than just what you feel. It's also the *actions* you take.

That's where we all have some control and can make choices. Sometimes it seems impossible to control your feelings, but when you control what you do with your time, that powerfully controls *how* you feel. Yes, even when it comes to falling in love.

Love whom and when?

The most important things we should control when it comes to romantic love is *whom* to love and *when* to do so.

A lot of people think falling in love only happens by accident—sneaking up and hit-

feelings of attraction developing toward someone, you may have to force yourself to spend less time with that person until the time is right. Otherwise, you may be giving up the choice that should be yours to make with a clearer head. You choose whom you might love by choosing whom you spend time with.

You don't need to keep your motivations a secret. Telling a person openly that you like him or her but aren't ready to have a deeper relationship will benefit you both. It could even keep a path open to that other person when the right time comes. The other side of this, of course, is that you can't choose how another person will feel about *you*—but that's a topic for another time.

Controlling the type of person you spend time with is vital to choosing the person you'll fall in love with, even more than

It's way better to fall in love with someone who makes a good match for you. TV writers may say that you can't choose whom you love, but you can—or at least you can choose whom you *won't* love.

ting them over the head when they aren't looking. Being attracted to someone may happen that way, but developing feelings of love takes more time. You can't have romantic love for someone you don't know, and you can't get to know someone unless you spend time with him or her. So the first key to choosing whom you love is choosing whom you spend your time with and how you do it.

In almost all cases, it's best to prepare for a career before committing to marriage. Falling in love too soon has caused many young men and women to drop out of college, or settle for an inferior career in order to be with that someone special.

It's better to decide in advance at what stage of life romance will be best for you. Then, wait until then to date or spend lots of time with any one person of the opposite sex. In the Bible, King Solomon advised that we not wake up love until the time is right (see Song of Solomon 8:4). Meanwhile, spend time with a wide variety of people. Learn what traits are most compatible with you. Then when that right time comes, you'll know the *type* of person to be devoting your time to.

Challenge and honesty

This can be hard. If you sense strong

when it will happen. Love usually starts with mutual attraction, but it can only grow on a basis of common interests, shared standards and similar goals.

Some of these traits are more important than others. A man who likes rock-n-roll can build a happy marriage with a girl who loves country music. But when a man and woman allow themselves to fall in love while fundamentally disagreeing on things like religion, politics or even financial habits, they're setting themselves up to become like the characters on television who seem to suffer so much for love.

It's way better to fall in love in the first place with someone who makes a good match for you. TV writers may say that you can't choose whom you love, but you can—or at least you can choose whom you *won't* love.

If a potential love interest holds different values than you, don't give him or her much of your time—no matter how attractive he or she is. Otherwise, you may soon be in tears wondering why you couldn't choose to love someone who was a good match. You can choose by choosing whom you spend time with. It may be a tough choice, but it's well worth making. Wise choices about your time make wise choices about love and future marriage! **GN**



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Why?

Does life have a purpose? Does it have real meaning? Is life anything more than a brief span on earth, with eternal nothingness on either side of this physical existence?

This is the question of the ages, a riddle that has challenged human beings since they came to be: Why am I here? *Why do I exist?*

Thousands of years ago, the biblical King David looked up into the night sky and wrote down his thoughts regarding man's relationship to his Creator: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"

David wondered about the purpose of man just as we do today. Every one of us was created for a purpose, but few understand what that great purpose is. Our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?* will help you understand the incredible truth about why you were born! For your free copy, visit our website or contact any of our offices listed on page 2.



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