

The Only Way

Winter 1999

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." John 14:6; Acts 4:12

You see them everywhere you go these days. They live in your neighborhood. They actively support your school's PTA. You see them at children's sports leagues, piano recitals, the workplace, market and parks. They are often very friendly folk - - morally upright, hard working and community- minded. Their children often excel academically and are among the most respectful and successful students in our schools.

As professionals - - doctors, researchers, educators and merchants - - they do much to elevate our standard of living. We enjoy their company and their contributions to the society we live in. Yet behind our smiles, friendly conversations and extended hands our consciences may be twinging, even convulsing! There is something about them that tugs deeply at our hearts. These people are of non- Christian faiths.

They have not accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior.

We, as Christians, must ask ourselves, "What is their eternal destiny? Are they, and the vast non- Christian majority of earth's people, in jeopardy of being eternally lost?"

Changing Demographics

Emigration from non- Christian countries has dramatically changed American demographics. Decades ago the vast majority of Americans were of one or another branch of Christianity. It was easier to ignore the destiny of peoples living in distant lands. The stereotypically comfortable view of America as a Christian society has been challenged by the flood of Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists and others of various faiths into our society.

Close association with people of other faiths is causing many Christian people to have a crisis of conscience - - as it should. Some, unfortunately, may begin to doubt that Christ is the only way to eternal salvation. We need not doubt the Bible's sure statements that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation! We can dispel any doubts about the validity of our Christian faith by coming to the Word of God for answers. The problem is not with The Faith presented in the Scriptures. It is with Dark Age dogmas which have been accepted as "God's truth."

Salvation by Geography?

Overwhelmingly, a person's faith is the result of where and to whom

they were born. Can it be that eternal salvation comes down to something so capricious as where we were born? Many Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Muslims, Hindus, Shintoists, Buddhists, etc., are of that faith because they were born into it. It is mind staggering to think that our eternal salvation might come to us chiefly because we were fortunate enough to be born to Christian parents in America and not to Hindu parents in the land of India. This begs the question of God's justice.

In reality, only about 30% of the world is Christian. Even that is a grossly liberal estimate. Nevertheless, accepting that percentage leaves us with at least a 70% non-Christian majority of earth's masses. Take the logical step of thought and realize that now, two thousand years after Christ's great commission to make disciples of all nations, the vast majority of humanity have not known the Savior - - Jesus Christ.

Are We Being Narrow Minded?

Tolerance and "political correctness" are the prevailing attitudes in our time. The trend is to say, "My religion is OK and yours is OK too." However, one of our delights in the Christian faith is our trust that it contains absolutes of truth. Is it arrogant to hold fast to the doctrine of Christ's atonement as the only way to salvation? Are we closing our eyes to the possible validity of other faiths as a way to eternal salvation?

CHRISTIANITY TODAY (January 12, 1998) dealt with this vital question in a rather probing article. It is good to see that the popular mouthpiece of "Evangelical Conviction" recognizes many faithful Christians are struggling with this issue. We sympathize greatly with all Christians who possess enough conscience to search open mindedly for a legitimate, Biblical answer to this crucial question. The CHRISTIANITY TODAY article calls upon one scripture as a possible solution to this dilemma, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9. The thought developed from this scripture is that, hopefully, God will eternally save the non-Christian masses through Christ without their ever previously acknowledging him. We disagree, eternal salvation is through Christ and Christ alone.

Their proposal is earnest but falls far short of God's plan as the clear word of Scripture presents it. The real solution to the question is to apply scripture statements to their proper time periods.

In Due Time(s)

The Apostle Paul gives us great insight, observing that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time[s]." 1 Timothy 2:4- 6

The word "time" at the end of this verse is plural - - "times" - - in the original Greek language. What "times" are meant, when God will make His Ransom For All manifest? We turn to the Book of Acts for clarification.

"Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, 'After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord- even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things.'" Acts 15:14- 17 (NRSV)

In other words, God first calls out His Church (a people for His name) during our Christian era. After that, during Christ's reign over earth at the Second Coming, "all other peoples" the masses of the human family who have not yet accepted Christ, will seek the Lord- even those "over whom my name has [previously] been called." This is the marvelous "times of restitution" Peter spoke of in Acts 3:19- 21.

Not Universalism

Notice the sequence of events in 1 Timothy 2:4. God "will [1] have all men to be saved, and [2] to come unto the knowledge of the truth." What are all saved from, before they come to a knowledge of the truth?

They are saved from that which "the ransom for all" in 1 Timothy 2:6 will be the cure. They are saved from the sin- and- death curse all people have inherited from father Adam.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." 1 Corinthians 15:21- 22; Hebrews 2:9

"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

" For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."
Romans 5:17- 19

Jesus Christ has tasted death for every man and the free gift came upon

all men unto justification of life. Please note that this is not "Universal Salvation." It is universal atonement- which will bring the opportunity for eternal salvation to each member of the human race.

What's the Difference?

Generally speaking, Universalism proposes that all mankind will be eternally saved. The Scriptures speak contrary to this concept. Universal atonement recognizes the Biblical fact that Jesus died for all at Calvary and that, therefore, ALL will receive the blessings of His atoning sacrifice.

What if Adam's sin was atoned for? What if his punishment (the death sentence) placed upon him was removed? The result would be the deliverance of Adam, and those that inherited his sin, out from the death sentence. Having suffered the effects of sin and dying for centuries, our race would need much rehabilitation, re- education in righteousness- restoration.

"In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. [Father Adam sinned and therefore humanity suffers under the curse of sin.] But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." Jeremiah 31:29- 30

Yes, all peoples of the earth will be released from the penalty imposed on Adam and his descendants. Being saved, therefore, out of Adamic death they will be given a full knowledge of the things of God.

They will come to know Jesus as their King who will reign over the earth and establish the Golden Age of God's kingdom on earth. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jeremiah 31:34

The fallen race will be tutored under the loving, sympathetic care of Jesus and His Church, composed of faithful believers from the Christian age of faith. In their due (proper) time all mankind, regardless of their present faith, will be brought to a knowledge of the glorious gospel of Christ. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17

What a glorious vision this is. We look forward to that time when, "in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." That "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." 1 Timothy 6:15; Philippians 2:10- 11

The Big Bang and the Bible

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Science may just now be catching up with the Bible. Theories come and go, but just in the last couple of decades scientists are concluding that there was a BEGINNING to our Universe! And if there was a beginning, there must be a Beginner. Some scientists have balked at these conclusions - - even though based on Einstein's theory of general relativity. Even he at first resisted what his computations were telling him. He finally admitted "the necessity for a beginning"[1] and "the presence of a superior reasoning power." [2]

Perhaps this seeming confirmation for our faith comes at a good time! In our world, as we are barreling down to the next millennium of time, people are asking some ultimate questions about the destiny of the human race. World events seem out of control. Where are we heading? Where will it all end? Perhaps some of our answers can come from where it all began.

Where it All Began

Since the time of Aristotle - - about 2,300 years ago - - scientific theory said the universe was without beginning. Up to the 1960s, two thirds of leading U.S. scientists surveyed believed the same.[3] Now with data from telescopes, scientists are finding Genesis 1:1 right after all: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." There, indeed, was a beginning to our universe!

Einstein's equations calculated both an expanding as well as a decelerating universe- both of which pointed toward a beginning point. But he never did accept the understanding of a personal God because of his bitterness toward clergy and his inability to resolve God's omnipotence and man's responsibility for his choices.[4] Perhaps if he had probed further into the Bible, he would have found a wonderful divine plan. This plan, in fact, presents a glorious outcome designed by an all- powerful, all loving God who also worked with man's free moral agency of choice!

Scientists Need Faith

Still, some scientists may challenge that a beginning does NOT imply an Intelligent Beginner. They propose that the laws of nature allow for the creation of the universe without a Creator. They label it "quantum fluctuation." [5] But since both those scientists and Creationists agree that before the Universe there was no time or space as we know it - there would also be no laws of nature to spontaneously produce the highly unlikely result of our well- tuned universe! Another suggestion is that our finite universe is like only one bubble in an infinitely large eternal macro- universe with many bubble universes.[6] Of course, these ideas cannot be tested by observation. Scientists need more faith to deny a

Creator than it takes to believe in one!

Birth of Universe

"Big Bang" sounds like a random explosion. (Actually it is the name given by one of its critics - - and the name stuck.) But, in fact, scientists say this phenomenal beginning point in time and space was very precise. Cosmologists today teach that ten to twenty billion years ago our entire universe was compressed into what scientists called a "singularity." This "singularity" was comprised of all the mass of our universe packed into an infinitesimally tiny volume of space, considerably smaller than an atomic nucleus. Space and time did not exist. This infinitely dense singularity exploded at unimaginable temperatures. Physicists concur that for our universe to have been able to support life, its original expansion rate had to be "fine-tuned to one part in 10 to the 60th power - - that's 1 with 60 zeros after it." [7] The head of the NASA COBE satellite team, George Smoot describes the big bang as "finely orchestrated." [8] If the rate of expansion one second after the big bang had been smaller by even one part in a hundred thousand million million," says Stephen Hawking, "the universe would have recollapsed before it ever reached its present state." [9] What deeper meaning we can now see in Psalms 19, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse [Strong's 7549] is declaring the work of His hands."

Not only is the rate of expansion finely orchestrated, but the ratios of necessary elements essential for life in our universe are also fine-tuned. Harvard's Astronomy Department Chairman, Robert Kirshner says: "A delicate match between the energies of helium, the unstable beryllium and the resulting carbon allows the last to be created. Without this process, we would not be here." [10] And where is the universe going? "Since the universe is a space-time continuum, this implies something outside space and time." [11] A non-universe plane of existence beyond our own implies - - yes again - - a Creator! How much more we can appreciate what the Scriptures mean when they say, "He who created the heavens, He is God; He who fashioned and made the Earth, He founded it; He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18).

Earth Created in Six Days

Wait a minute! say some Christians, how can science help confirm what we understand about Genesis when the earth was created in six days? Actually the opening verses describe the "heaven and earth" to be "without form and void" before the creative days began. In this unprepared state, the universe could have easily existed from 10 to 20 billion years.

But according to the Bible, were not the sun and moon created on the fourth day? "And God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. And placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the

earth, and to govern the day and the night and to separate the light from the darkness—a fourth day" (Genesis 1:14- 19). First of all, it is hardly reasonable to suppose, the earth could have grass and fruit trees on the third day without sunlight (Genesis 1:11- 13) - if the sun was not created till the fourth day! What eventually happened on the fourth day was that the sun and moon became clearly discernible on earth so as to "govern" or mark the days and the months. The sun as part of the universe clearly existed before the third or fourth day of creation according to Genesis!

Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence?

It's interesting how on one hand some may begrudge scientists who have concluded the evidence pointing to Intelligence, and yet our government has spent millions of dollars for NASA's project called SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence)! For years SETI has searched for signals to find "beings superior to us, not only technically, but perhaps spiritually and morally." [12] Man has an instinctive yearning to know about what is beyond his tangible world. But no signals or messages from outer space have been discovered.

The only intelligent messages discovered have been in the tiny universe of microbiology - - they are the complex DNA codes for life! By 1967 Nobel prize winners Crick and Watson cracked the genetic DNA code which are information messages in each of our own cells - - like sentences with grammar rules. [13]

But the search for Intelligence beyond our finite terrestrial boundaries should be concluded! The same God who intelligently prepared the Universe for life also designed the codes for life on earth. "Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf!" (Psalms 66:5)

Intelligent Design

Intelligent Design is a theory to explain intelligent results. As we enter the twenty- first century, science has yet to come up with a consistent natural explanation for the origin of the universe and life. It would seem that the supernatural explanation given in Hebrews 11:3 is still the best one we have: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, So that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."

The second step after concluding God made our universe is to conclude God will reward our search to know him personally. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6). When in ancient times Job questioned why God would permit him to suffer, what was God's answer in reply? God comforted him by reviewing His power and wisdom in the wonders of His creation: "Then the LORD answered Job—Where wast thou when I laid the

foundations of the earth" Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?" (Job 38:1,4,33).

If we can appreciate the beautifully precise design of God's physical universe - - our faith can more easily trust His wisdom in His divine design for preserving his intelligent creation Man. Yes, we may confidently face the future because we have already seen what our wise, all- powerful Creator prepared for us in the past.

END NOTES

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Heart Communion with Jesus

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The last week of Jesus' life pulses with drama. The drama gathered momentum with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Daily confrontations with the Pharisees ensued. Judas' betrayal pushed the drama to a tragic, though victorious, climax. "It is finished" was his cry. But death was swallowed up in the victory of the resurrection.

Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world"(1Joh 2:2 NIV). His death as a "ransom for all" will be "testified [to all] in due times" (1 Timothy 2:6). In God's Kingdom it will finally be fulfilled, Jesus is "the true light which enlightens everyone" (John 1:9 NRSV). Their wholehearted acceptance of Jesus will determine their eternal destiny.

First there is an intellectual understanding of the purpose of Jesus' death. But faith doesn't stop with head knowledge. There must be a heart response of full consecration- complete dedication. Jesus invited us to deny self, "take up his cross daily" and follow him (Luke 9:23).

Heart Communion

Heart appreciation, also, involves another aspect of Christian experience- heart communion with Jesus. If we take the time to meditate, to probe the meaning of all his experiences, we will find ourselves living in our hearts every event in that momentous life. To know Jesus is to love him and to love him is to emulate him- to want to be just like him. This is one way we become filled with the holy spirit. We will want to think like Jesus thought, talk like Jesus talked and love like Jesus loved. We will be very concerned to meet the needs of those around us. Why? Because Jesus died for them.

Sheer Pathos

The drama of Jesus' last week climaxed in sheer pathos on his last day. The Jewish day began at sundown. We find Jesus in the "upper room" celebrating the Jewish Passover that he was about to fulfill by his own death as the antitypical Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). What drama! While Jesus is emotionally overwhelmed with his imminent death, his disciples are boasting which one would be greatest in the kingdom. Since the roads were dusty and people wore sandals, it was the custom for one to wash the feet of others. Being so concerned over whom would be greatest, they were too proud to wash one another's feet. But Jesus humbly knelt before them and washed their feet. Are we willing to perform any menial task for others?

Then Jesus instituted the Last Supper- our communion of his death. Bread broken, wine poured out- again a grim reminder of his death.

These were emblematic of his body that would be broken and his life soon to be poured out unto death, as "a ransom for all." After Judas departed to conclude his secret scheme of betrayal, Jesus lingered in the upper room with the eleven, his dearest friends. Jesus knew his imminent arrest and death would stagger their faith. Oh, how his heart ached for them. "Let not your heart be troubled"- in tender words of loving concern, Jesus tried to prepare them for the immediate events that would temporarily shatter their lives (John 14). At about 11:00 p.m. he said, "Arise, let us go hence." Yes, Jesus had a Divine appointment with his enemies in Gethsemane.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches." On the way to Gethsemane, Jesus used the imagery of the vine and the branches in John 15 to assure them of his oneness and presence with them. Further words of comfort followed in John 16. They were not grasping the full implications of Jesus' words that "the shepherd would be smitten and the sheep scattered."

They stopped. And Jesus offered the most powerful intercessory prayer in the history of Christianity (John 17). So powerful that Christians today feel its benefits. Remember, Jesus prayed not only for the eleven but also for "those who believe on their words." This includes all Christians even to our time.

Somewhat comforted by Jesus' prayer, the weary little band followed their Master over the brook Cedron and up the Mount of Olives to the peaceful Garden of Gethsemane. Finally Jesus confides, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Mark 14:34). How selfless! During the whole evening Jesus ignored his own dire needs to comfort his disciples. Can we emulate Jesus and forget the needs of self to serve others? Despite Jesus' plea that they watch with him, his closest friends slept while he agonized in prayer. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Jesus was always there when they needed him. But they were not there when Jesus needed them. Where are we when others need us?

Arrest and Trial

As Jesus woke them he said, "Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." Soon a band of temple soldiers led by Judas surrounded them. For thirty pieces of silver, Judas was to deliver Jesus to the High Priests and Pharisees, away from the multitudes who loved him and would have defended him. A kiss of betrayal by Judas would identify Jesus. That night and the next day, Jesus' face was marred in many ways- bruised with blows, spat upon and rent with thorns. But nothing pierced his heart more than the profanity of this kiss of betrayal by a close friend.

Jesus could have escaped arrest. He stopped Peter's attempt to protect him. He knew all the brutality that awaited him. Willingly he submitted. His mission was to die as a "ransom for all." Are we willing to perform the Heavenly Father's will regardless of the cost in pain or loss?

During the long night and breaking of day, two trials (civil and religious) were held- each in two parts. In reality, it was a grueling ordeal of six trials. Jesus was continually abused, mocked, confronted by false witnesses, spat upon, ridiculed, beaten, taunted and scourged. Yes, he was scourged by a whip, with a cat- o'- nine- tails each containing metal cleats, that tore flesh out of his back.

In mockery the Roman soldiers dressed him as a king. A king must wear purple. And so they found an old cloak of this color and threw it over his shoulders. A king must have a crown so they crushed a crown of thorns upon his head. Each soldier advanced one after another to Jesus and bending low said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" After passing him with mock solemnity, each turned and with a burst of laughter, struck him with a rod and covered his face with spit.

There is an instinct in all of us to desire to see others cast down beneath us in esteem. Whenever we have the desire to belittle another, even in a dignified manner, think of this mockery of Jesus. The temple mob cried, "crucify him," "crucify him!" Jesus' heart response was a willingness to die for them because he loved them. Are we willing to love our enemies?

Pilate "delivered Jesus to their will."

"And they led him away to crucify him." With the crushing weight of his cross, Jesus began the long journey to a place called Golgotha. But the merciless ordeal of the long sleepless night had so weakened Jesus it was necessary for the soldiers to constrain a bystander, Simon, to carry the cross. Finally the journey ended with their ascent of a hill shaped like a skull.

As the soldiers set about their preparations for the last act of history's greatest drama, a common incident occurred, but Jesus filled it with significance. It was the benevolent practice to provide a stupefying drink for those condemned to the excruciating punishment of crucifixion, in order to dull the senses and deaden the pain. A cup was handed to Jesus. Exhausted with fatigue and burning with thirst he grasped the cup eagerly and lifted it without suspicion to his lips. But as soon as he tasted it and smelled the stupefying mix, he laid it down and would not drink. It was a simple act, yet full of heroism. Face to face with outrageous torture, Jesus chose not to allow his intellect to become clouded. His obedience was not yet completed. The Father's plan for him was not fully carried out.

On the Cross

Jesus' sufferings on the cross defy our comprehension. At 9:00 a.m., he was stretched upon a cross lying on the ground. The sound of a hammer against nails was mingled with the sound of groans as the nails tore through flesh and grated on bones. Several husky soldiers lifted the cross and dropped it into a deep hole. The pain of flesh tearing against nails

was unbearable.

Jesus gazed at the crowd beneath him. The priests and Pharisees stood in front with hate radiating from their eyes. They lost their dignity and as common rabble hurled insults at Jesus. The crowds followed, then the soldiers and even the thieves so that the mob under his eyes became a sea of scorn like angry waves that dashed about his cross.

Suddenly at noon every voice was hushed as every light in creation seemed to be snuffed out and an intense darkness settled over the earth for three hours. Lightening flashes thundered across the sky. It was as if the wrath of God joined its fury with that of the mob against the forsaken One. The heart that so bravely endured man's rejection could not seemingly endure separation from his God. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then the cry, "It is finished." But before Jesus died, he confidently said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Then God verified that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. The earth shook and the veil into the Most Holy of the Temple was torn from the top to the bottom. The death of Jesus had opened a new and living way into the Holiest (Hebrews 10:19, 20). Some said, "Truly this was the Son of God." WHAT A SAVIOR!

Much of this drama is diffused throughout the four Gospel accounts, but there is much repetition. We have published a seamless flow of JESUS' LAST DAY from the Gospel accounts which eliminates duplications while capturing every descriptive phrase of this drama. JESUS' LAST DAY is graced with a four- color cover of Jesus in Gethsemane. You will want to cherish it as a keepsake that you will re- read each year in remembrance of Jesus' death. This special free gift is a one- time offer to our readers.

"I Will Come Again"

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When this age- abiding promise was first uttered by Jesus to his Apostles, it did not make sense. To the then "natural minded" men who followed Jesus, they assumed that Jesus' next logical move would be to take charge as a King, throw off the yoke of Roman bondage, exalt the Jews and bless the world. Why should he leave now? There was work to be done here. When Jesus spoke of his death and strangely of his leaving, the idea simply did not fit into their expectations. But as they wended their way along the path to Gethsemane, Jesus had assured them, "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again." John 14:3

Dazed, these words made little impression on his little band. But forty days later on Mount Olivet, huddled together in amazement with eyes turned heavenward, straining to catch the last glimpse of their ascending Lord, this promise came alive, "I will come again!" Yes, their beloved Master would return. The Apostles wove that glorious theme into the fabric of their ministry and their very lives.

Christ's Second Coming is the most frequently discussed doctrine in the New Testament over one third of its writings deal with this momentous event! As Christians our hearts thrill at the hope of being united with the returned Lord Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, seeing him as he is, living with him and experiencing his love forevermore and the reality of reigning with him (Revelation 20:5) in a kingdom that extends to the ends of the earth, bringing "peace like a river and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream." Isaiah 66:12

Long have faithful Christians prayed with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Long centuries passed during which, seemingly, nothing happened. But our day is suddenly charged with an atmosphere of great expectancy.

However, in order to appreciate the reasonableness of the Bible's prophetic teaching on this deeply interesting subject, it is necessary that we have clear views of both the object of our Lord's second coming, and of the manner in which he will be revealed.

The Manner and Objective of the Second Advent

As we have observed, the object of his coming is to reconcile "whosoever will" (Revelation 22:17) of the world to God, by a process of ruling, teaching and disciplining. This is called judging and blessing. The manner of our Lord's coming and appearing is of paramount importance, as the student of prophecy strives to determine what manner of time the Holy Spirit does signify for the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

The Bible Student must hold clearly in mind the object, while studying the manner, of our Lord's return and both of these, when studying the time. This is needful to offset erroneous views, already preoccupying many minds, based on false ideas of the object and manner of our Lord's coming.

Grasp and hold in mind as firmly as possible the fact that God's plan is one harmonious whole, which is being wrought through Christ. Hold in mind that the work of the second advent stands related to the work of the first as effect to cause: That is, that the great work of Restitution at the second advent follows the work of Redemption accomplished at the first advent as a logical sequence according to God's divine plan.

Therefore, the Lord's return is the dawn of hope for the world, the time for bestowing the blessings secured by the redemption. The Gospel Age has been merely a parenthesis, during which the Bride of Christ is selected, to be associated with her Lord in the great work of restitution, which he comes to accomplish.

Signs of His Coming

Few would question that we are living in an era of human history, which is without precedent. Most Bible-believing Christians feel we are living in the very time the Bible says Christ is to return. There is a surge of interest in prophecy - a revival of interest in the second advent. Many speak of the imminent coming of Christ.

Their expectations are based on our Lord's Great Prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17, 21. Many believe that the nearness of Christ's return is indicated by such signs as the following: Israel restored (Matthew 24:32; Jeremiah 16:13-18); knowledge and travel increased (Dan 12:4); evils exposed as never before (Luke 12:2; 1 Corinthians 4:5); infidelity rampant from university to pulpit (Luke 18:8; 2 Timothy 4:1-4); men seeking pleasure, morality rotting (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13); strikes, walkouts (James 5:1-4); racial strife, riots (Zeph 1:7-9); juvenile delinquency (2 Timothy 3:2); wars and war preparations intensified (Joel 3:9-11); men crying fearfully for peace (1 Thessalonians 5:3; Luke 21:26); trouble everywhere (Matthew 24:21,22).

Coming or Presence

Let us take a closer look at our Master's words and see what these signs really prove. "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming [Greek, parousia], and of the end of the world?" Matthew 24:3

The Greek word here translated "coming" is parousia. It really means "presence." Therefore, if parousia means "presence," then the fulfillment of the signs given by our Lord in His prophecy would not mean that he is

coming soon, but that he is already secretly present - - as "a thief in the night." Remember, the Scriptures teach that Christ's initial return would be a thief- like, secret presence before "every eye shall see him." (See 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10 ; Revelation 16:15)

Rotherham's Emphasized Bible, Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words, Young's Analytical Concordance, and many other standard works in fundamentalist and evangelical bookstores confirm this definition of "presence."

The Bible Definition

However, we are not confined to dictionary definitions. The Lord has graciously provided His people a Scriptural definition for the Greek word parousia thus leaving us in no doubt as to its true meaning.

Parousia occurs in Matthew 24:37 where it is mistranslated "coming." The following chart compares its parallel citation in Luke 17:26 and, in so doing, the Bible provides its own definition for parousia.

Mt 24:37		Luke 17:26
But as the days	=	As it was in the days
of Noah were,		of Noah,
so shall also the	=	so shall it be
parousia of the		in the days of the
Son of man be.		Son of man.

The phrase "parousia of the Son of man" in Matthew 24:37 means the same as the phrase "in the days of the Son of man" in Luke 17:26. The "days of the Son of man" in Luke 17:26 refers to the time that Christ is present, just as the "days of Noah" refers to the time when Noah was present among his wicked generation. Therefore, parousia in Matthew 24:37 should be translated "presence of the Son of man" instead of "coming of the Son of man."

The Scriptural definition of parousia is further confirmed by the Apostle Paul's use of it. The thought of "presence" is plainly shown by the contrast with "absence" in Philippians 2:12. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence [Greek, parousia] only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

While no doctrine is mentioned more frequently in the New Testament than Christ's second advent, few doctrines have been as greatly fragmented into such diversified concepts. Much of the beauty of this

doctrine has been wrested from the grasp of God's people. All secular Greek dictionaries define parousia, "presence." Most Bible dictionaries likewise define parousia, "presence." Most current fundamentalist and evangelical writings on the second advent usually begin by correctly defining parousia, "presence." Then something strange happens. Somehow the word "coming" replaces "presence." Incorrect theology requires parousia to be translated "coming," but Scriptural harmony requires that it be translated "presence."

The Main Point

If, as we have seen, parousia means "presence," then all the signs that our Lord gave us in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 17, 21 do not indicate his imminent coming- they indicate his secret thief- like presence. We see those signs being fulfilled all around us.

The Scriptures show that the first stage of our Lord's parousia, presence, will be secret. "The day of the Lord will arrive [will be here, Greek, heko - - see Strong's, Young's or Vine's] as a thief." (2 Peter 3:10, Rotherham) A thief enters a house quietly, doing a secret work. Consequently, the first works of our returned Lord are during a secret presence. The world will, at first, be unaware that Christ has returned. "But ye brethren are not in darkness that that day should overtake [implies a period of overlapping] you as a thief." 1 Thessalonians 5:4

Later, his presence will be made manifest to all. The Scriptures use another Greek word, apokalupsis, to describe this revelation to all. "The Lord Jesus shall be REVEALED [apokalupsis] from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance." 2 Thessalonians 1:7- 8 It is in reference to this revelation to all, that Scriptures like Revelation 1:7 apply; "He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him." Christians, who are not overcharged with the cares of this life, will experience the joys of discerning the signs of his secret presence (Luke 21:34- 36), before they are "caught up together" with him.

When Does the "Parousia" Begin?

A number of Christian writers are publishing works which propose the date of Christ's return. The fulfillment of the "signs" which our Lord gave us indicate that we should be looking for his secret presence now. Space does not permit a complete discussion of Bible time prophecy nor a harmonization of seemingly conflicting scriptures [such as "every eye shall see him"] regarding the second advent. We encourage you to read the online book *The Time Is At Hand* which contains detailed studies of the time prophecies pointing to our Lord's return. You can also write to obtain a hardcover copy of this book. Also read the online booklet, *I Will Come Again*.

Waiting for the Rapture?

June 1999

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. ..." 1 Thessalonians 4:17

All the longings of every Christian are summed up by John's last words in Revelation when he says, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). What rapture it will be when, "It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is shown in weakness; it is raised in power" (1 Corinthians 15:44)!

Even the possibility of a "rapture" for some not-so-Christian people has become a subject of intense fascination as we approach the beginning of a new Millennium. How else could the novel on the rapture, Apollyon: The Destroyer is Unleashed, hit the NEW YORK TIMES bestseller list?

Popular expectations surrounding the return of Christ and the gathering of his people are tied in with a period of "Seven Years' Tribulation." Some feel Christ will first take his church secretly before these seven years (Pre-Tribulation); some feel it will be in the middle (Mid-Tribulation); some after (Post-Tribulation). And yet another view: Partial-Rapturism asserts that some will be taken before, during and the rest after. (RE-THINKING THE RAPTURE, pp. 24, 25) In any case, it is generally understood, "one shall be taken, and the other shall be left" (Luke 17:34). Then, many expect, after a temple is built in Jerusalem, abominable worship established and 144,000 converted Jews try to save others- Christ will come with his church and begin the 1,000-year reign.

"Caught up Together"

What was the Apostle Paul, by inspiration, really telling us? He was teaching us that those who have fallen asleep through the Christian Age would be raised first when Christ would return from heaven. Those living at the time would not precede those who slept, but afterward would join them in the same place. "We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. .. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. .." (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 NAS). "Together" here means the same place- not the same time. "Together" means place or location just as it does a few verses later when Paul says, "we may live together with him" (1 Thessalonians 5:10). The place is the "air." Satan, the "god of this world," has been invisibly ruling as the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Jesus returns as a King invading Satan's domain setting up his own Kingdom.

The "dead in Christ" rise first. Afterward those saints who are "alive and remain till the coming ["presence," Gk.] of the Lord" join them. They do not need to sleep to wait for Christ to return! Paul elsewhere explains, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the

twinkling of an eye, at the last trump..."(1 Corinthians 15:51,52). Thus those who were asleep are raised instantaneously upon Christ's return from heaven. But those who die in the Lord from "henceforth" - - when he has returned - - "rest from their labors and their works do follow" (Revelation 14:13). One by one- as they prove "faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10) - - "in a twinkling of an eye" each will join Jesus and the brethren who preceded. They join in one place, not at one time.

"One taken. .."

But didn't Jesus say, "one taken, and the other left" (Luke 17:36)? If a driver of a car is a Christian, wouldn't he just be "taken"? If an airline pilot is a Christian, won't he just be "taken"? On the contrary, a careful look at the texts reveals that the ones on the "housetop" are warned not to go inside to take their things. There is time for choices! The one in the "field" should not decide to "return back" to his house before leaving. Furthermore, they are not being snatched away to heaven. But then, where are they going? The apostles, in fact, asked this logical question, "Where, Lord?" (Luke 17:37)

Jesus answered- as he usually did in symbolic Language - - "wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." Faithful Christians are being gathered to a spiritual feast when he returns! Some respond to the opportunity. Some do not. Jesus, who had been saying to his church through the age, "Behold, I come quickly," finally says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me" (Revelation 3:11, 20). In keeping with one of the signs of his return, Jesus said he would provide "meat in due season" (Matthew 24:45).

Spiritual food.

Therefore, the "carcass" to which we as eagles are gathered could not be the Lord's fleshly body in heaven. He is spirit now (1 Corinthians 15:45). (We would not be eating his flesh in heaven anyway!) So some would be teachers "grinding at the mill" when the Lord would return. Some would be in the "field" - - in the world - - not connected with any church ("house"). Some would be very comfortably lying in their creedbeds (Isaiah 23:20) when Jesus would return. The test would be, Would Christians be spiritually sleeping or spiritually awake to understand that Jesus had returned as a "thief"? Would they be investigating God's "times and seasons" in the Scriptures? Would they understand the "signs" Jesus had given his disciples to confirm that he had returned invisibly? If Jesus' disciples would be ready, they would feast on the truths the returned Lord would provide. They would understand he had returned!

The Great Tribulation

Tribulation was one of the signs Jesus gave for his return. "Then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this

time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:32). The world has known trouble for a long time, but this trouble would be without precedent. Christ's peaceable Kingdom is established in a time of trouble.

Just what would happen in this "great tribulation"? Do we know how long it would last? Why do some Christians believe Christ first comes secretly to take his saints before the worst of it? Jesus, in fact, does come like a "thief in the night" and faithful Christians are admonished not to be spiritually asleep so they would not know the "day of the Lord" had arrived (1 Thessalonians 5:1- 6). Thieves do not enter a house with trumpets or shouts. That is why Paul when talking about Jesus descending from "heaven with a shout...and with the trump of God," is warning God's people that they should not be spiritually sleeping." Therefore let us not sleep as do others..." They hear a trumpet message and the "shout" of encouragement. He really does come secretly for his saints while the rest of the world sleeps on....

Just as "business as usual" was going on in Noah's day, so it would be in the days of the Son of man. "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives..." (Luke 17:26,27). Unless one was spiritually awake- investigating the time prophecies and reading the signs- he or she would not know Christ had returned and was assembling his resurrected saints in the "air"!

Other Signs

Actually, Jesus was quoting from Daniel's prophecy regarding signs of Messiah's return to take authority over the earth. And there were others signs besides tribulation and trouble. "And at that time shall Michael ["who as God," Jesus] stand up the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people [Israel], and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation...many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:1,4). During "the time of trouble," there would also occur a restoration of Israel! Jesus mentions that sign in his prophecy too- the blossoming "fig tree" (Matthew 24:32). Sounds like our times.... Never have we seen the potential for global annihilation. "This century," says former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in THE NEW YORK TIMES, 4/21/99, "has been the bloodiest in history. Over 160 million human beings have been killed in various conflicts and that number rises each day." But never have we enjoyed such travel and communication as we have been experiencing since the last century. Never have we seen a dead and scattered nation like Israel after 2,000 years come back to life as in our time!

Daniel's Seventieth Week

How could the tribulation be only seven years? The idea of seven years, actually, is borrowed from a prophecy in Daniel about Christ's first advent—not his second! While in Babylon, Daniel was informed that "seventy weeks" of favor from God would be given to his people to

prepare them for the coming Messiah. A week would equal prophetic seven days - - or seven years. so 7×70 would equal 490 years beginning with the "commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:16- 27). Seven weeks or 49 years would be spent in rebuilding Jerusalem, "even in troublous times" where Messiah would present himself to his people. Then sixty two weeks (or 434 years) more of just waiting for Messiah. At the beginning of the last "week," Messiah would present himself.

Precisely 483 years after Nehemiah's commission to rebuild Jerusalem, Jesus presented himself as Messiah at the Jordan River! Right in the middle of this last week of God's favor, alas, the Jewish people rejected their Messiah. After $3\frac{1}{2}$ years - - anticipating his rejection - - Jesus sorrowfully said, "Your house is left unto you desolate..." But still, although as a nation cast off, special favor to the Jewish common people themselves continued the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ years until the first Gentile convert, Cornelius. Thus the last seven years of the prophecy was fulfilled. A "seven years' tribulation," therefore, cannot be applied to the second advent from this prophecy!

Although the tribulation associated with Jesus' return is much longer than seven years - - still the good that will come from it will be more than compensated in Christ's 1,000- year Kingdom. Yes, this tribulation has begun already, and it will get worse. Yes, the saints have been gathering secretly to be with the Lord. But for those left behind when all the faithful Christians are all resurrected, there will be much joy and relief. "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19 NAS). When Christ with his bride as "the holy city, new Jerusalem" is revealed to the rest of the world - - then all the longings of mankind, those left behind, will also begin to be fulfilled (Revelation 21:1- 5).

EVOLUTION: The 20th Century Killer

September 1999

In 1859, Charles Darwin wrote his treatise, *The Origin of Species*, and ever since scholars and believers have debated the truth and value of Darwin's assertion that species develop through a process of natural selection, or evolution. Currently, many people regard evolution as an accepted principle in the realm of science and fail to weigh the heavy negative impact which the theory of evolution has already had upon human life and society. Does it matter what we believe about the origin of man? Does it make a difference whether we believe an intelligent Creator designed and created man and the universe, or whether creation came about through natural or even random processes? Yes, this is a great matter, a matter of life and death!

William Provine, a Cornell biologist and evolution supporter, plainly states what Darwinism means for human values, "No life after death; No ultimate foundation for ethics; No ultimate meaning for life; No free will." If mankind was created by natural law or by chance then there can be no human choice, meaning, or purpose in mankind's destiny, nor could there be a reliable moral compass to govern the individual members of society. If Darwinism is followed to its logical social conclusion, any course of action taken by the strong against the weak can be justified as harmonious with the process of natural selection. Modern human history has clearly shown the devastating impact of the evolution theory upon mankind.

In his book, *Out of Control*, Zbigniew Brzezinski notes that the twentieth century began as the century of promise and progress and yet it "became mankind's most bloody and hateful century, a century of hallucinatory politics and of monstrous killings. Cruelty was institutionalized to an unprecedented degree, lethality was organized on a mass production basis. The contrast between the scientific potential for good and the political evil that was actually unleashed is shocking. Never before did it consume so many lives, never before was human annihilation pursued with such concentration of sustained effort on behalf of such arrogantly irrational goals." Wars for world or regional domination and attempts to create totalitarian utopias caused the deaths of approximately 175 million people in this century of insanity. How is it that the course of human history was so tragically directed toward the devaluing of human life on such an immense scale?

Social Evolution

To understand the unthinkable, the destruction of so much of humanity, it is necessary to discover the philosophical underpinning of those who perpetrated such destruction and horror upon their fellow human beings. The roots of Nazism are well known to have their source in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and his theory of the Superman. Nietzsche's philosophy in turn drew from the writings of Darwin and

Herbert Spencer. While Darwin's work and conclusions were confined to the field of biology; Spencer attempted to apply the principles underlying evolution to other fields of science, including the social sciences. Spencer coined the phrases "struggle for existence," and "survival of the fittest." Yet it was Nietzsche who most clearly articulated that evolution showed that strength is the most desired quality and weakness the only failing. Will Durant notes the connection in *The Story of Philosophy*:

"The ethical philosophy of Spencer was not the most natural corollary of the theory of evolution. If life is a struggle for existence in which the fittest survive, then strength is the ultimate virtue, and weakness the only fault. Good is that which survives, and wins; bad is that which gives way and fails. Only the mid-Victorian cowardice of the English Darwinians, and the bourgeois respectability of French positivists and German socialists, could conceal the inevitableness of this conclusion. These men were brave enough to reject Christian theology, but they did not dare to be logical, to reject the moral ideas, the worship of meekness and gentleness and altruism, which had grown out of that theology. They ceased to be Anglicans, or Catholics, or Lutherans; but they did not dare cease to be Christians ... they had removed the theological basis of modern morals, but they had left that morality itself untouched and inviolate, hanging miraculously in the air; a little breath of biology was all that was needed to clear away this remnant of imposture. Men who could think clearly soon perceived what the profoundest of minds of every age had known: that in this battle we call life, what we need is not goodness but strength, not humility but pride, not altruism but resolute intelligence; that equality and democracy are against the grain of selection and survival; that not masses but geniuses are the goal of evolution; that not 'justice' but power is the arbiter of all differences and all destinies. - - so it seemed to Friedrich Nietzsche."

Fascism and Communism

It is against this philosophical backdrop that the nations in the early 20th century justified the dividing of the world into colonies. The non-white peoples of the world became the burden of the Western nations, whose duty it was to extend their rule to a guardianship over the lesser, weaker nations. In the case of Germany, hegemony was sought over the entire world because all were considered inferior to the Aryan race. This idea influenced Kaiser Wilhelm before World War I as it later found full expression in Hitler during World War II. The total military and civilian deaths of just these two wars is more than 75 million, including the deliberate destruction of Jews and others in the holocaust, all this justified in the name of "survival of the fittest," and the claimed genetic superiority of one people over all others.

However, this philosophical madness was not limited to the German nation but was the source of the majority of the multitude of wars in the 20th century. Almost as tragic as the world wars are the deaths of nearly 60 million people as Communist states sought to create and control perfect socialist societies. Lenin, Stalin, and Mao all believed that

strength and power were essential to survival and should be used ruthlessly, even against their own people. It was the consolidation of Communist rule, rather than the civil war that created the Communist government, which brought the majority of these deaths through forced collectivization of society, elimination of opponents, and manufactured famines in areas of resistance. Again, "survival of the fittest" was appealed to for justification as the weakest of society were sacrificed to ensure the continued dominance of the strong.

Even today with the grim histories of Fascist and Communist regimes, the same story of man's inhumanity to man has been replayed in a smaller but no less inhuman fashion in Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Kosovo and other places. Even in the richest of nations, the United States, the principle of "survival of the fittest" can be found pervading its institutions, particularly the financial, industrial and political segments of society. While a democracy ostensibly provides protection and opportunity to all of its citizens, in fact the rich and influential exercise a disproportionate influence to secure power and control to themselves. The fact that the rich are getting richer is reflected in a U.S. News and World Report editorial:

Despite the economic boom, poverty rates have dropped only a smidgen and the number of people living in extreme circumstances - - less than \$6,750 a year for a family of three - - has actually increased from 13.9 million in 1995 to 14.6 million in 1997. One in every 5 youngsters is still poor, compared with 1 in 7 in the 1970s.

Just as in the United States itself, the world is experiencing a growing gap between the rich and poor, and that is a poisonous mix. That is going to create a crisis in the future- warning of potential anarchy in Africa as well as Russia. The United Nations has issued a stinging report. It says that even as corporate executives, scientists, entertainers, and others are now forming a "global professional elite," inequality is rapidly increasing within many countries. The income gap between the top and bottom fifth of the world's population has more than doubled since 1960.

Personal Amoralty

Personal experiences of many individuals also corroborate the sad influence of the evolution theory. For example, Provine's statement above about the meaning of Darwinism for human values was challenged by a young listener who said:

"My background is murder and rape. I once thought that was okay, because who cared about life?" But now he went on, he had come to realize that "life does matter" and "there are absolutes." The man's words were a stunning reminder that the origins debate is not merely academic; it involves the most fundamental principles by which people live and die.

Does it Matter?

Does it matter then whether we believe in creation or in evolution? Based on the overwhelming historical evidence alone we answer emphatically, YES! The theory of evolution has had an extraordinarily adverse impact on mankind and should be committed to the dust bin of history. Let us reexamine the scriptural testimony which the theory of evolution was meant to replace:

1. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Genesis 1:26 Man was created in the mental and moral likeness of God, with ability to reason and to exercise his free will to choose right or wrong. Man exists on a higher plane than the animals and "a little lower than the angels." Man is responsible to the Creator for failing to observe his law.

2. "For as all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive "All that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth." 1 Corinthians 15:22; John 5:28- 29 Adam's fall into sin affected the entire human race. It is through Adam that mankind inherited sin and death. Jesus tasted death for every man that all might have an opportunity for fullness of perfect life. Contrary to evolution man will have a return from death.

3. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Matthew 6:10; Revelation 5:10, 20:4, 6 The faithful church is privileged to reign with Christ for the thousand years of judging and blessing mankind in the kingdom. The purpose of the Millennial Age is to teach every man the law of God that at its close the will of God will be done on earth as fully as it is now done in heaven. Those of mankind who are shown to be incorrigible, who will not obey Christ will be cut off from life in the second death.

What a contrast is shown when the principles of life in the scriptures are compared with the effects of the theory of evolution on mankind! Evolution held out the hope of mankind ever rising to higher levels, but this dream turned out to be a nightmare. The scriptures have always exercised an uplifting influence upon man, whereas evolution has degraded him. Belief in the intelligent Creator and Designer of all things is indeed a matter of life, and belief in the evolution theory a matter of death!

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3

The Bible Millennium

November 1999

The new Millennium- what will it bring? Will it bring the second coming of Jesus Christ? Will world wide troubles come, or perhaps the end of the world itself? Will it be the year in which God's Kingdom is established on earth? The answers to these questions are vitally important. As Christians, we must consult the Bible to know the truth on these matters.

"Millennium" as defined in Webster's dictionary, is a period of 1000 years. Only two scriptures in the New Testament mention a 1000- year period (a millennium). The first is 2 Peter 3:8. The last is Revelation 20:4. We will examine these Scriptures after considering whether the coming year 2000 AD is the third millennium from the birth of Jesus Christ.

When Was Jesus Born?

Many Bible commentaries have placed Jesus' birth at 4 BC (BC means "before Christ"). Two thousand years from then brings us to the year 1996 AD, four years earlier than the year 2000. The most accurate dating for Jesus' birth is 2 BC (see *The Time Is At Hand*, pages 54- 62 offered at the end of this article). Two thousand years from then leads to the year 1998 AD, which is still 2 years shy of the year 2000. In reality, the BC and AD calendar division is a rather arbitrary time measure used only for convenience but is not useful for accurate measurement of Bible chronology

What Have We Learned?

The year 2000 AD is a date of great concern and curiosity for the world, but has no real Biblical significance. The Bible Millennium DOES NOT begin with the year 2000, that year is not 2000 years from the birth of Christ. Furthermore, the Word of God does not tell us to watch for the 2000th year from Christ's birth.

Which 1000- Year Period Are We To Look For?

Careful study of the Scriptures teaches that the Bible Millennium is the seventh 1000- year period from the entrance of sin and death upon the human family through father Adam. That is to say, since Adam sinned, 6000 years of suffering, dying and finally death have passed over his descendants, the entire human race. When considering creation (Genesis 1), we notice that God worked for 6 days (six periods of time, each equal in duration) and then He rested on the seventh day. In like manner, the nation of Israel was required to work six days a week and rest on the seventh day or Sabbath. This pattern of six days labor ending in a seventh day of rest is very helpful in locating the Bible Millennium.

How Long Is A Day With The Lord?

We are not left to guess. The Apostle Peter supplies us with the answer in 2 Peter 3:8, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Applying this Scriptural definition to the divine pattern, we perceive that six 1000 year "days" of human bondage and labor under sin and death are to be followed by the seventh 1000 year day of rest in which the burdens of sin and death will be removed from the human race. We see then that 7000 years were allotted in the divine plan for the entrance of sin, its reign of death and, ultimately, its complete eradication. This same 1000- year day is spoken of in Revelation 20:4 as the time in which the saints will reign with Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us that the purpose of the 1000- year reign is to put all enemies under his [Christ's] feet and the last enemy of mankind, as a result of sin, which will be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26)

This 1000- year period or millennium is described in Acts 3:19- 21 as 'the times of restitution of all things.' In other words, this is the era in which mankind will be brought back (restored) to their original condition- that is, made perfect. (See Genesis 1:27, 31)

When Does This Millennium Begin?

By carefully considering the chronological evidences of the Bible, we are able to pin- point the very year of Adam's sin and subsequent death sentence at 4126 BC. Adding the following 6000 years reign of sin and death to that date brings us to the year 1874 AD- the year for the great seventh 1000- year day, the Bible Millennium to commence. (see *The Time Is At Hand*, pages 33- 63 for a detailed presentation of this chronology). Let's consider the Scriptural evidences that we are in the Bible Millennium.

What Events May We Expect In This 1000 Year Day of the Lord?

Peter states that , " The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the DAY of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter 3:10, 12, 13) The thousand year day of 2 Peter 3:8, is also characterized as the day of judgment (vs. 7), the day of the Lord (vs. 10) and the day of God (vs. 12). These terms define various aspects of God's work during the Millennium.

These and many other scriptures reveal that this 1000- year day does not begin peaceably, but with trouble- terrible trouble. The millennial day

arrives as "a thief in the night." That is, it comes quietly, unobserved by the world, which is in a state of spiritual slumber. We are, in fact, living in the beginning of the Day of the Lord. Jesus has arrived as a thief (Matthew 24:43) and the world is unaware of it. Why? Our Lord returned to earth's atmosphere not again as a man, but as a glorious invisible spirit being. Peter reveals that our Lord was "put to death flesh, quickened [resurrected] spirit." (1 Peter 3:18) Paul clearly teaches that our Lord is no longer in the flesh for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 15:50)

In What Great Work Does the Lord Jesus Engage upon His Return?

His first work is to bind Satan, who is the god of this present evil world. (Revelation 20:1- 3; Galatians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 4:4) Satan must first be bound if his house (dominion- the present evil world) is to be spoiled or destroyed. (Mark 3:27) This means the removal of false religions and oppressive governments (the "heavens") along with the present social order (the "earth") which is largely based upon selfishness.

How Is Satan Bound?

Does our Lord use a literal chain and throw Satan in an actual pit? No, of course not. Satan is not a flesh and blood being, he is a spirit being. Since he can't be physically restrained his great influence, by which he rules mankind, will be bound. God, in His wisdom, has determined to restrict in a gradual manner Satan's usual method of operating.

The chain he is using to render Satan powerless is Truth. Yes, the Truth, which has shone forth from the time of our Lord's return at the beginning of the Bible Millennium, is dispelling the ignorance, superstition and errors of the dark ages. Light (knowledge, understanding and truth) shining upon earth's spiritual and temporal matters, is exposing and weakening the influence of the ruler of darkness - Satan.

How Has the Prince of Darkness Reacted to the Increased Light of the Millennial Day?

Like a wounded animal, caught in a trap, Satan is fighting for his life! His weapons are the new errors of higher criticism, greed, evolution, rampant immorality and sadistic violence. These weapons have been forged in an attempt to fight off or diminish the increasing light of the Millennial Day. This is the reason that unprecedented troubles are sweeping over the world. The wicked one, Satan, is being destroyed with the spirit of [our Lord Jesus'] mouth - the Truth! Satan will not go down in defeat without a fight. He will respond with all power, signs and lying wonders. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:8- 12)

Daniel Spoke of This Millennial Day

Daniel called this day "the time of the end [when] many will run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:1- 4) Have these two

signs identifying the time of the end had their fulfillment in our day? Is mankind running to and fro? Has knowledge ("light," which is used to bind Satan) significantly increased since 1874? A resounding, "Yes!" is the answer to both questions. These two signs have had a remarkable fulfillment and confirm that we are in the dawning of the Millennial Day.

Why Does the Millennium Start With Trouble?

In the beginning of the Millennium, the Golden Age of blessing, God establishes His kingdom "in the days of these kings." That means that earthly kings and kingdoms must be removed from power- and that spells trouble. (see Daniel 2:44) How does the world react to the setting up of God's glorious Kingdom? Do they rejoice and receive it with open arms? No. On the contrary; they are angry and fearful because they do not understand why their world is crumbling around them. Their flawed laws, governments and erroneous creeds are being exposed as failures. (Revelation 11:15- 18) Neither do they recognize that it is Christ (earth's rightful King) who is taking the reins of power- therefore the nations resist Him.

Our Lord indicated that the great trouble associated with this time of transition will be greater than any other mankind has ever experienced. (Matthew 24:21) Paul likened it to a woman in birth pains, "For when they shall say peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

Considering today's headlines regarding world wide economic troubles, governmental corruption, civil unrest, pollution etc. confirm that we are in a time of trouble without precedent. We are living in the time of transition from the present evil world into the Bible Millennium.

Israel, God's Time Clock

Our Lord Jesus said that in this time we would begin to see the restoration of the nation of Israel, an indication that the Kingdom of God is at hand. (Luke 21:29- 32) Prior to 1874 AD, the nation of Israel had been scattered and persecuted throughout the world for over 18 centuries. Since 1874, beginning at 1878 with Petah Tikvah (the first permanent settlement for returning Jews) to the proclamation of Israel in 1948 and to the present, this sign hails the dawn of God's Millennium.

What Is Next On the Prophetic Time Line?

One prominent event that we expect in the near future is the coming cooperative effort between churches and the state to maintain the status quo- to resist the establishment of God's Kingdom. This powerful allegiance will resemble the Holy Roman Empire of old (a civil and religious government). We expect that this nominally Christian government will have the power to persecute all, including true Christians, who do not cooperate with them- receive the mark of the

beast. (Revelation 13:16, 17) The movement toward union between various religious groupings as well as the rising tide of political influence from the "Christian right" is documented almost daily in news headlines.

The climax of the great time of trouble is an event referred to as "Jacob's trouble." (Jeremiah 30:7) At this time all nations will come against the restored nation of Israel. (Zechariah 12:2, 3; 14:2) However, He who restored Israel will not allow her to be destroyed. God will fight, victoriously, for Israel as He did in the days of old. (Ezekiel 38- 39; Zechariah 14:3) After this great victory, God will establish His New Covenant with the nation of Israel. (Jeremiah 31:31)

The Dead Will Live Again!

Sometime after the establishment of the New Covenant with Israel, the resurrection of mankind will begin. They will be raised up in a world which has a beauty, peace, justice, righteousness and love that far surpasses the world they formerly knew. This will be a time when the dead must return to life- when all who are in their graves will hear the voice of the son of God and come forth. ALL will come forth because Jesus died for ALL. (John 5:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 1 Timothy 2:4, 5)

The risen dead will then be educated. They must overcome their old habits and sinful characteristics which they practiced in their former lives. Developing along this line, they will also be learning the benefits of keeping God's perfect law. (Isaiah 26:9) In Isaiah's vision of God's Kingdom, this process of education and personal growth is characterized as a highway leading to holiness. (Isaiah 35:8- 10) In that day (the peaceable portion of the Millennial Kingdom) God's educational program will be so complete that "all will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest." (Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 11:9)

A Final Test Is Necessary

At the end of the 1000- year Millennial Day, mankind will have been perfected by God's program of education and discipline (Revelation 2:27) Then a final test will be supplied to prove all mankind to see whether, after experiencing both evil and good- blessing and cursing- they obey of force or their own free will. (Revelation 20:7- 9) The vast majority of mankind will pass the test and go on to life eternal. The disobedient minority will die the second death (going into oblivion, extinction), from which there will be no resurrection.

A Glorious Ending to the Millennial Day!

When the Bible Millennium is complete, all things will once again be in harmony with the great Creator. God will have wiped away all tears from mankind's eyes. The oft repeated request of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth- as it is done in heaven" will be fulfilled. From that time forward mankind will enjoy enduring peace,

health, happiness, security and life everlasting. (Revelation 21:4; 22:17; Isaiah 2:4; 33:24; Micah 4:4)

The Time Is At Hand is an extensive study of Bible chronology, the manner and time of Christ's second coming and the revelation of the Man of Sin. We encourage you to get a copy and consider its timely message.

Write to receive a hardcover copy of The Time is at Hand (enclose \$5.00 postpaid)

After Armageddon. ..

December 1999

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. .. which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. .. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." Revelation 16:12- 16

Y2K or not, many are distressing or at least musing about "Armageddon." Why? When? What is it anyway?

Back in 1912 former President Teddy Roosevelt, seeing the growing tensions of international anarchy among European nations before World War I, popularized the term "Armageddon." "With unflinching heart and undimmed eyes, we stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord" (The Boston Globe) Even further back history, in ancient Israel, the Valley of Megiddo was the battleground of many famous battles. (Thus the name Armageddon.) But with the Apocalyptic setting of a beast, dragon and frogs, John the Revelator sees the whole world ominously gathering to this place called Armageddon for a final "battle." John portrayed it as imminent. When is it? Is it soon?

What is often not noticed is that John also states the purpose of Armageddon: "that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Who are these kings? What about the Euphrates River and "unclean spirits, like frogs" coming out of the mouths of a dragon, beast and false prophet? so strange...What does it all mean?

A Symbolic Book

The Book of Revelation speaks in symbolic language. "The Revelation...signified [Gk., sema, a sign, VINE'S EXPOSITORY] by his angel to his servant John" (Revelation 1:1). Whether an animal or a celestial body or a city, the language is symbolic in this special Book. "Babylon," an ancient city long in ruins, is mentioned several times in this last Book of the Bible. Interestingly, it was a splendid City of walls hundreds of feet high and wide, supported by the River Euphrates. Babylon - - with a system of pagan worship, festivals, ceremonies, priesthood, complete with "Mysteries" - - was the chief seat of idolatry in the ancient world.

The Prophet Jeremiah referred to the city standing in his day: "Babylon has been a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken...of her wine...we would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed; forsake her...for her judgment reacheth to heaven" (Jeremiah 51:6- 9). Similarly, the Revelator speaks of symbolic Babylon as

"Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations...a great city...sitting on "seven mountains" (Revelation 17:5,18,9). Yes, Rome is called "the seven hilled city" by both poets and historians. Just as ancient Babylon was the seat of Paganism, so too papal Rome is its counterpart. It was not possible for Mystic "Babylon the Great" to be "healed" in the Reformation. In fact, for 300 years Protestants identified the great papal system as Antichrist. But for the most part, many of the Protestant daughter churches gradually became much like their mother. They associated themselves with human civil government.

Now, true Christians are advised to flee the nominal apostate churches. "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen...Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:2,4).

The Fall of Babylon

Ancient Babylon's downfall came in an unusual way. While King Belshazzar was feasting in his palace, a strange handwriting appeared on the wall (Daniel 5:1- 31). Daniel interpreted it to mean his kingdom's days were numbered. Meanwhile, Cyrus had diverted the flow of the River Euphrates which came into the city so that it dried up! His army entered through the iron gates of the dry riverbed. The Prophet Isaiah had predicted this very conquest! "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him...to open before him the two leaved gates...I will go before thee...I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron...I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me" (Isaiah 44:27- 45:4).

God used Cyrus, whose name means "sun" (YOUNG'S CONCORDANCE), as a picture of Christ who will conquer mystic Babylon at the end of this Age. With him will be "the righteous" who will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). These are "the kings of the east" (Revelation 16:12) who will bless all the families of the earth after Armageddon. ...

Today the "waters" of the Euphrates also support nominal Christendom. The "waters" are the people! How so? Revelation identifies the woman as "Babylon the Great" as sitting on the waters. The symbolic "waters" are even decoded for us: "The waters which thou sawest where the harlot sitteth are peoples, and multitudes and nations and tongues" (Revelation 17:5, 15).

While on one hand fundamentalist churches are growing in membership, the older historic mainline church attendance and donations have been somewhat drying up. In spite of this paradox, this alarming situation has encouraged those churches to try to work together. Thus the ecumenical movement. However, in cooperation with civil governments (the "dragon") the churches (the "beast" and the "false prophet") will begin to

eventually croak their unified message. Who are they...and what are they saying that would bring the nations to Armageddon?

Spirits Like Frogs?

A "spirit" is a doctrine. Apostle John says to "try the spirits whether they are of God" (1Joh 4:1). True Christians are to not believe everything they hear taught. They are to test everything by the Word of God. These false teachings are described as "unclean spirits like frogs." They would seem small, innocent - - but puffed up, arrogant, continual.

Why will the "frogs" croak? Because the people's support will be drying up for the Great City of Christendom, their confederation will croak, "Status quo!" They want try to gather for survival. Ironically, they will be gathering for Armageddon - - the destruction of the political and religious systems of this old order.

The Earthquake

This short- lived triple alliance will result in an "earthquake" (Revelation 16:18- 21). While literally a violent disruption of the earth, this earthquake is symbolic of society in upheaval. The people themselves will revolt against these imposed restraints and split this union: "the great city was divided into three parts..."

The effect of this "earthquake" will reach a climax in the Holy Land when the nations come against Israel. "There shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel...the earth shall shake at my presence" (Ezekiel 38:1- 23). Then, "every man's sword shall be against his brother" - - anarchy (Ezekiel 38:21). Then anarchy will spread worldwide completing Armageddon.

But Armageddon ending in anarchy will have a final, blessed purpose: "Thus will I magnify myself and sanctify myself and I will be known in the eyes of many nations and they shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezekiel 38:23).

Gathering for Peace

Similarly, the Prophet Zeph 3:8,9 (NAS) tells us what follows the gathering then the "fire" of anarchy: "Indeed, my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all my burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal. For then [afterwards] I will give the people s purified lips that all of them may call on the name of the LORD to serve Him shoulder to shoulder." Instead of brother against brother, people - - who did not know the Lord before - - will be serving God "shoulder to shoulder" in harmony!

After Armageddon, those who will have come against Jerusalem to destroy God's people will instead come to worship (Zechariah 14:1- 3,

16). They will also come to learn of God's ways. "In the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established...all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways' (Isaiah 2:1- 4). Instead of man's "armed peace," God's peace will be established permanently. Resources for armaments will be devoted to peaceful purposes: "They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war."

All those who died in Armageddon will be brought forth from the dead - - as well as those who ever died in preceding generations. The handicapped physically, mentally or morally will be healed. After Armageddon will be the time for the "healing of the nations," the peoples of earth (Revelation 22:1- 3).

Then, the "kings of the east," those faithful Christians who suffered with Christ, will reign with Christ (Romans 8:17). For what purpose? - - to bless all the families of the earth! The "New Jerusalem" will be the spiritual counterpart of the Jerusalem on earth. Both will work together, "For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." With Satan bound, no longer able "deceive the nations," most of earth's billions will chose God and righteousness. And as they reach personal perfection, each one will be a "king" bringing tribute to the Lord - - to the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24).

We recommend that you read the Christian Classic, The Divine Plan of the Ages

The God of Science

Winter 2000

Science is a systematic knowledge of the physical or material universe gained by observable facts. The sacred writings of all world religions basically contain a system of faith. Yet each do make statements within the province of science that provides a uniquely valid test to prove their authenticity. If their scientific observations are in reality superstitions reflective of the culture in which they were written, these so called books are disqualified as the inspired Scripture of God.

If, indeed, the scientific observations of any of these purported Holy Scripture agree with the facts of science today, then that Bible is the inspired Word of a true and living God. Why? The Creator and God of the universe is the God of science - - the author of the scientific laws that govern His universe. Only the God of science could cause scientific facts to be recorded in a book - - the Bible - - hundreds or thousands of years before scientists discover them.

Only the Judeo- Christian Bible contains scientific facts that anticipated scientific discovery by hundreds and in some cases several thousand years. The following are examples of remarkable scientific observations found in the Judeo- Christian Bible.

What Holds the Earth Up?

Three thousand years ago the Hindu scriptures recorded the earth was resting on the backs of several huge elephants. The elephants were resting on the back of a very large turtle that was swimming in a sea. Greek mythology claims that the god Atlas was holding the earth on his shoulders. But our Bible says in Job 26:7 - "[God] hangeth the earth on nothing." What a remarkable statement of fact. The earth is suspended in space. Nothing is holding it up. Job wrote about the same time the Hindu Scripture was written. How did Job know this scientific fact? Only God could have revealed this to Job.

Flat Versus Round Earth

For thousands of years people believed the earth was flat. If one went too far, he would fall over the edge. This was taught in both Hindu and Buddhist scripture. In the 1500s, the first ship sailed around the world. This provided empirical proof for many that the world was round. But the round earth was recorded in the Judeo- Christian Bible long before.

The prophet Isaiah 40:22 spoke of the "circle of the earth." Solomon wrote, "He [God] set a compass [circle] upon the face of the deep." Proverbs 8:27. In our century, Arabs spoke of infidels being pushed over the edge into space. About 3,000 years ago, our Bible said the earth was round. Indeed, the Judeo- Christian Bible is the inspired Word of God.

The Bottom of the Ocean

Until modern times people thought the ocean floor was sandy like the desert and saucer shaped - - deepest in the middle. This was even true of the pre- 1900 geologists. But in the 1900s oceanographers found the sea had many deep valleys or canyons. The deepest canyons were called trenches. The Marianas Trench in the Pacific is so deep that if Mt. Everest (29,000 feet high) was dropped into it, the peak would still be a mile below the water's surface. There are also underwater mountains. The Atlantic Ocean contains an undersea range of mountains 10,000 miles long.

In addition, 3,000 years ago the Judeo- Christian Bible spoke of the valleys and mountains of the sea. In Psalms 18:15 (NIV) David wrote of God being the creator of "the valleys of the sea." God asked Job (Job 38:16 NIV): "Have you walked in the recesses [valleys] of the sea?" The prophet Jonah was thrown off a ship and spoke of falling to the bottom of the mountains in the sea (Jonah 2:6).

The Judeo- Christian Bible spoke of the valleys and mountains of the sea thousands of years before scientists discovered them. Indeed our Bible is the inspired Word of God.

The Paths of the Sea

In the 1800s, Matthew Maury, an officer in the United States Navy believed his Bible. One day Maury was reading Psalm 8. He was amazed that verse 8 (Psalms 8:8) spoke of the fish and all creatures that swim in the "paths of the sea." "Paths of the sea" - - how could this be? He never knew there was such a thing. He was determined to find them. Maury discovered that the oceans have many paths or currents, which were like rivers flowing through the sea. Maury wrote the first book on oceanography and became known as "the pathfinder of the Seas" - - "the father of modern navigation."

Maury received his idea about ocean currents from reading Psalms 8:8 which was written about 3,000 years ago by King David. David wrote as he was moved by the Spirit of God and probably never actually saw an ocean.

Incidentally, Psalms 8:8 also spoke of fish in the "paths of the seas." All fishing boats make a good catch in the currents or paths of the sea. They have learned this is where the fish swim.

Lightning, Thunder and Rain

In ancient times, most religious scripture taught that lightning bolts were missiles thrown in anger by their gods. Since rain is so necessary to life, ancient people pondered what caused it. Some tried to stab holes in the clouds with spears. The Vedas (Hindu scripture) advised to tie a frog with its mouth open to the right tree and say the right words

and rain would fall.

Job stated (Job 28:26): "God made decrees [rules] for the rain. And He set a way for the lightning of the thunder." About 300 years ago, Galileo discovered the "rules for the rain" or water cycle that Job talked about. The sun evaporates water from the ocean. That water vapor rises and becomes clouds. This water in the clouds falls back to earth as rain, collects in streams and rivers and makes its way back to the ocean. That process repeats itself again and again.

But amazingly the Scriptures described this cycle centuries before. The prophet Amos 9:6 wrote that God "calls for the water of the sea. He pours them out on the land." Amos wrote as he was moved by the Spirit of God.

Pleiades, Orion and Arcturus

Job 38 deals with the wonders of His creation. In Job 38:31, 32 we read:

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades

or loose the bands of Orion?

Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?

ORION

"Canst thou ... loose the bands of Orion?" Garrett P. Serviss, the noted astronomer, wrote about the bands of Orion in his book *CURIOSITIES OF THE SKY*.

At the present time this band consists of an almost perfect straight line. In the course of time, however, the two right-hand stars, Mintaka and Alnilam, will approach each other and form a naked-eye double; but the third, Alnitak, will drift away eastward so that the band will no longer exist.

Thus, these stars that we see forming one of the bands of Orion are like three ships out on the high seas that happen to be in line at the present moment, but in the future will be separated by thousands of miles of ocean. In fact, all these stars that at the present time constitute the constellation of Orion are bound for different ports, and all are journeying to different corners of the universe, so that the bands are being dissolved.

THE PLEIADES

"Canst thou bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades ...?" Notice the amazing astronomical contrast with the Pleiades. The seven stars of the Pleiades are in reality a grouping of 250 suns. Photographs now reveal that 250 blazing suns in this group are all traveling together in one

common direction.

From Lick Observatory came this statement of Dr. Robert J. Trumpler:

The Pleiades stars may thus be compared to a swarm of birds, flying together to a distant goal. This leaves no doubt that the Pleiades are not a temporary or accidental agglomeration of stars, but a system in which the stars are bound together by a close kinship.

INCREDIBLE! God's laws of cosmology are loosing or dissolving the constellation Orion. Sometime in the far distant future, Orion will be no more. Conversely, wonder of wonders - - every last one of the 250 blazing suns in the Pleiades are ordained of God to orbit together in their symmetrical beauty throughout eternity.

ARCTURUS

"Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" Garrett P. Serviss wrote:

Arcturus, one of the greatest suns in the universe, is a runaway whose speed of flight is 257 miles per second. Arcturus, we have every reason to believe, possesses thousands of times the mass of our sun. Think of it! Our sun is traveling only 12 ½ miles a second, but Arcturus is traveling 257 miles a second. Think then of the prodigious momentum this motion implies. It could only be stopped by collision head on with a body of enormous mass. Barring such accidents, it must, as far as we can see, keep on until it has traversed our stellar system, whence it may escape and pass out into space beyond to join perhaps one of those other island universesà

The wonders of God's universe never cease to amaze us. Arcturus and his sons are individual runaway suns that seem to be out of orbit in our galaxy. Traveling at such incredible speeds, why don't they crash with other suns or planets? Where are they headed? Only God knows. Indeed they are not runaways. They will not crash. Why? God is guiding them.

When Mr. Burckhalter of Chabot Observatory had his attention called to this text in the book of Job, he studied it in the light of modern discovery and made a statement that has attracted worldwide attention:

The study of the Book of Job and its comparison with the latest scientific discoveries has brought me to the matured conviction that the Bible is an inspired book and was written by the One who made the stars.

Which Bible is Inspired by a Living God?

The Judeo- Christian Scripture made scientific observations that were confirmed centuries later by modern science, while the sacred scripture of other world religions merely reflected the scientific superstitions of their culture. How could the Judeo- Christian Scripture anticipate scientific discovery by 3,000 years? The Judeo- Christian Bible was

written by men who were inspired by the Creator and God of the Universe - - the God of science. Only the Judeo- Christian Bible is the Divine Revelation provided by our infinite Creator to direct us in the path to eternity.

God Will Bring Middle East Peace

March 2000

Many Christians today believe the regathering of the Jewish People to the reborn State of Israel is God's handiwork. They trust that Middle East events are under Divine guidance - - because they accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and grasp, by faith, its message.

Now two peoples, Jews and Arabs, are locked in an epic struggle on several fronts in the Middle East. The news media daily chronicles this great drama. Syrians want Israel to give them the Golan Heights, yet refuse to shake Israeli hands at negotiations. Syrians say, "Give us the land and then we'll negotiate." Palestinian Arabs want more land from Israel yet lapse upon previously agreed commitments to end terrorism. What, realistically, would this "peace," arranged by fallen man, be like? Very cold at best.

To the worldly, not enlightened by the prophetic lamp of the Scriptures, the struggle is merely political. It is not. Surely, at the very heart of Middle East struggles lies the question, "Who is the true God?!"

Is God the mighty Jehovah of Judeo-Christian belief or Allah of the Muslim faith? The final outcome of the struggle between Jews and Muslims will answer the question. We firmly believe God will vindicate himself.

Where Christians stand on this issue is of utmost importance. Do we support the Arab side of the land struggle? If so, we may unwittingly be opposing our God. The prophet Ezekiel shows us God's perspective on the contested land and the embattled Jewish people. Speaking to the invading forces of Gog at the time of Israel's final battle, God warns, "And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes." Ezekiel 38:16

The phrases "my people" and "my land" emphasize that centuries after the Diaspora, God still considers the Jews his people and the Land of Israel his land. Note that this occurs before Messiah is revealed to the Jews. Zechariah 12:10. The land of Israel and the Jewish people are inseparable - - by Divine decree! God promised the land to Abraham and his seed after him- passing from Abraham to Isaac, then to Jacob and on to the twelve tribes of Israel. The promise still remains.

Stephen's public discourse recorded in Acts 7:5 confirms this. Though Jesus had proclaimed the House of Israel "desolate" just before his crucifixion, Stephen subsequently made a profound observation. Although God promised the land to Abraham, "he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed

after him, when as yet he had no child." Two points are confirmed. First, the resurrection of the dead (Abraham must be raised to inherit the Divine promise of the land) and, second, the Land of Israel would be possessed by Abraham's seed in the last day- the great day of Restitution. Acts 3:19- 21

Turning again to the land issue, if Allah's Islamic people succeed in wresting the land of Israel from the Jewish people - - the promises and prophecies of the Judeo - - Christian Bible will have failed! The Bible would be invalidated; the Koran exalted. Friends, we are full of faith that God's word will not return to Him void. The Bible will be magnified and vindicated. The Jewish people will receive the Biblically promised land. They will do so even if the whole world opposes them- for God, who wills it to be so, is on their side.

The prospect of Israeli- Arab peace and resolution of territorial conflict under human solutions are painfully epitomized in Hebron. We hear of Hebron's little band of Jewish residents and their struggles to thrive as a community. We were there a few years ago, here's what we learned ...

A Brief History Lesson

Many are unaware of the modern history of the Jews in Hebron. Until 1929 there was a thriving Jewish community there. Jewish merchants and citizens lived in peaceful coexistence with their Arab neighbors. Civility characterized their interaction. Additionally, Jewish physicians and nurses ran the sole health clinic in Hebron. They provided the Arab community a large amount of charitable care, being the only source of health care available to the Arabs.

Riots plagued Jerusalem prior to 1929, instigated by Arabs. The result of these riots was murderous persecutions of Jews in the "City of Peace." Hebron, however, remained quiet. Harmony between Jews and Arabs prevailed until Arabs from Jerusalem came to foment uprisings in Hebron. The quiescent way of coexistence there was soon to be shattered.

Britain ruled over the Holy Land at the time under the provision of the League of Nations 1920 Mandate. British officers, as eyewitnesses recalled, told Hebron's Jewish community leaders that they were short on weapons and couldn't guarantee British protection of Hebron's Jews should the Arabs attack them. Unfortunately, the British made sure the Arabs were also informed.

This helped trigger the bloody month of August 1929 in Hebron. Arabs began attacking Jews. With knives, axes, machetes, picks- whatever they could find - - Arabs raged in indiscriminate attacks of violence. Strong young Jewish men brutalized, and also women, the elderly and even tender young children. When Arab fury was satiated, for the time being, 67 of Hebron's Jews had been slaughtered. Many others were mutilated. Photographs of the survivors keep the story fresh. Pictorial records of

victims' horrible wounds jarred our Christian sensibilities deeply.

Having their fill of Jewish blood the rioters began to turn on the British, who were standing by to watch the melee. Seeing the advancing mob, an officer on horseback drew his pistol and fired two shots into the air. The riot stopped immediately. If only the officer had fired his precious two bullets an hour or two earlier, much human suffering would have been averted.

The survivors were told that their safety could no longer be guaranteed. They had to leave their homes, synagogues, businesses and fields without any financial compensation. Suffering such material loss compounded the pain of their physical wounds. The Jewish medical clinic was closed, the Arabs had deprived themselves of adequate health care. The Jewish community of Hebron faded and, after the 1948 War of Independence, was completely gone. The Jordanian Army occupied Hebron until the '67 War - - banning all Jews from that sacred city.

In 1979, Jews finally began to return to their homes and synagogues left behind for a half- century. What drew them there? What could impel them to move to such an inhospitable place - - whose bloody past looms over the present? Quite simply and powerfully - - the Word of God.

Scriptural Reasons

Hebron is called the "Mother of Israel." Jewish roots here are deep - - the result of a history that goes back thousands of years. Abram dwelled in Mamre, which is in Hebron. Genesis 13:14- 18 Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah in Hebron for 400 shekels of silver. Genesis 23:17- 20 Joshua took Hebron as part of the promised land of Canaan. Joshua 14:6- 14 Hebron was one of the six Cities of Refuge. Joshua 21:13 David began his reign over Judah in Hebron. 2 Samuel 2:1- 4 In Hebron David was anointed king over all Israel. 2 Samuel 5:1- 3 It is of interest that Hebron is not mentioned at all in the Koran.

The Tomb of the Patriarchs holds the bones of the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives- the parents of the Jewish people. Is it any wonder that the Jews are compelled to live here beside their ancestors? Their deep roots of faith yearn to be connected with the land and cities God gave to their fathers. The Bible assures us that one day their hopes will be thoroughly satisfied.

Christians Beware

Some Christians embrace the concept of Replacement Theology. Briefly stated, that means Israel has been everlastingly superseded by the Christian Church. Supposedly, Israel's national role in God's plan is finished. (We do not agree. Limited space does not here permit a verse-by- verse consideration of Romans 11. We commend careful study of the chapter. It powerfully confirms Israel's present and future role in God's plan.)

Generally the traditional Christian churches tend to hold Replacement Theology's tenants. Having lost sight of the Biblical promises to Israel as existing any longer, these churches actively support the Muslim cause. They say that Israel should give up land. In December 1996 they sponsored a full- page advertisement in THE NEW YORK TIMES calling for Israel to give up sole administration of Jerusalem. Doubtless they will apply more pressure as negotiations for the final status of Jerusalem heat up.

Ironically, in supporting Islam's aims, these Christians are hurting the cause of Christ. Islam's goal is world domination. Listen to their fiery rhetoric, "The governments of the world should know that Islam cannot be defeated. Islam will be victorious in all the countries of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Koran will prevail all over the world. Only then will their Jihad [Holy War] be complete." "We shall export our revolution to the whole world. Until the cry 'Allahu Akbar' resounds over the whole world, there will be struggle. There will be jihad." We note the burgeoning growth of mosques in the United States and Europe, the nations of so- called "Christendom."

PLO flags covered with Arabic script are displayed in public gatherings. Their popular Message - - "first we will kill the Saturday people and then we'll kill the Sunday people."

Christians must support the message of our Bible. Israel, dwelling in its God given land as a blessing nation, is part of that message. The God of Israel, not of Islam, shall reign over all the earth. "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD." Numbers 14:21

Concluding Thoughts

Hebron is an example, a microcosm of the larger struggle. That larger contest for possession of the land will greatly intensify when the issues of final redeployment and sovereignty over Jerusalem come to the bargaining table. Remember God's promises regarding the land and the people of Israel. As Christians, perceiving the role of the Jewish people in the plan of God, may our faith give us the courage to make a stand and speak up for truth.

Christian leaders and governments are exerting tremendous pressure on Israel to give up land. United States leaders want Israel to give the Golan Heights to intransigent Syrians and more land to Palestinian Arabs to achieve "peace." There is sad irony in God's Israel suffering (temporary) loss of land because professed Christians unwittingly choose to side with the position of Islam's Allah. God will bring peace to the Middle East - - not man.

"Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD."
Ezekiel 38:23

Prayer Before School. ..

April 2000

As long as man has walked on the face of this earth, he has reached up to God in prayer. "Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). The poet has once said, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire - - uttered or unexpressed." To the extent that a man or woman is still in the "image of God," prayer is a natural inclination.

Adam, of course, communicated with God in the Garden of Eden. But sin changed this precious fellowship. Abel brought an acceptable sacrifice in worship when he "brought of the firstlings of his flock" (Genesis 4:3,4) Why did God have "regard for Abel and for his offering" - - but not Cain's vegetables from his fields? It was because Abel worshipped God while acknowledging sin and the need for blood to be shed.

Prayer in the Beginning

The Prophets of old, of course, communicated with God all the time. They showed their faith by their works and were counted righteous (James 2:21- 23). As friends, they could speak to God in prayer. But by faith, they looked forward to the coming of a Messiah who would redeem them from their sins as well as bless the world. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

Later on, God entered into covenant relationship with the children of Israel under the Law Covenant at Sinai. The whole nation of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, were received as God's people and were treated as if without sin. They had the privilege of going to him in prayer. But the sins of the Jewish nation were only typically blotted out from year to year. The blood of bulls and goats could never really take away sin, and the Jews held only the relationship of servants to God.

In the Tabernacle and then the Temple, the High Priest would offer sweet incense- representing prayers - - on the Incense Altar. "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense. .."(Psalms 141:2). However, yearly he would also bring blood atonement under the Second Veil to sprinkle on the Ark (Leviticus 16:11- 14).

However, the Gentiles were altogether without God. They had no privilege of prayer. Yes, they could praise or acknowledge the God of Israel .. But if they petitioned Him, he was not under any obligation to answer.

Jesus Opens a New Way for Prayer

Jesus, of course, opened up "a new and living way" when he himself died

as an offering for sin. So now we can "draw near" in prayer in full assurance we are being heard as sons of God.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19- 22

But Jesus warned that Christians should not pray "as the hypocrites" - - or use "vain repetitions as the heathen do" (Matthew 6:5,7). We might ask ourselves, Do we just use forms of words in our prayers without our hearts being in them? Do we just repeat words without their meaning anything to us? Do we just "say prayers"? We need to enter into our "closets" alone with God. With sincere hearts, we are to come "boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14- 16).

Our Lord's Sample Prayer

In the prayer taught us by our Lord, we first give honor to God recognizing Him as "Our Father" - - acknowledging His greatness and expressing the desire that His name be hallowed (Matthew 6:9- 13). We remember the Kingdom that is promised. We tell Him that our desire of heart for that Kingdom to come. We pray that His will may be fully done on earth. (This implies that we have given up our own will, that we wish to have God's will completely done in our mortal bodies.)

In this prayer there is a brief mention of our daily temporal needs: "Give us this day our daily bread." There is no request for our "wants" of delicacies, etc. - - but simply the necessities for our day. We ask no more- we wish no more. Then we pray that our "trespasses" may be forgiven "even as we forgive." How can we ask our Heavenly Father's forgiveness if we have not forgiven others ourselves? We cannot. ...

Finally, comes the petition for our protection from evil influences. There are temptations everywhere from the powers of evil: the powers of the air, and from our own flesh, and the world all around us. We ask for this divine aid in prayer.

Asking for the Holy Spirit

Are we to ask for temporal wealth and health? If God had promised the Christian temporal prosperity and healthy bodies, then we should pray for them. But He did not promise the Christian these earthly rewards. James says that when you pray for them, "Ye ask amiss" (James 4:3). While we must be wise stewards over our temporal advantages, Jesus has invited us to "suffer with him" (Romans 8:17) and walk in his footsteps. While Israel under the Old Law Covenant was promised prosperity if they would follow the Law (Leviticus 26:4- 12), the Christian is invited

to "to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (Colossians 1:24; 2 Corinthians 1:5). Ours is a way of sacrifice: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice. .."(Romans 12:1)

Yes, the good gift Jesus told his disciples to pray for was the holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). Just as parents know how to give appropriate and good things to their children, God gives us the holy Spirit for wisdom, peace and strength in all our affairs of life. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. .."(James 1:5). God has promised wisdom.

In the early church "gifts of the spirit" - - such as healing and tongues- were given to establish the infant church. The power of conferring those gifts was vested in the apostles- and to them only. None others in their day or since have been able to confer those gifts (Acts 8:13- 20). Instead of miraculously expecting gifts as at first, we now should pray for the Lord to help us grow the fruits of the spirit- meekness, gentleness, patience, brother kindness, love (1 Corinthians 12:30,31- 13:1- 8; Galatians 5:22).

Watch and Pray

Perhaps if we pay no attention to our prayers after they are uttered it would indicate that we have might not really appreciated the answer if and when we receive it. In fact, the Lord sometimes makes us wait for the answer. Remember the Lord's answer may be yes, or no or wait. But He is never indifferent to the pleading of his children. However, when we have to watch and wait, we learn patience, and even hunger more for the answer.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told his disciples, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." He knew his crucifixion would be a severe trial to his followers. He himself prayed to the Father, "Not my will, but thine be done." Likewise, today we must still be sober and pray for the Lord's will to be done in our lives. So there is a condition to the promise, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). Only if we are abiding in Christ - - like Jesus wanting only the Father's will - - can we expect to ask in prayer and receive our answer.

Children Praying in School

Can anyone else pray and expect to be heard besides fully committed, consecrated Christians? Yes. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Corinthians 7:14). The children of all believers are justified through the faith of their parents up to the time they reach years of mental maturity. Family prayer is very desirable in the homes of the Lord's people. Children should be taught from earliest age to thank the Lord for their blessings and ask Him to help them in time of need. If we would have our children actively and properly pray, we should not expect others to bring or guide them to the

"throne of grace" especially in a secular setting. Daily morning, afternoon and night - - we as parents can pray together with our children about our thankfulness, our needs and our cares. Children learn best when parents actively and properly pray together with them.

Should children pray in school? Of course, they should. But they do not need to have formal legislation that allows for community prayer in the classroom. In fact, it would be unfair to impose such a religious practice in a public school. Children should be encouraged to pray anywhere, any time - - before school, on the bus, in the cafeteria, the classroom, etc. - - as well as in their bedrooms before sleep at home.

Praying Without Ceasing

Our lives should be a prayer. As we wake till the time we sleep at night, we should have an attitude of conscious awareness of our Heavenly Father's presence. "In everything give thanks. .."(1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18) Prayer is the vital breath of the new creature in Christ. How often do we breath? Do we claim in prayer His rich promises as revealed in His Word?

Is the End- Time Antichrist scenario near?

THE POPE'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM AND THE VATICAN'S HIDDEN AGENDA

May 2000

Jerusalem is the focal point of End- Time prophecy, but first we must understand the Vatican's own agenda for Jerusalem. As soon as the Pope stepped off the plane, The New York Times, March 21 said, "He outlined a larger role for himself than just a humble Catholic pilgrim." The Pope said, "In this area of the world there are grave and urgent issues of justice, of the rights of peoples and nations." Such words make Israeli leaders nervous, for they know the Pope opposes Israel's sole sovereignty over Jerusalem.

The Vatican's agenda had already gained momentum when full diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the Vatican were established on June 15, 1994. Before such recognition, the Vatican gained the promise to be included in negotiating the final status of East Jerusalem. At the time, Israel claimed this only involved non-sovereignty issues.

In turn, Israel's leaders were elated that the Vatican agreed to give up its demand for the "internationalization" of Jerusalem. But exactly why did the Vatican give up this demand?

The Vatican's Dilemma

Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem presents a basic dilemma for the Vatican. Remember, the Vatican demanded Jerusalem's internationalization during the UN debate of the Partition Plan in 1947. New York's Cardinal Spellman committed all his energy to keep Jerusalem out of Israeli control. He telegraphed the Papal nuncios (ambassadors) in South American countries with the demand that they urge their home governments to take an uncompromising stand at the UN for the internationalization of Jerusalem.

The Vatican's ostensible reason for this policy was that thus all three major faiths would be guaranteed free access to their holy places. However, from 1948 to 1967 when Jordanian forces occupied Jerusalem, Jewish holy places were shamefully desecrated and synagogues destroyed. Furthermore, Jews were denied access to East Jerusalem and the Western Wall. During this time, the Vatican never once raised a cry for internationalization.

By contrast, since acquiring Old Jerusalem in 1967, Israel has guaranteed all (Christians and Moslems in addition to Jews) free access to their holy places. Yet since 1967 the Vatican renewed and continued its insistence that Jerusalem be internationalized to provide free access. How absurd! Obviously, a deeper reason exists for the Vatican's opposition to Israel's possession of East Jerusalem.

Replacement Theology

The Roman Catholic Church believes Israel's right to be the Kingdom of God ended forever with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman Legion in 70 CE. When the Roman Catholic Church grew to world prominence, it claimed to be the rightful heir of the Kingdom of God. Rome (the Vatican) became the "New Jerusalem." The long centuries that followed of non- Jewish control of their land seemed to validate Papacy's claim. Then the rebirth of Israel challenged Catholicism's "Kingdom of God" theology. But the boast of Rome to be "the eternal city" was completely deflated when Jerusalem - - "the Eternal" - - became the capital of Israel in 1967. Why?

The Vatican's claim to be the "New Jerusalem," if true, would be the fulfillment of a Biblical type and many prophecies. (Biblical "types" are spoken of as "shadows" which continue until their reality occurs. For example, Israel was to celebrate the Passover annually with a slain lamb. The reality of that type was the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, which fulfilled that type. The slaying of the Passover Lamb came to an end shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection. Until this day a lamb is no longer killed and eaten during Passover) The Roman Catholic Church for centuries has claimed to be the fulfillment of the type of Jerusalem as the capital of the actual Kingdom of God. In type- and- shadow theology, if the type reappears, then the supposed reality is not valid. Thus, the re-emergence of Jerusalem as Israel's capital destroys the Vatican's claim to be the "New Jerusalem" - - the capital of the actual Kingdom of God.

Why does the Vatican act like a world political power, exchanging ambassadors with other nations? No other Christian church claims this civil government status. The only excuse the Vatican has to act as a world power is the claim that it is both the spiritual and the temporal Kingdom of God on earth, the New Jerusalem

The Vatican's Hidden Agenda

Why then did the Vatican in 1994 drop its demand for internationalization if it doesn't want Israel to have Jerusalem? The answer is plain and simple. The Vatican caved in to PLO pressure, not Israeli, on the internationalization issue. The PLO was vigorously opposed to internationalizing Jerusalem because it wanted East Jerusalem to be the capital of a Palestinian state. The Vatican's main concern was that East Jerusalem should not be in the hands of the reborn Jewish State.

That the Vatican was determined to terminate Israel's exclusive sovereignty over East Jerusalem was reflected in the statement of the Vatican's Foreign Minister, Jean- Louis Tauran in Amman, Jordan, July 9, 1994 (less than a month after the Vatican recognized Israel):

Before territorial problems are resolved, we have to find international

guarantees to safeguard the uniqueness of the city and assurances that never again one party should claim Jerusalem as its possession [emphasis ours]. It [Jerusalem] should be a crossroads of peace, a bridge between Earth and Heaven.

Of course, the Vatican wants a major part in the administration of that "bridge," preferably in a Palestinian-administered Jerusalem. The prestige of administering the holy sites of a Palestinian-ruled Jerusalem would greatly enhance the Vatican's larger agenda as the "New Jerusalem," the Kingdom of God on earth. Consequently, the Vatican is now demanding a modified version of "internationalization", a "special statute" on Jerusalem that would provide "international guarantees" of freedom of religion and access to holy places.

Over the years the Vatican waged a continuous aggressive campaign that East Jerusalem legally belonged to the Palestinians. But it has become apparent to both the Vatican and Arafat that Israel will not yield East Jerusalem. Therefore the Vatican and the PLO signed a new agreement.

Vatican and PLO Pact

Commenting on the reason for the February 16, 2000 Vatican and PLO Pact, Arafat's spokesman Nabil Abu Rudaineh said, Arafat is willing to share an undivided Jerusalem with a Vatican-sovereignty over all the holy sites in the Old City. Should Israel and Arafat fail to reach an agreement on sharing Jerusalem, PA Legislative Council Speaker Ahmed Qurei said, Arafat would agree to an internationalized East Jerusalem as stated in UN Resolution 181.

Of course, all of this is subject to some modification during negotiations. But the bottom line is that the Vatican will never rest until Israel's exclusive sovereignty is terminated. In other words, since Israel's sovereignty over East Jerusalem challenges the Vatican's claim to be the capital of the Kingdom of God on earth, Israel's sovereignty must be terminated. Why?

The Vatican's Greater Agenda

All heads of state are eager to meet with Pope John Paul II (Time, August 23, 1993). Why? Because he is not just the head of a church, the Vatican is the capital of a church-state. He is also head of the Papal State. Through his priesthood he has an intelligence gathering network that is the envy of every government. This network reaches down into almost every town and villa over much of the globe. John Paul II plays power politics with a skill that awes world leaders. Nations are anxious to exchange ambassadors with the Vatican. Pope John Paul and former President Reagan successfully plotted the downfall of the Communist Empire (Time, February 24, 1992). During this clandestine campaign Archbishop Pio Lashi said to the diplomat, Vernon Walters, "It is a very complex situation—listen to the Holy Father [Pope]. We have 2,000 years experience at this." It was further observed, "Step by reluctant step, the

Soviets and the Communist government of Poland bowed to the pressure imposed by the Pope and the President."

The Pope's ultimate agenda is revealed in the following statement he made on April 21, 1990 - - "a united Europe is no longer a dream. It is not utopian memory from the Middle Ages. The events that we are witnessing show that this goal can be reached." The Pope wants to revive the Holy Roman Empire of the Middle (Dark) Ages with the Vatican and Jerusalem axis as its capital. Listen to what the Vatican spokesman Joaquín Navarro- Valls said, "With all the symbolism this trip carries, not just for Catholics but for the whole world, the presence of the Pope underscores the arrival of God in human history. Clearly, seeing the Pope in this place makes the whole world think."

Forget that the Pope is of precarious age and health. Popes come and go. But the Vatican's agenda moves forward. ...Reviving the Holy Roman Empire - - this sounds like End- Time prophecy. This sounds like the book of Revelation and the Antichrist. It is!

Notwithstanding Arafat's, the Pope's or Antichrist's plans, there is only one agenda for Jerusalem that will ultimately succeed - - the Divine agenda. The Torah will go forth from Zion and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). At that time Israel will not only enjoy exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem but also exclusive dwelling rights. The Christian churches would do well to heed the warning of Zechariah 12:3.

And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. Many believe the Antichrist, False Prophet, Image of the Beast scenario is near.

Send for the newly published Booklet - - "can We Identify ANTICHRIST?"

As an introductory, it is free.

The Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust

June 2000 (Also found at July 1998)

The doctrine of the resurrection electrified the early church. In the New Testament there are few doctrines on which more stress is laid, yet there are few doctrines in the churches today which are treated with more neglect. Why? Most traditional creeds in the Christian churches refer to the "resurrection of the body" - - the same body we have in this life. Have you ever pondered what that means?

One Evangelical minister attempted to explain the "resurrection of the body." He said, that it will consist of a regathering and revivifying of all the bones, sinews, flesh, skin, etc., that ever constituted a human body, regardless of how these parts had been disposed - - no matter if parts had been destroyed by fire or accident or eaten by fishes or beasts of prey; or if they had rotted in the ground and been absorbed as nutrients into various fruits, vegetables, grass, etc., and thus been over and over again transformed. He pictured the air filled with hands, arms, feet, fingers, bones, skins, sinews, etc., of the billions who have lived and died, seeking the other parts of their bodies; and that then the souls would come from heaven and hell and be imprisoned in those resurrected bodies.

How absurd! And yet, how else could one explain the "resurrection of the same body? No wonder very little mention is made of the resurrection in today's pulpit. Hear the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:35- 37:

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body.

The most complete discussion of the resurrection is given in 1 Corinthians 15:20- 28 where Paul unfolds the beautiful details of this doctrine:

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:20- 26).

Verse 20 shows Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead. But there

would be afterfruits- all mankind. Verses 21 and 22 identify the afterfruits. Just as all mankind died because of Adam's sin, so all will be made alive because of Jesus' death - - as a "ransom for all" (1 Timothy 3:6).

Two Resurrections

Verse 23 shows that "all" mankind, for whom Jesus died, will be divided into two groups - - Christ the firstfruits, followed by "they that are Christ's at his parousia" (Greek for presence). Christ the firstfruits refers to the Body of Christ, his Church. Jesus was the firstfruits from the dead. But the Body of Christ will be the firstfruits of the world for whom Jesus died. They are called the "firstborn" in Hebrews 12:23. These Christians are raised at Christ's return (1Th. 4:16, 17).

Christ will be present for a thousand years (2 Peter 3:7- 12). "They that are Christ's at his presence" in 1 Corinthians 15:23 clearly shows the afterfruits or remainder of mankind will be raised during Christ's thousand- year kingdom (Revelation 20:1- 6). This is confirmed by verses 1 Corinthians 15:24- 27 which show that the resurrection work of verse 23 occurs during the Kingdom of Christ. Thus, there are two resurrections: first the church and second the remainder of mankind. No wonder Paul spoke of the "resurrection of the just and the unjust" in Acts 24:15. And this is just what Jesus tells us in John 5:28, 29.

Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good to a resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment (RSV).

Note, all will be raised from the dead - - first, "they that have done good." This refers to the true Church. During Christ's return they will be raised to spiritual life and united with their heavenly Lord. Then will follow the resurrection of the "evil class," all the remainder of men. They will come forth to a "resurrection of judgment." The Greek word in the text is krisis and it actually denotes "a crucial testing time." This Greek word is the source of our English word "crisis." And it has the same meaning. A doctor might say, "The patient will reach his crisis tomorrow morning." This does not mean that the patient will die tomorrow morning. Rather, the crisis of an illness is that period when the patient will take a turn for the better or for the worse.

The "crisis" or trial time for the Church is in this present life, but the "crisis" or trial time of the remainder of mankind will be at the resurrection in the Kingdom. Billions of mankind before and after Jesus' earthly ministry died without receiving the light of Jesus. Yet John 1:9 states that Jesus is the light that "lighteth every man that cometh into the world" A further Scriptural confirmation that, for most, truth enlightenment will require an awakening from the dead.

Resurrection of the Unjust - - When?

Both Jesus in John 5 and the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 taught the resurrection of the unjust occurs during the 1,000 year Kingdom of Christ when they will be on trial for eternal life. Yet Revelation 20:4, 5 seems to place it after the thousand years.

4they [the Church] came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:4- 6

Verses 4 and 6 clearly teach that the Church reigns with Christ in his 1,000 year Kingdom. Therefore, the Church must be resurrected at the beginning of the 1,000 years and verse 6 plainly states the Church's resurrection is the "first resurrection." Yet verse 5 places the raising of "the rest of the dead" (the "unjust") after the thousand years are completed. It then calls the raising of the unjust "the first resurrection." This is a contradiction to verse 6 which identifies the raising of the Church as "the first resurrection."

Notice in verse 5 we italicized, "the rest of the dead did not come alive until the thousand years were completed." Why? These words do not appear in the earliest manuscripts that contain these verses.[1] By eliminating these spurious words, verses 4- 6 harmonize. Now verses 4 and 5 agree with verse 6 - - the first resurrection applies to the Church.

Because of their theology, the translators have been less than objective on 1Joh 5:7- 8 and Revelation 20:5. Finally the translators have, in the last couple of decades, admitted that parts of 1Joh 5:7- 8 are spurious. Hopefully they will also concede that the first part of Revelation 20:5 is spurious. Thank the Lord there are reference books that enable us to prove it for ourselves.

Old Testament

The prophet Daniel wrote "many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall Awake"(Daniel 12:3). In Romans 5:15- 19 "many" is used interchangeably with "all" when referring to those who benefit from Jesus' death. Daniel then divides the "many" into two classes. Some awake to "everlasting life" and "some to shame and everlasting contempt." Some translations say "age- lasting" or "age- abiding" "life" or "contempt." The Hebrew word translated everlasting or age- lasting is olam. Olam does not mean eternal or everlasting. It means "for the duration." The context or other scriptures will define the length of that duration. Some translators seem to get a satisfaction by rendering olam as everlasting or perpetual when referring to the punishment on the non-elect.

The following scriptures prove olam does not mean perpetual or

everlasting. In Exodus 29:9 the Aaronic Priesthood would be olam, and was incorrectly translated perpetual. Hebrews 7:12 shows the Aaronic Priesthood ended in Paul's Day. It was replaced by the Melchisedec order. In Jeremiah 25:9, 12, Nebuchadnezzar would make the land of Judah a "perpetual (olam) desolation." Incorrect translation! Verse 11 states that the desolation would be 70 years.

Recall John 5:28, 29. The evil are raised to a resurrection by "krisis" or trial. This trial includes the 1,000 years, plus the "little season" that follows. Some will pass their trial favorably during the 1,000 years and enjoy what Daniel 12:3 calls age- lasting life. But only those who pass the test of the "little season" will receive everlasting life. Certainly there will be nefarious persons among the evil who are raised to their trial time (John 5:29). They will endure age- lasting shame as they are confronted by those they had harmed. Whether they finally obtain eternal life is problematic.

Remember 1 Corinthians 15? At death "you do not sow the [same] body which is to be, but bare grain, [our ego or personality] But God gives it a body just as He wished." (1 Corinthians 15:37, 38, 40 NAS)

Jesus spoke of the resurrection of the "good" and the "evil". Paul called it the resurrection of the just and the unjust. The Revelator identified the raising of the Church as the first resurrection, thus implying a second resurrection. In the first resurrection, the "good" or "just" receive a spiritual or celestial body that is immortal (1 Corinthians 15:38, 40, 53, 54). In the second resurrection, the "evil" or "unjust" receive an earthly or terrestrial body (1 Corinthians 15:38, 40). This life is age- lasting. If they have the faith and obedience to pass their "krisis" or trial, they will have eternal life (Revelation 20:17).

END NOTES

1. These words are missing in the earliest Greek manuscripts, Codex Sinaitic and Codex Alexandrine. (The Codex Vatican

1209 does not contain the Book of Revelation.) These words are also missing in the earliest Syriac and Aramaic manuscripts.

The Christian Sabbath

July 2000

Most people cannot wait for the weekend. Saturday and Sunday are days supposed to be for rest, relaxation and enjoyment. Although most stores are now open on Sundays, some people still go to church. Although Saturday is a big recreation day, other people still go to their synagogue or in some cases their church services. Why one in seven days? Why not one in ten? Is Sunday really a Sabbath?

God Rested

Even God rested on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:1- 3). But of course, God's "days" are not man's 24- hour days. God "ceased from his own works" (Hebrews 4:10) and gave it over to his Son- according to Bible chronology- over 6,000 years ago. Since then, man has been toiling under the taskmaster of sin and death. The law of God originally written in man's heart became obliterated. The plan for rewriting God's Law in man's heart will not be finished till the end of God's seventh day when Jesus Christ turns back a restored perfected creation to his Father (1 Corinthians 15:27,28).

But from creation- for 2,000 years- God did not say anything to man about keeping a Sabbath. Noah was minutely instructed by God, but nothing was said about keeping a Sabbath. In all of Abraham's long life, nothing is mentioned about his keeping a day of rest.

The Law of Sabbath

Not until it was time for God to deliver his special people Israel from slavery was there any ordinance or obligation to keep a Sabbath. Even the Passover, which was to be kept as "an ordinance for ever," was commanded before the Israelites left Egypt (Exodus 12:14). Likewise, while the first Sabbath was observed before the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai- it was also still considered part of the Law codified at Sinai. Thus, before they reached Sinai, they were then given the Law of Sabbath- and a very clear object lesson for observing it faithfully! Six days they could gather manna, but not on the seventh (Exodus 16:26-30). Eventually, at Mount Sinai the Law Covenant was formally inaugurated.

But in God's counting seven is not exclusively assigned to days. The seventh day, the seventh month, and the seventh year were, in fact, all prominent under the Law. The seventh day was observed as a period to cease from toil, a period of physical rest. In the seventh month, atonement for sin was effected that Israel might have rest from sin: "And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: in the seventh month. .. to cleanse you. .. it [the tenth day of the seventh month] shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you. .."(Leviticus 16:29- 31). In the seventh year, one might be released from the bondage of servitude (Deuteronomy 15:12).

Additionally, the grandest of all Sabbaths was the Jubilee when the Sabbath year was multiplied by seven and climaxed by the added fiftieth year. Then all mortgages, liens and judgments against persons and lands were canceled- actual real estate was returned to every family. Such equity was unheard of in all the histories of civilizations. Truly a GOD-given wonderfully fair Sabbath ordinance! The arrangement was designed to be a "shadow" or picture of the equity and rest of Christ's Millennial reign. The Jubilee Sabbath was a living pictorial of "the times of restitution [restoring] of all things [promised] which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets" (Acts 3:21). No wonder Jesus healed on the Sabbath!

Pentecost- the 50th Day

Israel's seventh day also found its fulfillment by another multiple of sevens. In this case the week was to be counted seven times with a special fiftieth day added. That fiftieth day was the Hebrew day Shavouth- better known to Christians as the Day of Pentecost. In spite of the uniqueness of this Law of Moses, that Law was a mere "shadow" of the beautiful reality God had planned. Since that special fiftieth- day Sabbath when the holy Spirit was given to the Christian church, there has been an inexpressible rest for the footstep followers of Jesus!

Some, however, in the early Christian church- predominantly those of Jewish background- experienced difficulty letting go of the regulations of Law of Moses. Issues such as circumcision, eating of certain meats, keeping Sabbath days, etc., challenged the teachings of the apostles who needed to emphatically advise that such observances were no longer acceptable to the Lord. "Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - - things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ" (Colossians 2:16).

Since Jesus opened up the new and living way, his followers of are in no sense of the word bound by the Jewish Law - - either by the Sabbath days or Sabbath years. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Romans 10:4).

Lord of the Sabbath

Didn't Jesus Keep the Law? Yes, Jesus did keep the Law to which Israel was bound at Mount Sinai. Why? Born a Jew, Jesus was obligated to keep the Law - - and that included keeping Sabbath. Although he healed on the Sabbath and was soundly criticized for that act of mercy, he pointed out the true purpose of the Sabbath. He also customarily taught on the Sabbath (Matthew 19:17). Jesus fully understood, "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). He kept the Sabbath in "letter" and "spirit."

\But Jesus went beyond keeping the Law. He fulfilled it. His death marked the beginning of the fulfillment of everything the Law pointed towards. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Once Jesus fulfilled it, from then on anyone who believed on him was no longer bound by the Law. Paul gives the logic: "Wherefore, my [Jewish] brethren, ye also are become dead to the law [of Moses] by the body of Christ: that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the death, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:1-4).

But didn't the Lord of the Sabbath say, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"? (John 14:15) What are Jesus' commandments? Jesus' commandments went beyond just loving God and one's neighbor, the essence of the Mosaic Law. Jesus gave us, his followers, a new commandment which goes to the extent of sacrificing one's life: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34 NIV; see also 1Joh 3:15 NAS). Jesus was offering more than a day of rest from physical toil. He was proposing a rest of faith to those burdened with the weight of sin: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. .."(Matthew 11:28- 30).

Witnessing on the Sabbath

Of course, the Apostles used the seventh day as an ideal time for preaching Christ, especially because on that day the Jews - - their most likely hearers - - met for worship and study (Acts 13:14, 26, 27, 43, 44; 16:13; 17:1,2; 18:4). However, when Apostle Paul was preaching to brethren who were already disciples, it is evident they were meeting for worship on the "first day" of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

How significant that the disciples - - as we might expect - - chose to meet together on the "first day" of the week to remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also, the first day of the week was the day Jesus' made his appearances to his disciples during the forty days after his resurrection. Sunday was not a new obligatory law on Christians, but it was merely a commonly cherished practice. Later, when Christianity became the state religion under Constantine, not only was the Bible canonized, but the observance of Sunday as a day of rest was instituted as a legal duty. But the Holy Scriptures were already the accepted Word of God- and neither a Roman emperor nor a pope needed to ordain Sunday for worship.

The Christian's Rest

All who believe in Christ may enter into rest, and thus keep a continual Sabbath, "For we which have believed do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3). As new creatures, we rest all the time. Each Christian- in proportion to his or her knowledge and faith- will have rest. But the rest we have entered into is not our ultimate rest. A permanent rest awaits us: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. ... Let us labor therefore

to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:9- 11).

Christians will enter into that rest when they experience their resurrection change, when they will enter into the joys of their Lord. In addition, so far as the world is concerned, the great Messiah's reign of a thousand years will be the Sabbath for the world in general. Their rest will also mean coming into complete harmony with God. What a sublime prospect!

For the present, Christians are thankful for any day set aside for the opportunity to worship God and fellowship with fellow Christians. The Christian Sabbath is not broken by physical labor. Nor is it dependent on physical ease. It is deep and lasting rest, only broken by doubt in Jesus Christ. The Christian Sabbath is Sunday through Saturday - - all week, all the time.

Miracle Healings of Forgiveness

October 2000

FORGIVENESS- of what value is it? Up to 15 years ago it was considered- well- such a "churchy" thing. A social grace perhaps. But in the competitive world of reality "holding a grudge" often provided the drive to trample over others on the way up the ladder of success. If you researched the word forgiveness in Psychological Abstracts at a university library you would find nothing.

All this has changed. Why? Miracles are occurring. A case in point- Ray's cardiovascular illness took a turn for the worse. The doctor suggested to his wife that the children visit because Ray may not survive. When she told Ray, his face reddened with anger as he said, "don't invite John!" Ray had not spoken to his son John for twenty years. Nevertheless, John showed up. As the eyes of Ray and John met, tears ran, hearts melted and flowed together in love. Ray forgave John, as father and son embraced. Ray had a miraculous recovery.

Dr. Glen Mack Harnden, a noted Psychologist, is enthusiastic about the personal benefits of forgiveness. "It not only heightens the potential for reconciliation," he says, "but also releases the offended from prolonged anger, rage, and stress that have been linked to physiological problems, such as cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, hypertension, cancer, and other psychosomatic illness." Yes cancer is now classified as stress related.

The American Psychological Association, Boston August 1999, concluded, "holding a grudge is hazardous to health" and that "humility encourages people to let go of slights and betrayals."

"Fearfully and Wonderfully Made"

Well did the Psalmist say, we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalms 139:14. The human body is indeed an awesome creation of God. Our body contains a complex and delicate chemical plant. Because of our imperfection and the polluted environment, toxic chemicals and harmful bacteria continually assail cells in our body. But our body has defensive chemicals to withstand these assaults. If our minds are in a happy or contented mood, our nervous system activates these defensive chemicals to the occasion. That is one reason "Godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Timothy 6:6. If our minds are agitated or stressful, our defensive mechanism is weakened. Of course, because of Adamic condemnation our delicate chemical plant eventually loses its balance and all are overtaken by death. Also some are born with greater diseased prone bodies than others.

Harnden observes, "Forgiveness does not preclude the enforcement of healthy and natural consequences on the offender. Smedes, a counselor, agrees. "Some people view forgiveness as a cheap avoidance of justice.

If forgiveness is a whitewashing of wrong, then it is itself wrong. Nothing that whitewashes evil can be good."

God's Justice

The Bible has always taught this. God is the Judge of the universe. Laws are necessary for the welfare of all. To be effective, the violation of law requires a penalty. Once Adam was informed that death was the penalty for disobedience, then that penalty was just.

A basic fact to remember is that God in His foreknowledge knew that Adam would disobey. Therefore, long before the creation of Adam, God's wisdom devised a plan of recovery and ultimate happiness for the human race that would require the death of His only begotten Son. Thus 1 Peter 1:19, 20 speaks of the blood of Christ for the redemption of mankind as foreordained before the world began. The Creator used the time- space situation in Eden to demonstrate the dependability of His justice. It is vital for man to know that "justice and judgment [just decisions] are the habitation of your [God's] throne" Psalms 89:14.

If when Adam disobeyed, God said, "Oh, I will overlook your disobedience this time, I will pardon you. I will not punish you as I promised to do." Adam might say, Wonderful! I am glad God is more loving than just.

Wonderful? No! Arbitrary! The Creator and Ruler of the whole universe could never be trusted throughout eternity. At any time, in any place, God might at the slightest whim change His mind and turn on His creatures. Eden proved the unchangeableness of God's justice. Thus God declares in Malachi 3:6, "I am Jehovah, I change not." And James 1:17 states, "The Father of lights in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Why didn't God first create us perfect like father Adam and try each one of us individually? Lacking experience, each one of us would probably have disobeyed like Adam. Then where would we be? Instead, we were tried collectively in father Adam.

Thus as the Psalmist observed (Psalms 51:5), we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity. Consequently, we could be redeemed collectively. "As in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive."
1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:18

Daily we sin and daily through faith in Jesus' cleansing blood, we have forgiveness of sin. We are thankful that Jesus is not only "the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins ... but for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2 Therefore, like Jesus, we can forgive all who Jesus died for- all humankind. To the degree we love and forgive like Jesus, to that degree our minds will be less stressful and anxious. Consequently, our body can attain its maximum as we lay down our "bodies a living sacrifice" in God's service. Romans 12:1

These columns have often presented the Biblical teaching that Jesus died for the sins of every man. Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2; 1 Timothy 2:5,6. That God is only calling a "little flock" during this Christian Age. Luke 12:32; Acts 15:14- 17. Then this little flock will share with Christ as kings, judges, and priests (Revelation 20:4; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 22:17) in God's Kingdom, helping the world during their time of probation.

Compounded Revenge

The bitterness, anger, and hate raging in the unforgiving heart of unregenerate man is compounded by the national, racial, tribal and ethnic thirst for revenge. Harnden observed, "From the 1500s to the 1800s- four centuries- a total of 34.1 million died in war." Wars have killed nearly five times that many (165 million) during the 1900s alone. Why the spiraling increase- retaliation by unforgiving victims of war. The cycles of ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia, tribal massacres between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes, strife between capital and labor, black payback murders of white estate owners in Zimbabwe and South Africa after decades of white suppression are examples. This ongoing cycle of repaying vengeance with vengeance contributes to the perpetuation of an increasingly violent society. Revenge- unforgiving hearts is the scourge of our time. This is the substance of papers by Psychologists.

Where will it lead? End- Time prophecy is upon us. The Antichrist/False Prophet scenario will yet play out, followed by the last feature of Armageddon- the invasion of Israel by the armies of the north (Ezekiel 38\$). While God is fighting for Israel and setting up His Kingdom in Israel (Ezekiel 39\$; Zechariah 12:9- 12), these group hatreds will erupt. Nations will be torn from within by class violence. Classes will disintegrate as "every man's hand is against his neighbor." Zechariah 14:13.

While the masses are in the throes of anarchy, God will command these raging Gentiles- "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the Gentiles. I will be exalted in the earth." Psalms 46:10. Satan will be bound. Revelation 20:1- 3. War and all violence will cease as a massive education program is set up. "The knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 2:4; 11:9. Christ and his church, the spiritual rulers of God's Kingdom, will appoint the Jewish people as the agency of the Kingdom blessings (Revelation 20:4,6; Zechariah 8:20- 23) with Jerusalem as its capitol.

What a humiliation to many in realizing they are not of the true church but were Christians in name only (Matthew 7:22, 23). Under Jewish administration - - what a humiliation to most Gentiles and to those professed Christians who believed they replaced Israel in God's plan. Remember the reports at the American Psychological Association - - holding a grudge is hazardous to health and humility encourages people to let go of their grudges.

Forgiveness in God's Kingdom

Humility makes one teachable. Being humbled the Gentiles will more readily accept Jesus as their Savior. By asking for forgiveness of the Lord for their sins, their hearts will experience the healing of repentance. But personal grudges will still burden their hearts. They will need to interact with their enemies, estranged friends and even estranged family members. Murderers will face victims, robbers those they robbed and whoever disfigured others those they maimed. These agonizing dramas of confrontation and forgiveness will play a major role as minds and bodies respond to the healing dynamics of both repentance and forgiveness.

The resurrection of the unregenerate to their trial or probation time will have begun. John 5:28,29 NAS. All will be taught to develop a pollution-free Eden. Isaiah 30:23; 29:18. Television drama of sex and violence will be replaced with heart-rending drama of once dysfunctional families struggling to replace their selfish cravings with justice, love, kindness, generosity and patience. Christ and his church will reward each step of love and obedience with a healing of body and mind until perfected.

Today, the Creative Arts reveal the ills of a society. In the Kingdom, the Creative Arts will extol God's holy principles and the joy, peace and brotherhood that come from living these principles. Eternal life will be the reward of the obedient. For a complete discussion of the healing work of God's Kingdom send for the free booklet offered. Remember, holding a grudge is hazardous to one's health.

Why are you a Christian?

November 2000

2Co 5:14, 15

Some become a Christian just to escape eternal judgment. But God saves us and forgives our sins "for His name's Sake" (Psalms 25:11; 106:8). Then there are those who become Christians in order to gain health and prosperity, believing that faith in a "secret kingdom" and its power will grant their reward. How sad! The height of Christian concern should not be "what can God do for me" but rather "what can I do to glorify God." Remember the words of Psa 31:3 - "For thy name's sake lead me and guide me."

Self- centered vs. Christ- centered Christians

Evidently the church at Corinth included many self- centered Christians. Paul had to chide them in 1 Corinthians 4:8- 14.

"You are already filled, you have already become rich, you reign as kings without us; and I would that you indeed had become kings so that we also might reign with you... We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak but you are strong, you are distinguished, but we are despised. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even unto now. I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." (NAS)

The Apostle Paul expressed the essence of the Christ- centered life in 2 Timothy 2:11,12, "It is a faithful saying: if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." The Apostle Peter said, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you" (1 Peter 4:12). In Matthew 10, Jesus enumerates the trials, hardships and persecutions that his faithful followers would suffer; then he says, "But he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

The Secret Kingdom???

The time in which the Kingdom of God shall "rule from the rivers to the ends of the earth" is, of course, future. Yet, at Jesus' first advent it was declared, "The Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Some use Luke 17:21, "The Kingdom of God is within you" as proof of the secret kingdom concept. However, the Greek text literally means, "The King is in your midst." Since the faithful followers of Jesus are to reign with him (Revelation 20:4,6), Jesus also called them the "Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13). Matthew 11:12 shows that "the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." Jesus and his church are to be the kings (Revelation

20:6) in God's future Kingdom. The sufferings of the Christian walk are the training grounds for reigning in this future Kingdom (Hebrews 5:8,9; 2 Timothy 2:11,12).

Unknown to the world, Christ- centered Christians are now being trained for their future work of reigning with Christ in his Kingdom. They are not using prayer selfishly for physical and material prosperity. Like the Apostles, they pray for strength to endure privation knowing "that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried in the fire" (1 Peter 1:7). By bitter experiences they are developing Christ- like love. "Love your enemies, bless them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matthew 5:44

The Purpose of the Kingdom

Most Christians have overlooked the main purpose of the Kingdom. Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh- Day Adventists, born- again Christians, Mormons, etc., believe that all who do not accept Christ and/or the Gospel before "The Great Tribulation" is over are lost eternally.

How sad that Christians try to give God's love a narrowness that He will not own. God has not been trying to convert the world. In Mark 4:11,12, Jesus showed that he purposely hid the Gospel from many "lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven." John 1:9 speaks of Jesus as the "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Yet millions died before the time of Christ never hearing the only "name (Jesus Christ) under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Despite all the missionary efforts since the time of Christ, other millions died not hearing the message of salvation. God is not trying to convert the world during the Christian Age. He is only selecting a little flock (Luke 12:32).

Ac 15:14- 17 shows that "God for the first time did visit the Gentiles to take out of (not convert) them a people for his name (Christ- centered Christians, His Church)... After this I will return (second advent) and build again the tabernacle of David (Christ's Kingdom)... that the remainder of men might seek after the Lord." Jesus said in John 5:28,29, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life (to reign with Christ - - Revelation 20:6); and they that have done evil (the vast majority of mankind), unto the resurrection of crisis" (Greek for judgment or trial). Christ and his church will enlighten the "remainder of men" in the Kingdom - - their crisis or probation, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

This is the great "restitution" (restoration) project foretold by all the Old Testament prophets (Acts 3:19- 21). This restoration of the willing of "the remainder of men" (Acts 15:17; Revelation 22:17) to mental, moral and physical perfection of life that was lost in Eden will not be

completed until the end of the 1000- year Kingdom of Christ. For this reason Revelation 20:5 states, "The rest of the dead*" ("the remainder of men" of Acts 15:17) lived not again until the 1000 years were finished." All not mentally, morally and physically perfect are dead in God's sight. Thus Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew 8:22). It will require the balance of the 1000 years to bring the willing up the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8) to perfect human life.

*Some ancient manuscripts do not contain the words "the rest of the dead."

The School of Christ

How do Christians develop the love, justice, sympathy, understanding, etc., to qualify for a share with Christ as kings, priests (blessers), judges (Revelation 20:6; 1 Corinthians 6:2) in His Kingdom? Christ- centered Christians learn Christ- like love through their sufferings and privations (1 Peter 1:7; 2 Peter 1:5,6; 1 Corinthians 13:5,6). In that way, they will know just how to help "the remainder of men" in their trial time for eternal life. If you are a Christ- centered Christian, you might be interested in the following ad:

WANTED: PECULIAR PEOPLE for Unusual Position

Not necessarily wise or noble, successful or socially accepted. Physical infirmities and heavy personal burdens can be an asset. The training for this position requires a commitment of all your time, all your effort for the rest of your life. Your instructor will insist upon absolute obedience while causing you to lose friends, reputation and personal fortune. These will be replaced by friends not of your choosing, reputation not esteemed by society and personal fortune not negotiable.

Your success or failure will be measured by how carefully you follow the instruction manual - - a book which the greatest minds in the world cannot understand and have dismissed as "foolishness." Your course will inspire many hatreds, for which you will be obliged to offer a sacrificing love in return; and the more of this love you master, the more of its servant you will become. Wages offered during the training period consist of a few promises - - considered by most as highly doubtful of fulfillment.

Anyone who faithfully completes this course is guaranteed a position as an administrator in the Kingdom of Christ which by Divine intervention will shortly bless all the families of the earth. For further details, send for this free booklet - - WHY ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?