



A
TALE
OF
TWO
PROPHETS

by Jon Hill

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The accent in this booklet is on Moses because his true purpose and personality are not visible in most "Christian" literature. My style of presentation is not pedantic, argumentative or coldly factual, but rather, personal, intimate—an attempt to give human warmth and feeling. In that concept, some quotes are not intended to represent "Scripture"—adequate documentation of actual Scripture is present and so identified—but to give the "feel" of any given situation gained from decades of study and teaching; "poetic license," if you please.

This booklet is pitifully brief, intended only as an introduction to concepts and ideas you may not have heard before, with the hope that you will pursue greater knowledge, understanding and friendship with both Moses and Jesus. (I personally recommend the book titled *The Real Jesus* written by a close personal friend of mine of nearly 30 years—Garner Ted Armstrong.)

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Was Moses ever acquainted with grace and truth? Did Jesus ignore the law? Did these two prophets—one the founder of Israel and mediator of the Old Covenant, the other the Son of God and Mediator of the New Covenant—have anything in common? Were they Jekyll and Hyde, or two of a kind? Were they opposites, or just alike? Contradictory or complementary? Let's get to know both Moses and Jesus better—the tale of these two prophets is fascinating!

MOSES—THE FRIEND OF GOD

Hard, stern—does that describe Moses?
Merciful, loving, longsuffering, meek, lowly, kind,
forgiving, friendly—does that describe Jesus?
Could both of these descriptions possibly fit both Moses
and Jesus?

Almost every Christian knows more about Jesus than he does about Moses. Let's become better acquainted with that man Moses. Let's look into the pages of Scripture and find out more about that prophet God used to begin the writing of His Holy Bible. Let's get to know that Moses who prophesied of Christ—that Moses who brought Israel from slavery to sovereignty (Acts 7:37 and Exodus 6:26, 27).

Behind the Scenes

Let's become personally familiar with the character and personality of that Moses who was "mighty in words and in deeds," according to Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian Church (Acts 7:22). Let's set aside all preconceived notions about that man Moses, and get to know him intimately. We can draw from history and tradition, but let's avoid bigotry at all costs. Let's go behind the scenes of plague and pestilence, behind the events of the parting of the Red Sea and the giving of the law, behind the stories of the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness and the establishment of the Levitical priesthood.

Moses was a human being. He suffered frustrations from

unfulfilled desires, misunderstandings of his motives by his fellow Israelites, self-doubts concerning his ability to perform the momentous tasks God required of him, family problems with his wife, sister, brother, in-laws and adopted parents.

Let's get to know him better—he was really a pretty nice guy. Let's become Moses' friend—after all, God was! (Exodus 33:11.)

Jesus descended from Judah. Moses came from Levi. Both were sons of Abraham. Jesus was a "babe in a manger." Moses was a babe in a boat. Moses was born a slave. Jesus was the single object of intense persecution by a king whom Satan inspired to exterminate Him while He was yet a child. Moses was adopted into Pharaoh's family and became a prince of Egypt. Jesus was the Prince of Peace. Moses was a general of the armies of Egypt. Jesus was Captain of the Host. Moses fled for his life into exile in Sinai, away from Egypt. Jesus was taken, to save His life, in exile into Egypt by His parents.

Years of Preparation

Moses' life spanned 120 years. Jesus' human life was only a little over thirty-three. Moses' life is easily divided into three distinctly different periods of forty years each. Eighty years passed before God called Moses to his most important remaining forty years. But Moses was greatly influenced by those eighty years of preparation. Let's look at them briefly.

Whatever the arguments as to which is dominant in a man's life, two things shape the person: heredity and environment.

Moses' great-grandfather was Levi, son of Jacob and Leah, and founder of one of the tribes of Israel. When Leah, Jacob's cousin on Abraham's side of the family, bore Levi she was very happy because he was her third son by Jacob. Leah was not Jacob's choice for a wife, but through deception by Laban, Jacob's uncle-cum-father-in-law, she became his first legal wife. Jacob's choice was Rachel, Leah's sister. Therefore Jacob preferred Rachel and snubbed Leah. God saw Leah's problem and blessed her with the majority of Jacob's sons. At the birth of this third son, Leah felt things would be different: "Now this time will my husband be *joined* unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi" (Genesis 29:34).

Levi, in Hebrew, means "joined." Although Leah's senti-

ment regarding her third son was personal, her choice of name for Levi later proved to be prophetic as well: the entire tribe of Levi "joined" the nation of Israel to God by fulfilling the offices of the Levitical priesthood!

Beginning with Abraham, who married his half-sister, and continuing through Isaac, who took a cousin to wife, and Jacob, who also married a cousin, the custom of the family had been to maintain the genetic pool by intermarriage within the family. Many problems were created by this, but many strengths were also passed on. The record of the family shows wealth, education and brilliance. Until politically generated slavery in Egypt, via the first pogroms of history, thrust Abraham's descendants into a poverty so abject they didn't even own their own bodies, he and his offspring were wealthy beyond most modern concepts of riches.

Educated in the finest institutions of learning in the centers of the civilization of their day as well as in the crucible of trade, commerce and animal husbandry, Abraham and his children were the cosmopolitan elite of their day. Contrary to popular opinion, the record seems to show that Abraham and his family brought culture to Egypt, rather than obtaining it there.

As to brilliance: Abraham, blessed by God, managed to extricate himself from two politically tricky situations with the Pharaoh of Egypt and the king of Gerar—not only escaping the consequences of lying to them, but adding immensely to his already great riches in the process. Isaac maintained the family wealth and duplicated Abraham's political coup with a later king of Gerar. Jacob even outmaneuvered his own father and brother (with his mother's help), won both the birthright and the blessing from Isaac, outfoxed the very foxy Laban, his uncle, and established independent wealth for a family of twelve sons and a daughter! And of course we should also mention the brilliant success of Joseph, the half-brother of Levi, in Egypt.

Faults and Talents

The purpose of all this is to show that despite the fact that Moses began as the son of a slave, he had inherent capacities in his bloodline which qualified him to be used to fulfill the unique commission God called him to accomplish.

On the other hand, there were family characteristics many prefer to overlook in considering these holy men of the

Bible. God doesn't leave them out, however. He tells the whole story and makes these giants much easier to understand by showing their entirely human faults as well as talents. The family had a streak of clever, scheming deviousness and used it to execute plots against each other as much as against the world around them. Strong, if not violent, tempers provided another common trait. Opinionated and of iron will, they were from time to time not even beyond arguing with God Himself—though the main thrust of their lives was one of faithful obedience.

Another trait of Moses' heredity was a strong dominance among the women of the family. No second-class citizens, these women—they are only a bit overshadowed by even more dominant males in the family, by custom, tradition and the way God made things.

Following the family tradition, Moses' father, Amram, married his own aunt, his father's sister—and together they produced Miriam, Aaron and Moses. All participated in the focus of this genealogy of strong traits.

Living in more than difficult times, Amram and Jochebed, Moses' parents, gave birth to him in an impossible time for raising sons. By royal decree all boy babies were to be exterminated. The Egyptians feared a population explosion among their Hebrew slave class would endanger their national existence; hence infanticide by law! Using their national history of resourcefulness, and exercising faith, Moses' parents sent their as-yet-unnamed three-month-old son on a voyage down the river calculated to end at the feet of the frustrated, childless daughter of Pharaoh as she pursued her ritualistic ablutions in the waters of the Nile-god Egypt served.

Clever Miriam spied on the event and reported all to mother Jochebed (both *strong* women). Even more clever, Jochebed managed to ingratiate herself with the royal daughter of Pharaoh and wrangle herself the position of wet nurse and governess for that blessed gift of the Nile, (named by this time) Moses! And in addition, she got paid! That fascinating interplay of human endeavor and God's intervention at times of crisis set Moses on a career unprecedented in history.

Just as the innocent naming of Levi by Leah, drawing from the circumstances of his birth, was later prophetic, so was the naming of Moses by the daughter of Pharaoh. Viewing the child's miraculous appearance on the bosom of the

Moses-- A Type of Christ

Several passages in the New Testament compare the two prophets—Christ and Moses. Jesus is actually pictured as the successor of Moses in the book of Acts. In one of Peter's earliest sermons following the day of Pentecost, he said: "Moses said, The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you" (Acts 3:22-23, RSV). Later Stephen said the same thing Peter did. He pointed out to a hostile audience: "This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up'" (Acts 7:37). Both of these New Testament figures were loosely quoting the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed."

Moses was the main prototype of the great Prophet to come—Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews also compared the two prophets. "Therefore, holy brethren, who share in an heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession [profession, KJV]. He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as *Moses* also was faithful in God's house. Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house. . . . Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later" (Heb. 3:1-3, 5).

Both Jesus and Moses were *faithful* to their tasks and their callings. They accomplished the work of God in their respective ages. Yet Moses was a figure and a type of the Prophet to come—Jesus the Messiah or Anointed of God.

god-Nile as an answer to her prayers, she dubbed him "Drawn Out" (Moses), because, she said, "I drew him out of the water" (Exodus 2:10). Later, as we all know, this Moses was to "draw out" the entire slave-nation of Israel, and in so doing destroy Egypt for generations.

First Forty Years

Paul tells us in Hebrews a peculiar thing about Moses: "Esseeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible?" (Hebrews 11:26, 27.) This truth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says Moses knew his heritage, his background, the promises and prophecies passed on from Abraham to Jacob to Levi to Amran, to Moses!

The biblical record of Moses' first forty years covers just half a chapter, but the skeleton outline of events provides enough detail to flesh out most of the remainder from reason and tradition. Taught the truths Abraham received from God, Moses' first learning experience, his primary education, was received at the breast of Jochebed, the witty, clever, faithful mother-cum-governess for the adopted, miraculous Gift of the Nile, the new Prince of Egypt!

Built onto this basic foundation of truth was his royal education. Adopted into the very top social stratum of the greatest civilization of the day, nothing was spared to provide him with the very best available on earth in every facet of his life: history, perverted by political necessity of the time, as is the case of all history; mathematics from the accumulated intelligence of the unprecedented and, to this day, unduplicated excellence of pyramid builders; medicine from physicians performing delicate brain surgery unequaled until our present century; military tactics from the reservoir of the strongest army of this most precious segment of life, in the human sphere of things; political science, engineering, horticulture, astronomy, the physical sciences, the social graces, government, law, protocol, jurisprudence . . .

Forty years of the best education available on earth, including practical application—and, of course, all paid for from the royal treasury! And, most important of all, this entire process was God-guided. The Lord knew how He was go-

ing to use Moses all along. And, speaking of cleverness, wasn't God pretty clever, getting Satan and his deceived followers to provide a proper background for His boy Moses?!

Life Begins at Forty

Permeated with the truth of God taught him by his real mother, saturated with all the knowledge the royalty of Egypt could provide, Moses came to the first severe crisis point of his life. Seeking to destroy this spoiled gift of the gods, Moses' adopted siblings of actual Egyptian royalty must have precipitated his need to flee into exile when he slew that Egyptian in defense of his blood brethren.

Well, they say life begins at forty! And for Moses, at least, a completely new life began at forty.

Rearred in the lap of luxury unimaginable, with unlimited funds to sustain his every need and whim, an unlimited supply of manpower always at his disposal to execute whatever project he might want to pursue; lauded, praised, honored and revered, protected, provided for and pampered—Moses now faced making his living with his own two hands! Fear-ridden and exhausted by his flight from Egypt, Moses met a Midianite mogul named Jethro-Ruel (which modest name, being interpreted, means "His Excellency, the Friend of God"). J.R. offered him a job as a shepherd for his flocks which wandered for sustenance all over the Sinai wilderness.

Another forty years of Moses' continuing education lay before him: the rough life of a nomadic herdsman, forced to survive and thrive in the blast furnace of that impossible piece of geography—the Sinai Desert! What a comedown for the powerful Prince of Egypt. Penniless, wanted for murder by the most powerful nation on earth, son of a slave people, inexperienced in living by the sweat of his brow, Moses began a new life. Forty years and Moses had gone from rags to riches—and back to rags again!

But don't feel too sorry for him—God was with him, and he knew it! He knew about Christ! He could picture in his mind's eye the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham about the first coming of Jesus that you and I can read about in the Gospels as recorded history. And beyond that, he could also picture the other promises of that second coming that hasn't happened yet: the Kingdom, the power and the glory of God on earth! Moses could see all that as if it had already happened. He was jealous in guarding in his heart and mind

his own part in that Kingdom of God—and he well knew what kingdoms are all about.

That knowledge, that faith, sustained him completely. Moses didn't miss a beat in picking up his new style of life in the desolate desert. He selected a rough, strong, hardwood stick and started herding sheep.

It wasn't all bad news. J.R. had a supply of daughters that wouldn't quit—seven of them! He happily gave Zipporah, his eldest, to Moses for his wife, and promptly became a grandfather. Moses called his son “Stranger” (Gershon), because, he said, “I have been a stranger in a strange land” (Exodus 2:22).

Jesus' Enigmatic Statement

One thing we should understand thoroughly is that Moses was very personally acquainted with the One we call Jesus. The Jesus of the New Testament was the *Lord* of the Old Testament! Jesus frustrated the theologians of His day with this enigmatic commentary: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am”! (John 8:56-58.)

Jesus the Word of God, who was God, and became flesh, always existed. He was the One who told us that no man had either seen or heard the Father. It was through Him that all things that are made in heaven and in earth were made. Jesus is the One who, in the prayer He made to His Father just before the crucifixion, asked that the glory He had formerly enjoyed with the Father be restored to Him, since He had completed the mission for which He came to earth.

The doctrines of some would relegate Jesus to being a created being, having a beginning. Some think He is Michael the archangel. And of course some are of the opinion that He was just an outstanding human being of His day expounding social philosophies beyond the scope of His generation. And many deny Him altogether, even as a historical person, and feel He is the invention of whoever it was that started the Christian movement, an outstanding member of the mythical pantheon of Christendom. If we are to believe that John, Paul, Stephen, Peter, Luke, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc., etc. were tellers of truth, then we must conclude that Jesus not only preexisted, but was indeed the God of the en-

tire Bible, the Spokesman for the God family, the Word of the Lord, the Almighty God *Elohim* who spoke and there was light! This is not intended to be an establishment or defense of this truth—we have literature you can write for that does that—but merely an overview so you will understand the personal relationship the holy men of old had with the Son of God whom we worship.

So when Jesus told the critics of His day, “Before Abraham was, I am,” He was being neither grammatically nor factually incorrect. When Jesus trod this earth as the physical son of man, He was not only filled with compassion for the multitudes of His generation, but remembered intimately and with the depth of godly love all the spirits of just men made perfect in the many generations that had preceded His presence at Bethlehem. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses were not just prophetically hoping about the coming of the Messiah in some future generation; they were direct recipients of personal promises from the One who became our Savior. They were not just empty, historical names Jesus had to learn about as a boy in Nazareth—to Him they were all old familiar friends to whom He had personally made eternal promises!

Old Familiar Friends

Besides the power of the Holy Spirit, the memories Jesus held of these men and women of the Bible who had all died in faith, believing in Him, must have sustained and inspired Him to fulfill His commission perfectly. Jesus anxiously looked forward to that day—yet to come—when He will call them from their graves to glory in His Kingdom. They may seem distant, almost unhuman characters to us, but to Jesus they were all old familiar friends, all of whom He loved enough to die for! And He did!

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever—Hebrews 13:8—so Jesus, by any other name, is just the same! And He had MANY names! Moses knew Him—better than you know your closest friend—as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He knew Him as the *Elohim-God* who told Moses all the necessary details of those seven days of creation. Moses knew Him as *El Shaddai*—God Almighty—who sustained with His great power the forefathers of Moses. Moses knew Him as the God of the Covenants—*YHWH*, or *Jehovah* as some call Him—who made covenants with Adam, Noah and Abraham before He made His “Old Covenant” with Israel. Moses fore-

knew Him as Christ, his Savior, the Son of God—and he believed, and died in faith in Him! Jesus was no stranger to Moses—He was his Friend!

Moses the Octogenarian

After forty years of sheep tending on Sinai, being eighty years of age, Moses was at last ready to perform the commission for which he had been born. A commission that would take him yet another forty years to perform. The epic of the Exodus, the giving of the Law, the writing of the beginnings of the Bible, the establishment of the Levitical priesthood and the Tabernacle services in the wilderness—all this and so much more lay yet before Moses, the octogenarian.

But Moses didn't volunteer for the job. In fact, he was quite adamant in refusing it. He so pursued his reluctance to serve in the capacity that means "Moses" to most of us that he argued with God to the point of making Him angry! Moses brought up every excuse to avoid the commission God had for him. He reasoned, he begged, he squirmed, he suggested alternates, he told God He'd picked the wrong man—all to no avail as we well know. But what a tale that is!

THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

Moses' first forty years was a piece of cake. A miraculous answer to the prayers of Pharaoh's daughter provided her with the son she sought. Carried on the bosom of the great god-Nile, a tiny ark of bulrushes floated the new Prince of Egypt into her arms. She dubbed him "Drawn Out" (Moses), because she drew him out of the water—he who was born to "draw out" the whole nation of Israel from slavery to sovereignty and make "exodus" a household word.

Reared in the lap of luxury unimaginable, honored, praised, loved, lauded, protected, pampered, educated and prepared to become a Pharaoh himself, Moses struck tragedy at age forty. Through a careless act of his own, and undoubtedly spurred by palace intrigue from his royal Egyptian semi-siblings who hated him in jealous rage, Moses fled into exile to save his life. A fugitive from the justice of Egypt, Moses plummeted from the pinnacle of riches and honor into an unknown future.

Cloak of Humility

That future stretched another forty years, getting him ready for the commission God had prepared for him. The prince became a pauper, and scratched out a living in the searing sands of Sinai as a shepherd for a Midianite mogul named Jethro. Trading his bejeweled, golden staff which designated him prince of the greatest nation on earth for a crude,

gnarled, hardwood shepherd's staff, Moses began his forty years of humbling, hard work. Moses married Zipporah, eldest daughter of his boss. They had two sons. Moses wandered through the woe-filled wilderness of Sinai for forty years, yet won no wealth. Unlike his own great grandfather Jacob, who hired out as shepherd for Laban and in twenty years became rich and a sheik in his own right, Moses remained a shepherd, virtually penniless.

Moses put on the cloak of humility in the place of princely robes. Long, endless hours under desert sun and stars were spent in contemplation and soul searching. Alone in the empty waste, Moses had time to mature. He became both hardened—and softened.

Hardened physically, following his father-in-law's flocks for limitless leagues, trudging sandal-clad, sleeping in the open where night would find him, yet ever alert for predators or bandits that might do harm to his charges. Hardened in self-reliance, because there were no longer eager servants available to answer whim or need. Hardened in character, spirit, faith—hardened with bands of steel in his relationship with the as yet unseen God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Softened with the compassion so necessary for a successful shepherd, tenderly caring for little lambs and kids, foals and calves. Softened with solitude and inward search, seeing the real helplessness of humanity in a harsh world. Softened with memories and nightmares of the condition of his real kin, the slaves of Egypt: Israel in ignominy. Softened in malleable obedience to the demands of a man of Midian. Softened in a personal relationship with a family of his own. Softened with time.

Moses, general of the armies of Egypt, now had for troops only sheep to command. Moses, builder of massive monuments in the empire of Egypt, lived mostly in the open, with no shelter—his best building at home with Jethro and his family, a tent. Moses, the handsome prince, became old man Moses, weather-beaten, wrinkled and burned by sun and sand.

Forty years of opulence and everything—forty years of austerity and hardly anything: eighty years all told, and God felt he was finally ready. Ready for another forty years so fabulous they would seem like forty lifetimes. Ready for the great commission God was about to confer upon him.

God knew Moses was ready—but Moses had his doubts!

Offer Refused

Allow me to quote from *The Living Bible, Paraphrased* and mix in a little of my own: "One day as Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, out at the edge of the desert near Horeb, the mountain of God, suddenly the Angel of Jehovah [YHWH] appeared to him as a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw that the bush was on fire and that it didn't burn up, he went over to investigate. Then God called out to him, 'Moses! Moses!' 'Who is it?' Moses asked. 'Don't come any closer,' God told him. 'Take off your shoes, for you are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' (Moses covered his face with his hands, for he was afraid to look at God.) Then the Lord told him, 'I have seen the deep sorrow of my people in Egypt, and have heard their pleas for freedom from their harsh taskmasters. I have come to deliver them from the Egyptians and to take them out of Egypt into a good land, a large land, a land flowing with milk-and-honey.... Yes, the wail of the people of Israel has risen to me in heaven, and I have seen the heavy tasks the Egyptians have oppressed them with. *Now I am going to send you to Pharaoh, to demand that he let you lead my people out of Egypt!*'" (Ex. 3:1-10)

How could Moses resist an offer like that? Here was the very Creator he worshiped speaking directly to him. Moses, octogenarian has-been from Egypt, and giving him the opportunity of being the one to free the Israelites from slavery and oppression. And more than that: to give them a land of their own, equal to, if not more impressive than, opulent Egypt! Here was Moses' golden chance, guided, inspired, empowered and blessed by God Almighty—not just to lighten the burdens of Israel (as Moses had tried to do in that disastrous crisis of forty years earlier that had led to his exile), but to make of them a sovereign nation, under God!

This was Moses' own dream multiplied. How could he refuse? How? How do you tell God, "No!"? Enoch didn't. Noah didn't. Abraham didn't.

But Moses did!

"But I'm not the person for a job like that!" Moses exclaimed.

What were Moses' thoughts about this revelation? Let's

guess. First, God says *He* is going to deliver the slaves of Egypt. Then He says Moses is going to do it! How does a simple, hiring shepherd of forty years at the age of eighty go charging into the most powerful court on earth where he is wanted for murder and tell the king to let all his slaves—the mainstay of the economy—go free? Forty years ago things might have been different. Then Moses was familiar with all the procedures at court, knew of all the intrigues, had a power base of his own as a popular prince and general, was still young and daring, burning with a desire for the betterment of his Hebrew brethren. His own people had rejected his efforts then, how much more so would they now—why, they wouldn't even know *this* Moses, and if they did, would they recognize any authority he might try to exercise over them as a shepherd when they had rejected his power as prince? He'd be laughed out of the ghetto!

And even if the Israelites did accept him, the Egyptians certainly wouldn't. Moses thought he had forgotten most of what he knew of court protocol. Whom could he go to to even gain an audience with the Pharaoh? Something like this was just not done without long planning, organization, powerful friends . . .

No way, thought Moses, and he immediately conjured up a hundred reasons why he was certainly "not the person for a job like that!"

"Then God told him, 'I will certainly be with you, and this is the proof that I am the one who is sending you: when you have led the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God here upon this mountain!'"

Now, Moses thought about that proof. He had certainly worshiped God on this mountain, but what "proof" was this, that he would "worship God here upon this mountain" after he "led the people out of Egypt"? Not that Moses doubted God, he doubted himself. What good was after-the-fact "proof"—it was getting Israel out of Egypt that he doubted possible.

So Moses reasoned with God. "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them that their fathers' God has sent me, they will ask, 'Which God are you talking about?' What shall I tell them?"

Unspoken Questions

Now God was patient and sympathetic with Moses—after all, He had been preparing him for eighty years. He didn't

rebuke Moses for his hesitance; He understood the unspoken questions in Moses' mind. But He also knew Moses to be a man of intelligence and character and no small amount of experience. So His answer was enigmatic: "I Will Be What I Will Be" was the reply. "Just say, 'I Am has sent me!' Yes, tell them YHVH, the God of your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has sent me to you."

"Call together all the elders of Israel," God instructed him, "and tell them about YHVH appearing to you here in this burning bush and that he said to you, 'I have seen what is happening to them there in Egypt. I *promise* to rescue them from the drudgery and humiliation they are undergoing, and to take them to the land now occupied by the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, a land "flowing with milk and honey." The elders of the people of Israel will accept your message. They must go with you to the king of Egypt and tell him, "YHVH, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us and instructed us to go three days' journey into the desert to sacrifice to him. Give us your permission." But I know that the king of Egypt will *NOT* let you go except under heavy pressure. So I will give him all the pressure he needs! I will destroy Egypt with my miracles, and then at last he will let you go. And I will see to it that the Egyptians load you down with gifts when you leave, so that you will by no means go out empty-handed! Every woman will ask for jewels, silver, gold, and the finest of clothes from her Egyptian master's wife and neighbors. You will clothe your sons and daughters with the best of Egypt!" (Ex. 3:12-22).

But Moses still had doubts. Not to be construed as a lack of faith, but it all seemed very vague to him. How was he to convince his slave-brethren with promises? How could he go and tell them: "You'll Find Out Who I Am" sent me, and He promises us freedom and a new country of our own that is presently occupied by six powerful, separate nations. All we have to do is ask Pharaoh to let us go for three days and sacrifice to 'I Will Be What I Will Be' in the desert. But Pharaoh won't let us go until 'I Will Be' has destroyed Egypt. Then all of you can ask for all the riches of Egypt from your former masters; they will gladly give you all their gold, silver, clothes, jewelry—and we will all be rich and free!"

Now who is going to believe a story like that? If I tell them I talked to God who was in a burning bush in the desert, they'll call for the men in white and rush me off to an

institution. They'll say I've lost my marbles, that I've been wandering in the desert too long, that I'm just an old man dreaming of restoring my former glory, that I've been hallucinating after being alone so long with a flock of sheep in the wilderness....

"They won't believe me!" Moses complained to God. "They won't do what I tell them to. They'll say, 'YHVH never appeared to you!'"

Three Good Miracles

Now, God was again patient with Moses, listened to his arguments, sympathized with his dilemma. "I understand your problem, Moses," God replied. "What's that in your hand?"

"It's just my shepherd's rod," Moses answered sheepishly.

"Well, I'll tell you what we're going to do, Moses. I understand that people have a great difficulty in believing what my servants say I say—so I'll let you have three good tricks you can perform, *real* tricks, miracles, that'll make their eyes bug out in disbelief. If they want to see something, we'll give them something to see! First, throw that rod you have down on the ground and I'll make it into a snake—you grab it by the tail and it'll become a rod again. Second, stick your arm into your robes and when you pull it out it'll be leprous, but when you put it back into your robe and pull it out a second time, it'll be normal again. Third, if these two tricks don't achieve the goal, you take some water from the river Nile and when you pour it out it'll become *blood* right before their eyes! Now, bolstered with those miracles, do you think you could do the job?"

Well, Moses threw down his rod, and sure enough, it became a snake, and when he picked it up by the tail it returned to its original stick shape. He put his arm in his robe and when he drew it out, sure enough it was leprous! Hopefully, he thrust it into his garments again, and thankfully when he brought it out again it was okay! He didn't have any Nile River water handy, so he had to take that one on faith. And Moses *did* believe.

More Excuses

But somehow, Moses just couldn't seem to picture himself performing this job God wanted him to do. He cast about

in his mind for yet another excuse that would convince God that He'd picked the wrong man—he was getting desperate!

"Moses *pleaded*, 'O Lord, I'm just not a good speaker. I never have been, and I'm not now, even after you have spoken to me—my speech is slow and halting. I just don't think I'm the one you really want to...'"

Now, God became a little upset. Why was He even listening to the arguments of a mere human being? Who did Moses think he was talking to his Maker that way? Couldn't he see that God was not just *asking* him to do this job, but **TELLING** him?

"Who is it that makes mouths, anyway, Moses?" I Will Be said. "Isn't it I? Am I not the one who makes a man so that he can speak or not speak, or see or not see, hear or not hear? Now you do what I tell you, or else! I will tell you what to speak, and then help you to speak it, and *you will do what I say!*"

Incredible, isn't it? You'd almost think that Moses had already read and was convinced of the words of a man called Paul—yet to be born, thousands of years into the future: "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses.... So let us come *boldly* to the very throne of God and stay there to receive his mercy and to find grace to help us in our times of need" (Heb. 4:15, 16). Yes, Moses believed in and practiced that principle long before Paul wrote it—fact is, Moses' own example as well as Paul's own experience and knowledge probably inspired Paul's words.

Patience Worn Thin

You can read the Bible from start to finish and you will not find a more *bold* approach to God by anyone else. Here was a *man*, literally arguing with God! And surviving! And God, in His turn, was reasoning with Moses. It was a give-and-take situation between the Creator and the created! The Ever-living God was so far patiently putting up with mumbling Moses as he tried in every way to squirm out of the job God had for him to perform.

But, believe it or not, even God's patience wears thin. He had allowed Moses to refuse His offer and criticize His choice *four times*. Though Moses may not have known it, he was pushing his luck a little too far, being a little too *bold* when he rejected God's offer the *fifth* time!

With no real or imagined excuses left to present to God,

Moses simply said: "Lord, please! Send someone else!" THEN THE LORD BECAME ANGRY! "All right," He said, "I've had enough of your excuses! Your brother Aaron is a good speaker; if you don't trust me to make you eloquent before Pharaoh, then you tell Aaron what I told you and let *him* tell Pharaoh—this is almost ridiculous! But I will let Aaron be your spokesman to the people—you will be as God to him, and he will be your prophet to the people and to Pharaoh. And don't forget that rod of yours—be sure to take it along so you can perform the miracles I showed you. NOW GO DO YOUR JOB!!!"

With that, Moses finally got the *hint*! God had made up His mind on who He was going to use to free the Israelites from Egypt, and no matter how stubborn Moses was, God was yet *more* stubborn! The going was getting tough—and it was time for the tough to get going!

Besides, Moses didn't really believe God was going to swallow that excuse about his not being a good speaker—Moses was too eloquent in presenting the argument! Generals and princes don't tend to be "slow of speech." And you and I know that Stephen, the first martyr of the New Testament Church, said about Moses: "... Pharaoh's daughter found him and adopted him as her own son, and taught him all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he became a mighty prince and *orator*"! (Acts 7:21, 22.)

So, like it or not, Moses was stuck with the job. Moses stopped arguing at this point—though he was to repeat that habit many times later—and left the presence of God to begin his next, last and greatest forty years. He had been prince for forty years, pauper for forty—now he was to be prophet for yet another forty!

Reluctant Prophet

The reason all this is brought up is to show Moses in a different light than most see him. Moses was not eager to become the chief executive in the "administration of death" (2 Cor. 3:7). Moses was a reluctant prophet. Faithful and obedient and hard working, granted, but reluctant. Moses *did* the job God wanted done—but it wasn't Moses' idea—it was God's!

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17, KJV). This scripture is misquoted and certainly misapplied by most. It makes it appear

that Moses was the giver of the law—that harsh, unbending, unforgiving, deadly set of rules that condemn and kill—while Jesus *substituted* grace and truth in the stead of law.

Nothing could be further from the truth! In the first place, the translation in the King James Bible is inaccurate. It should read: "For the law was given THROUGH Moses, while grace and truth came THROUGH Jesus Christ." This Moses and this Jesus are very much two of a kind.

Law is not opposed to truth. Law is truth. Granted, law is not grace. It was never intended to be. The purpose of law is to show the NEED for grace. Grace in no way does away with law—grace forgives the transgression of law.

Without law there could be no grace.
Without grace there could be no life.
Thank God for law—and grace—and life!

Law and Grace and Truth

Moses, the man, or any other man, could not produce or provide grace. Only Jesus, by His perfect life and perfect sacrifice can grant grace. Hence, the law could be given *through* Moses, the man—but it was, and is, and always will be *God's law*—while grace could *only* come *through* Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and grace was, is, and always will be *God's grace*!

Moses was thoroughly familiar with God's grace, and he wrote *five books* of God's truth. Jesus thoroughly believed in and knew all about law, for it was His voice that thundered God's law to millions of Israelites from the heights of the holy mountain of God, Sinai in Horeb—where Moses reluctantly accepted the job God had for him!

FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS

Things didn't go well from the beginning of Moses' great commission. Before Moses even got to Egypt, God nearly killed him because he had neglected to circumcise his son—after all, God couldn't afford to have the leader of Israel have a son who was not bound to the covenant. He had made with Abraham! (Exodus 4:24-26.) This situation upset his wife Zipporah greatly; she called him a "bloody husband" because of circumcision, not realizing it was God who required it, not Moses, her husband. So upset was she that she turned right around and took her children with her, returning to her father's house, leaving Moses alone to go to Egypt.

First Crisis

Now Moses had been forewarned by God that the Pharaoh would not take too kindly to the idea of releasing all his Israelite slaves, but he was still not prepared for the first crisis. When Moses gave his now famous "Let-my-people-go" speech to Pharaoh, all the king did was laugh at him and punish the Israelites with heavier demands! To say the least, Moses' popularity, gained with the Israelites through miracles and promises, suffered a great setback at this point. "All you've done is to make us stink in Pharaoh's nose, and given him a good excuse to work us all to death!" they complained.

Moses had nowhere to turn except to the God who had sent him. He knew *YHWH* was merciful and he knew God's

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Moses, frustrated and dejected, was back to square one! But God had not yet begun to fight!

God, in His patience and determination to make a name for Himself in the events of the Exodus, had ten plagues already planned to use against Egypt—and do remember that this was the *same* One who became the “little Lord Jesus,” born in Bethlehem so many centuries later!

Now the real battle of Egypt began in earnest! Egypt is called “the gift of the Nile.” And for good reason. That longest of the world’s rivers makes Egypt habitable. Without the Nile, there would be no Egypt! Naturally the Nile became an object of worship to the Egyptians. It supplied life, renewed each year as it overflowed its banks, deposited the fertilizer and provided the water for the crops. So the river Nile was the greatest god in the entire Egyptian pantheon.

By a miracle of vast proportions, God, *through* Moses and Aaron, turned the entire Nile River—and all other supplies of water—into **BLOOD! Blood.** Don’t pay any attention to well-meaning commentaries that tell you there was a coincidental red mud slide that just happened to spill into the river upstream when Aaron touched the water with his rod. This was a *miracle*, not a mishap! God says blood—God means blood. After all, who made blood in the first place? Could not God have a “blood bank” available with which to fill the Nile? Or maybe, as He did much later in changing water into wine (a much nicer miracle), He just *changed* the water into blood. No small miracle, granted—but real nonetheless.

The fish died, the river stank and was not potable. The most revered god of Egypt had been made to stink and become evil to its worshippers.
Impressive!

Devastating National Disasters

This was not just a jug of H₂O, but the entire water supply! One god down, many yet to go. But Pharaoh was predictably hardhearted. His sorcerers turned a pint of water into blood also, and that was enough for Pharaoh. “. . . He wouldn’t listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had predicted, and he returned to his palace, *unimpressed!*” (Ex. 7:22-23.) Now it has always seemed to me that it would have been much more practical and impressive if Pharaoh’s boys had turned the blood back to water to prove its impotence in-

stead of adding to the plague. But that’s not the way Egyptians thought in those days.

The power of that awesome first plague had a good effect on Moses and he began to pursue his job more willingly, began to become the Moses we all remember. Over a period of about a year, God, *through* Moses and Aaron, punished that great nation Egypt with such devastating miracles that it looked worse than Germany after World War II. In fact, it ceased to function as a nation for more than a generation!

All the gods Egypt worshiped were turned into deadly enemies, fearsome plagues. Frogs, flies, beetles, bugs and lice—a great list of gods!—became in their turn hideous national disasters. Most of the cattle they worshiped died of a mysterious disease while the livestock of the Israelites remained healthy. An unprecedented lightning storm complete with hundred-pound hailstones destroyed trees, crops, buildings and killed many inhabitants. What the hail left was destroyed by a later plague of locusts. No crops in Egypt at all that year! For three days God turned out all the lights of heaven with a darkness so thick no one could move. The sun, the moon, the stars, all so avidly worshiped by the Egyptians, were all turned off like you might turn off a light switch.

The gods Egypt trusted in were not only no help to them, but they became frightening tormentors causing pain, death and destruction. The great God *YHWH* showed who was the real God by turning the things they worshiped into tools of evil and death.

All of Pharaoh’s priests and sorcerers admitted defeat and begged Pharaoh to let Moses have his way. The whole populace in panic-stricken terror besought their king to let Israel go. All the treasures of Egypt were pressed on the Israelites in eager desire to have them go. Egypt lay in shambles. But Pharaoh stubbornly resisted his advisers, his people, Moses, Aaron and God until his own son died with all the rest of the firstborn of Egypt. That was the straw that broke the Pharaoh’s back!

The sordid slaves of Egypt led by a jubilant Moses left shattered Egypt in triumph. “Exodus” entered the languages of the world with all its meaning, and remains with us to this day. (“Exodus” is a later Greek word meaning “exit” or “leaving.”)

In that epic miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea, God crushed the last remaining vestige of Egyptian power: her

Pharaoh and all his armies drowned. Egypt was nothing: no crops, few houses, sick people, gold, silver and all treasures gone with the Israelites, no Pharaoh, no army, no government—no Egypt!

Moses' Troubles With the People in Sinai

Yet in the face of this overwhelming evidence of power from heaven executed through Moses for the benefit of Israel, grumbling, griping, complaining and rebellion were the milestones of the trek through Sinai—and Moses took the brunt of it all. Moses they could see. It was *through Moses* that God had done all these miracles. And when there were any problems it was Moses who faced the public rage; Moses who got the blame.

"Moses brought us out of Egypt," they complained, "to die in the desert!" They couldn't see God, only Moses. "Moses' plagues," "Moses' exodus," and when God Himself spoke *His* law to the whole nation with His own voice they called it "the law of Moses"—and people make that same mistake to this very day! (We'll get to the details of that in the next chapter.)

God tests and tries us all in different ways, but be thankful you don't have to go through what Moses did! Moses knew whose idea this whole plan was: God's. God's plan, God's people, God's plagues, God's Exodus (and, of course, God's law). But the people only saw Moses, the man to blame. When Moses was up on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he was staggered by what his Maker had to say: "Quick! Go on down, for *your* people that *you* brought from Egypt have defiled themselves" (Ex. 32:7).

Remember, Moses had not wanted the job in the first place, tried in every way to avoid the calling God had given him—now God Himself was seeming to sound just like the people and blaming it all on Moses! But God had more to say.

"I have seen what a stubborn, rebellious lot these people are. Now let me alone and *my anger* shall blaze out against them and *destroy them all*; and I will make you, Moses, into a great nation instead of them" (verses 9-10). This was the same God of love who later became Jesus Christ; the same God who gave His own life for you and me, and yes, all those Israelites whom He was now threatening to destroy—and even those Egyptians He *had* destroyed; the same God of

whom John spoke in the New Testament when he said: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17, KJV). But in this situation it was *God* (who became Jesus Christ, the Spokesman, the *Logos*) who had just given the law in His own voice to Israel, and written with His own finger in stone to Moses—and it was *Moses* who was asking for *grace*!

Bold Intercession

"But Moses begged God not to do it. 'Lord,' he pleaded, 'why is *your* anger so hot against *your* own people whom *you* brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and mighty miracles?' " (Ex. 32:11.) People have misunderstood John's statement cited above, probably because they *have not read the whole book!*

At this particular moment the life of an entire nation—millions of people, with all their potential billions of descendants (and maybe *you* are one of them!)—hung on the words of one man: Moses. Most people's opinion of Moses' supposedly harsh character would surely demand that Moses would have been the first one to take God up on His offer! Let God kill all the Israelites; they were just a pain in the neck to Moses anyway! And what a promise to Moses himself: to make a whole nation from the one man, Moses, just as He had made the whole nation of Israel from one man, Abraham! After all, Abraham was 100 years old when his son of promise, Isaac, was born—and Moses was only 80!

Moses, who governed with an iron hand. Moses, who administered corporal and capital punishment for crimes against God's laws—and stoning has got to be one of the hardest of all capital punishments! Moses, granite-faced, stern and unbending. Moses, man of law, prime minister of the administration of death!

There are not many Christians who would depend on Moses for mercy!

But here's the story of what really happened—believe it or not—written in the eternal words of God's own truth!

Moses interceded for Israel instead of for himself. Moses screwed up his spiritual courage and spoke to God Himself as no other man has. Moses went *boldly* to the throne of grace.

Addressing God Almighty, Moses said: "Do you want the Egyptians to say, 'God tricked them into coming to the mountains so that he could slay them, destroying them from

off the face of the earth?" (Verse 12.) A strong argument, but I would think a dangerous one to use on God Himself. But Moses, seeking mercy for *others*, went far beyond that!

Moses the Merciful

"Turn back from your fierce wrath," Moses boldly said. "REPENT!" Moses said—TO GOD! "Repent of this evil against your people." Has any other man dared to speak to God like this—and lived? Moses did! Yet somehow it doesn't seem to fit with what we've always heard about Moses, does it?

Moses continued: "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever" (verse 13, KJV).

What boldness! What absolute trust in the mercy and grace of God! What spiritual *guts*! What a merciful Moses!

And beyond that, it was effective; it worked! "And the LORD REPENTED of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (Verse 14, KJV.)

WHY?

How can this be? God angry?! Moses merciful?! It doesn't make sense with what you've heard before, does it? An enigma, a puzzle, a paradox!

But what about all those people the great God of love destroyed and all those people that harsh man Moses "saved" that day? And, in a larger sense, if God is all powerful and all loving, why does He allow so much human suffering today?

Moses learned the answers to these puzzles in a gripping tale worth the telling.

MOSES AND THE MERCY OF GOD

God had relented and yielded to Moses' plea to save Israel that day of the provocation with the golden calf. Moses went down the mountain with fury, power and mercy to set things straight. The whole tribe of Levi joined in his endeavor and qualified to become a priesthood tribe, serving to join Israel to God. The immediate crisis partially solved, Moses returned to God on the mountain to intercede once more on behalf of his Hebrews.

Again, boldly approaching the throne of grace, Moses spoke with deep and loving emotion to his Creator about His people: "Oh, Eternal One (*YHWH*), these people of yours have sinned a great sin—they have made themselves gods of gold. Yet now if you will only forgive their sin—and if not, then kill *me* instead of them, even blot *me* out of the book of life that only you can write!" (Ex. 32:31, 32.)

Surely the God of all love could not help but be moved by such a selfless, loving, merciful plea! This One to whom Moses spoke, who was to become the Christ; this One, who by the design of Himself and His Father was yet to appear on the world scene, emptied of being God, subject to death as a human being, willing to give His life to atone for all sinners; this One whose inner thoughts would be so much like Moses' (only on a much grander scale) when He would say, at the point of death on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"; this One who would taste death for, *in the stead of*, everyone; this One, the Savior of all mankind;

this One, to become Jesus the Christ, the only name under heaven whereby men may be saved; this One, ever-living, all-powerful, glorious God, willing to sacrifice all to save murderous, evil, sinning, God-defying mankind; this One fully understood and sympathized completely with Moses' desire for mercy, for grace. It was Moses who needed to understand total mercy in its total context.

And YHWH was ready to teach him.

God's Prerogative

"Whoever has sinned against me will be blotted out of my book, Moses. Now you go lead the people to the place I told you about, and I will punish whom I will punish!" (Verses 33, 34.)

Moses obeyed. The people were solemnly and soberly assembled to await their fate at the hands of their God. Moses and God continued their conversation, deliberating what was to be done (Ex. 33:5-23).

Moses: Great YHWH, you have been telling me, "Take these people to the promised land," but you haven't told me whom you will send with me. You say you are my friend and that I have found grace in your eyes. Please, if this is really so, guide me clearly in the way you want me to travel so that I will understand you and walk acceptably before you. And never forget that this nation is your people!

YHWH: I myself will go with you and give you success!

Moses: If you aren't going with us, don't send us. Don't let us move a step from this place. If you don't go with us, who will ever know that I *and my people* have found favor and grace in your eyes, and that we are different from every other people on the face of the earth?

YHWH: Yes, Moses, I will do what you have asked, for you have certainly found grace and favor with me, and you are my friend.

Moses: Oh, great and merciful God, thank you. Dare I ask one more thing? Permit me to see your glory!

YHWH: I will make my goodness, my glory, to pass before you, and I will announce the full meaning of my name: YHWH. But one thing *you* must understand, Moses, is that it is I, not you, who must decide when and to whom to be gracious. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. My friend Moses,

your heart, your attitude, your intent, your concern, your love are all in complete harmony with my own. Your purpose is my purpose. But both the power to perform it and the time frame in which it must be done are mine, and mine alone. Don't be impatient!

Now, you can't see my glory face to face or it would destroy you, but you stand here on this rock beside me, and when my glory goes by, I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed. Then I will remove my hand and you shall see my back, but not my face.

Key of Timing

For the lesson in patience Moses learned, we must cheat a little and go to the New Testament. Peter tells us in his second epistle, chapter 3, verse 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. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some *men* count slackness. . . ."

Here is the key—the key of timing, of the schedule God has in mind. The key which unlocks the puzzle of the frustrating question: "If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why has He allowed so much human suffering all these thousands of years?" Why was God not as merciful in each succeeding generation as Moses was toward his own generation?

Our time sense as human beings is very limited. God is eternal—and He can afford a patience humans find difficult, if not impossible. What's a thousand years to God? To give it some kind of meaning to us humans, God inspired Peter to say it's just like a day to us. But Peter sort of "stole" his idea about this God-time concept from much earlier writings: the Psalms. In Psalm 90 you will find the source of Peter's statement in the New Testament: "For a thousand years *in thy sight* are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (verse 4). In other words, the time factor, which is so very urgent and real to us human beings, is to God a relative thing.

Now many people assume that the Psalms were written by David—and indeed David did write the majority of them. But Psalm 90, if you will notice in your Bible, has a different author. The entire psalm deals with time and men. That fa-

mous quote about "threescore years and ten" (a 70-year average, which you will find is most modern) allotted to most men comes from that psalm. Immediately after that famous quote comes a most interesting statement (verse 10): "If by reason of strength they be *fourscore* years . . ." Moses was the author. And Moses was *fourscore* years old when he learned from God this most important lesson about time—when Moses learned patience, when Moses learned about *how* and *when* and, most importantly, *why* the great God YHWH planned to exercise His mercy and grace!

The Seventh "Day"

The week is composed of seven days. God is the author of time, by virtue of creation. And He arbitrarily chose a seven-day week. "Six days *thou* shalt labor, and do all *thy* work," YHWH said to Moses and all Israel, "but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord [YHWH] thy God: in it *thou* shalt not do any work . . ." (Deut. 5:13-14).

The meaning is clear when all the scriptures are put together. God allotted six days—six thousand years the way man reckons time—for mankind to do whatever he chooses, without interference from Him, and God also allows Satan to influence the actions of men for that time (most men, but not all). But the seventh day, one thousand years—the millennium, if you please—is reserved for God alone, a time He reserves for His work, His labor, His doing, His plan; a time when men must cease from *their* works and allow the completion of His great work; a time during which Satan will be bound, helpless, inaccessible to man (and *that* restful Sabbath is just about here!).

Paul gives us another glimpse at the plan: "And so ALL Israel *shall be saved*: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer [Savior], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, *when I shall take away their sins*. As concerning the gospel [the good news], they *are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election [the ultimate judgment of their eternal fate], they *are* beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:26-29).

"All Israel *shall be saved*"? Could that possibly include that sinful generation God sought to "destroy" and Moses sought to "save"?

Yes! "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and re-

vived, *that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*." (Rom. 14:9).

A Physical Resurrection

But how can dead people receive salvation? We've always been told by most of the Christian preachers that if you don't get "saved" during your lifetime, you'll go to that terrible *other* place forever: hell! Would you believe that the good news Jesus told Moses is *better* than the "gospel" preached by so many today—in His name? Those "Christian" preachers could learn a lot from Moses, the friend of God!

Who made life anyway? Who gave Adam his first breath? Who molded Adam from the dust and built Eve from Adam's side? Who is the Giver of life—and can *death* stop Him from restoring life? If He can make a man once, can He make him again, just as he was before he died? Do we Christians believe in the resurrection? Is there only *one* resurrection to spiritual life—or does the Bible speak of other resurrections? Does the Bible speak of a *physical* resurrection? Yes!

And, for those who might leap to the conclusion that this is a "second-chance theory," forget it! These people never had their *first* chance!

Surely you have heard of the "valley of dry bones." A Negro spiritual in America makes this a tuneful truth that is happily sung while ignoring the meaning of the words!

Ezekiel 37 tells the story: bones, sinews, flesh, skin and the breath of life—and that is a *physical* resurrection—are given to all the *dead* of the entire "house of Israel"! "They say, Our bones are dried, and *our hope is lost*. . . Therefore prophesy [Ezekiel] and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, O my people, I will *open your graves*, and cause you to come up out of your graves [is that not a resurrection?], and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, *when I have opened your graves*. O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, *and shall put my spirit in you*"! (Ezek. 37:11-14.)

Read it and weep—tears of joy!

Opportunity for Salvation

And not only Israel is included in this merciful resurrection to their one and only chance at eternal life, but all the people of every nation under the sun, from every generation

that ever lived, are included! Matthew 12 and Luke 11 tell of Jesus warning the generation of His day, long since dead, that those of the generation of Jonah in Nineveh (the very antithesis of Israel) and those of the generation of the queen of the south (the queen of Sheba) would one day rise with *the generation to whom He was speaking*. And Jesus further warned that the chances for salvation of those other generations would be better because they did not have—and reject—the very Christ Himself living among them during their fleeting days on earth!

God is no respecter of persons. He made all mankind in His own image. He loves them *all*—and intends them *all* to have an equal chance at salvation.

“As it is written, Jacob [Israel] have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith *to Moses*, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then [and this is the lesson that Moses had to learn] it is not of him that will eth, nor of him that runneth, but *of God that sheweth mercy*... Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:13-20)

God is the One who is in charge. He is the One who will offer salvation to whom He wants to offer it *when He chooses*. Thank God He chooses to offer that same salvation to everyone sooner or later! Babylonians, Scythians, Ninevites, Africans, Romans and Christians alike!

And that's *really* good news!

God is “not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9). *God's will be done!*

How sad it is that so many misinterpret what John said: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Although the law came *through* Moses and grace and truth came *through* Jesus Christ, Moses was most familiar with not only God's law but also His infinite mercy and grace—and that's the truth!

Learn the same lesson Moses learned. Don't be impatient with God, anxious for Him to offer salvation and grace when *you* want Him to, to whom *you* choose—wait on the Lord! His arm is not shortened. Death is His enemy. But He has conquered death once and *for all!* His grace and truth are not limited by temporary death. Nor is His law in opposition to His grace and truth! All those who have never known His

name will rise again and have their once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for grace and for life eternal!

And *that's* good news!

God's Name

Blessed be the name of the Lord. But what *is* His name? Moses kept asking Him the same question. And God gave His friend Moses the *answer*: “And the Lord [YHWH] descended in the cloud, and stood with him [Moses] there, and *proclaimed the name of the Lord*. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands [of generations], forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Ex. 34:5-7).

And *that* is the “name of the Lord” Moses learned from his friend God!

That was almost more than Moses could endure. What a marvelous plan! What all-encompassing mercy—beyond the wildest hopes of Moses, but very much in line with Moses' hope!

What God told Moses was that every human being would at one time have his opportunity for salvation. But the God of grace reserves the judgment of *when* and *whom* to Himself! Grace was not to be administered through Moses, but through God.

Trust God—Moses did!

Why Salvation?

But what about *why*? Why would anybody want to be saved? Saved from what for what? Saved from Egypt? From sin? From death? But *for what*?

Why *did* God make us the way He did? Mortal, subject to sin, capable of inflicting so much misery on our own kind for so many thousands of years. Why are we here? *Why* were we born? What is it God plans for us? What *purpose* is there? And once we are “saved” what will we *be*?

That's the “Tale of the *Other* Prophet”—Jesus. Moses knew—do *you*?

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

Moses was finally convinced that the God he worshiped—the One who became Jesus the Christ—did have mercy and grace in mind for every human being who had ever lived, or was yet to live. Moses and Jesus were of one accord on that subject—and that One to become Jesus had the *power* to bring to pass the *hope* of Moses.

Moses had a lot more to do with the Christian religion than most people know—he realized more of the true purpose of life than the majority of Christians today!

The Transfiguration

When the disciples of Jesus' day asked Him to show them the Kingdom of God and its coming, Jesus, through a "vision," provided three of their number with a foretaste of what that Kingdom would be like. Peter, James and John, from among the twelve apostles, were chosen for this special revelation. The whole scene is described in Matthew 17.

The two individuals Jesus chose to show in vision to His disciples were Moses and Elijah! Moses, then, will definitely be in God's Kingdom. Moses was Jesus' first choice, along with Elijah, as an example for Peter, James and John of the end product of the purpose of creation. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are earlier mentioned by Jesus as definitely being in the Kingdom of God, as well as Noah, Daniel, Job and David—

but Jesus chose to show in vision only Moses and Elijah! Surely, then, Moses and Elijah must have known the purpose of life Jesus was about to reveal to His disciples!

Power To Become Sons

The Bible clearly reveals that the purpose of the creation of human beings is to make them "sons of God." Yet this presents an enigma because it also clearly states that "flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50).

The only answer to that problem is the equally enigmatic statement by Jesus that human beings must "be born again" (John 3:3). That statement by Jesus is perhaps the most misunderstood of all He made. "Born again" is turned by most of religion into some sort of "spiritual experience" which leaves the body still flesh and blood, incapable of inheriting the Kingdom. It seems no one actually wants to take Jesus at His word!

Let's cheat, and believe that Jesus—the second of the two prophets of this tale—really meant exactly what He said. He said: "But as many as received him, to them gave he *power to become the sons of God*, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (John 1:12-13).

Let's face it: Jesus was not talking about pseudo sons, or allegorical sons, or religious-terminology sons, or pretend sons—*but real sons!* If you can believe it, the purpose of creation is to raise human beings to GOD BEINGS: real sons of God, *God as God is God!*

"Blasphemy!" shouted the righteously indignant and generally enraged religious bigots of Jesus' day when He said, "I am the Son of God."

"For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy: and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God!" they explained smugly in their theological straitjackets as they stooped to pick up rocks.

But for some reason they paused to give Jesus time to pose a puzzling question from the heart of their own Scriptures: "Is it not written in your law, I said, *Ye are gods?* If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou

blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John 10:33-36.)

Is a Son a Son?

At the very heart of Christian belief is the absolute necessity of recognizing and believing what those of Jesus' day labeled "blasphemy?" Every good Christian believes as the cardinal point of doctrine that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was and is the Son of God—but how many good Christians do you know who *also* believe *equally* in the words of that *same* Jesus of Nazareth when He said, praying to His Father in heaven just before His crucifixion: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one, as we are* . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which *shall* believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, *that they also may be one in us*?" (John 17:11, 20-21.) How many do *you* know who believe *that*?

Why do so many use all the words and slogans so common to Christianity in vain? Do we believe that neither Jesus nor the Father in heaven really *mean* what they say? Do we believe that the gospel message so plainly stated by Jesus is all allegory, all symbolism, all parable, all fable, all myth? Do we say by our beliefs and actions that the Communists are *right* after all when they say that belief in a supernatural being, in religion, is *indeed* "the opiate of the people"?

Do we believe that plain, clear words in the Bible describing the purpose of life, the plan of God, and defining the gospel are all empty phrases holding no practical meaning? Are these phrases to be taken with a grain of salt as mere religious phraseology having no *real* meaning or substance? Do words used in the revelation of God to mankind have a meaning apart from reality? Do we really believe that God *says* one thing but *means* another? (That was Satan's first argument back in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve! Check it for yourself: Genesis, chapter two.)

When God says His purpose is to make you and me His sons—just what kind of sons do you suppose He means? Real ones or fake ones? When and if you become a son of God, what kind of son do you think you will be?

When you get right down to it, are *you* really satisfied with *any* religion's explanation of the meaning of life, of the key purpose for our creation, of the ultimate goal to be at-

DETACH ENVELOPE HERE

tained by *any* religious exercise? Let's briefly examine the major options offered to us.

What Would You Like To Be When You Rise Up?

Bilions have believed that the ultimate goal of mankind is to achieve nirvana: "the state of perfect blessedness achieved by the absorption of the soul into the supreme spirit"; that is, an unconscious continued existence, as it were, like a cell in the body of the great one. It may have served billions, and driven them to extremes in their worship to accomplish nirvana—but I must admit that it does *not* satisfy me personally. What good is it to live forever and yet not even *realize* you are alive; have no *personal* existence? Does the idea satisfy *you*?

A nearly equal number have believed that the afterlife of the faithful will consist of forever living at ease in an oasis called the "Garden of Allah," where, lounging in hammocks strung between date palms, the men (because this is a rather male-dominated religion) will be fed delicacies by a bevy of voluptuous women (an eternal harem?) and will have all the hashish needed to keep them in a stupor (alcohol is not allowed) so the eventual boredom will not bother. In the name of the god of *peace* (Islam), true believers have converted others by the *sword* to believe and seek this reward! This goal may be pleasing to many—it does have some specific, concrete goodies explained—but again I must admit that it does not satisfy me personally. How about *you*?

Christianity is separated into two basic camps, which for many centuries have endeavored to exterminate one another. The more universal belief held by the larger of the two camps is that the purpose of life is to achieve the "beatific vision." After wading through about six pages of fine print in the encyclopedia of that religion, attempting to define just *what* the "beatific vision" *is*, you come to the disappointing conclusion that, in their own words, "no one really knows"! The best you can get is that it is a state of blessedness in which you, living forever, will be able to gaze upon God, seeing Him better than you see Him now, but not ever being able to see Him as He really is. Vague as it may seem, it is avidly pursued by hundreds of millions as the goal of their existence. Perhaps the threat of the only other alternative—suffering unimaginable torments in hellfire, all explained in vivid detail, spurs

them on. One more time I must admit that this theory does not satisfy me. To think that the Creator who has fashioned this fabulously complex, intricate, material and very real universe would propose such a vague purpose for His highest creation—mankind—just does not compute with me. How about *you*?

The other Christian belief—developed in protest and now shattered into hundreds of splinters, each having a slight variant of doctrine regarding the afterlife—is basically this: When you die, you go to heaven as a spirit being of some sort and live eternally in bliss—somewhat similar to the beatific vision, but with more details added. You check in at the pearly gates with Peter, get your wings, your harp, your golden slippers with which to walk the golden streets, your white robe, your cloud—and then you DO NOTHING (virtually), and you do(?) it forever! Granted, you are never hungry or thirsty; never cry or suffer. A sort of a great golden, peaceful retirement center in the sky, with, torture of all tortures, *nothing* to do... forever. It doesn't satisfy me—how about *you*? Is the suffering of hell again the driving force that encourages enlistment for this theory?

There are many more beliefs having goals equally vague—but those mentioned cover the majority of mankind, with the exception of the multitudes who believe we are born and die, like dogs, with no purpose. This doesn't satisfy me either, and I even refuse to address it—how about *you*?

Why the Mystery?

There is a very definite reason for all this confusion. The vagueness about the ultimate reward of the true believer of any religion, and particularly the "Christian" religion, is specifically predicted and explained in your Bible. It is nobody's fault; nobody is to blame. All who cling to these faiths can easily be given the benefit of the doubt and be said truly to be deeply sincere—the blood of the believers and martyrs of all these religions bespeaks eloquently the indelible fact of sincerity.

But there is a reason why *no* faith gives the clear purpose of life, the reason for creation, the plan of God, the ultimate goal God set for mankind. The reason is that God locked up that truth and gives the key to unlock it only to those of His own choosing at the time of His own choosing. Many a sermon has been preached on how impossible it

is for us to understand just what it is that God has in store for us, using as the text this scripture: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). This conveniently explains away the vagueness. This allows all manner of speculation, of possibilities for scenario-developing, of doctrinal discrepancies among believers. This brings comfort to the confused, helps in swallowing the impractical visions advanced regarding God's purpose.

It also fulfills that very scripture itself! *Nobody* has seen on his own the perfect will of God. Since nobody has seen it, obviously nobody has *heard* of it. No man has *thought up* or *conceived of* the plan God has in mind, try though they may. Intelligence, wisdom, dedication—all in absolute sincerity—have been applied in vain. Still, no one has come up with the plan.

This one "text for the day" seems an inadequate tool—let's cheat again just a little and read the *next* text also! Maybe we'll see, hear and begin to conceive what others have not: "*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit*: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (verse 10). This plainly says that despite the fact that man alone has not been able to come up in his own imagination (even with all the effort he has expended at it) with the plan God has in mind for those who love Him, He, by His Spirit, reveals that plan!

In short, God's purpose for mankind *can be known*, but only by His Spirit. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the *revelation* of the mystery, which was *kept secret* since the world began, but *now is made manifest*, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, *made known* to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen" (Rom. 16:25-27).

The Bible Says . . .

You are made in the image of God.
Why?

None of the other millions of creatures God created are made in His image. God doesn't look like a snake, a bull, a bird or a fish—He looks just like a human being, or better put,

human beings look just like God! "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26-27). God is not a male chauvinist: He created both male and female in His image!

We look like Him, but we are not *exactly* like Him. An image shows design and shape, but is not made of the same substance as the original. We are flesh—physical, temporary, mortal. God is spirit—eternal, immortal (see John 4:24; Isa. 57:15).

David knew that God had created us in His likeness, yet he said: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). To be like God as God is God—to be *totally* in the likeness of God—requires a change in our composition, from physical to spiritual. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. . . . Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [the "when" David referred to—when he would finally be satisfied]: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:50-52).

Job was familiar with this necessary change: "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call [the last trump], and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands. . . . I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet [apart from] my flesh shall I see God!" (Job 14:14-15 and 19:25-26).

What is changed is the flesh, attitude, character—not the personality, the integral, personal, conscious you. Job makes this clear: "Whom [God] I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another. . ." (Job 19:27).

Sons of God, Brothers of Jesus

Jesus is the Son of God—no good Christian denies that. Jesus is unique: He is the *only* son of a human being who had God the Father in heaven as His literal Father who caused His impregnation in the womb of a woman, Mary. But to Jesus, and through Jesus, was given the power to

make us *all* sons of God! Jesus became the firstborn Son of God by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). Even Jesus was physical, flesh and blood. That had to change. And that overwhelming change came about at His resurrection. But the beautiful thing about the resurrection of our Savior, the captain of our salvation, our Redeemer who lives, is that it becomes possible through the power of that resurrection for *you and me* also to be changed, also to become sons of God! To be God as God is God! To be God as Jesus is now God!

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). "For it became him, for whom are all things [the Father], and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation [Jesus Christ] perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one*: for which cause he [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:10-11). "And he [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church: who is the BEGINNING, the FIRSTBORN from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. . . . Christ in you, the hope of [your] glory" (Col. 1:18, 27).

This is not just religious-sounding language. This is the straightforward biblical truth that when *you and I* are changed we will be glorified sons of God, just as Jesus is NOW! Sons of God, brothers of Jesus—in every sense of those words!

Not Yet Born

This may seem difficult, because the Bible calls physical human beings "sons of God." Yet the Bible also plainly states that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (*the sons*). Humans must be born again. Not just an experience of the mind, but an actual rebirth; a complete change to a new being as different in state as the mature plant is from the seed which is planted in the ground (an analogy the apostle Paul used in 1 Corinthians 15—the resurrection chapter).

The difficulty is resolved when you realize that the New Testament was written in Greek. The Greek language uses one word, *gemma*, to refer to conception, the begotten stage of the fetus, the whole nine-month gestation period, and the actual birth. So, from the beginning of the new life, conception, the individual is considered to be a "son," even though

he is not yet born. When you, as a natural human parent, are first aware that there is life in the womb, don't you think of it as your child, even though it is not yet born? And do not *most* of those conceived finally achieve birth?

It's the same with God.

God begins the birth of His sons very small, just as we begin the birth of our own children. "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the EARNEST of the Spirit" (II Cor. 5:5). An "earnest" is a very small down payment carrying with it a promise of more to come, until the full commitment is reached.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). There are no capital letters in the Greek, by the way. It is only the translators who decided to capitalize "Son" when it referred to Jesus and *not* capitalize "son" when it referred to us. Most reverent and sincere humility no doubt, but it leads to misunderstanding.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). That word "adoption" can just as well be translated "sonship"—or even "Sonship"—but it never entered the minds of the translators that we could be the actual "Sons of God." They only took words like "brethren," "son," "Father" to be metaphors, niceties, condescension from God as it were. But this scripture clearly declares that we human beings, after receiving God's Holy Spirit, are to call God *Abba*—which is Aramaic for "father"—and then amplifies and reinforces that by adding "Father" from the Greek. An actual Father, not a pretend Father. Perhaps it was fear of the same charge of "blasphemy" leveled against Jesus by the religious people of His day that caused those men to use the translation "adoption" in the clear light of the context of a double-language (Aramaic, Greek) "Father-son" relationship discussed in Romans eight?

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit—that we are the children of God" (verse 16). This Spirit of God is, remember, the *only* source of this humanly inconceivable concept of what it is that God has in store for those who love Him. I have chosen to believe the Spirit of God, and not be satisfied with the ideas of men—how about you?

Now these "children of God" discussed in Romans are not *born* yet. They have just begun, just been spiritually conceived. They are not changed yet from physical to spiritual

totally; they just have the "earnest" of that yet future total change.

The fact is, *nobody* has been changed yet except Jesus of Nazareth. All the holy men of old are dead and in their graves, waiting, as Job stated he would wait. Some decayed to dust—as Peter said of David *after* the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). Some became ashes; some possibly were partly preserved physically—as Joseph, for example, whose body was mummified after the Egyptian style. But ALL are waiting for a "better resurrection.... God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:35, 40). "... the general assembly and church of the firstborn... the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23)... waiting...

Worth Waiting For

God is not playing games. God is not perpetrating some cosmic joke. God is not sponsoring some eternal rest home in the sky for retired Christians.

God is reproducing Himself!

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be [we're not born yet, just begotten]: but we know [do you?] that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:1-2).

What is Jesus going to be like when He comes back to this earth? A metaphorical, allegorical, mythical "Son of God"—or a real, spiritual, all-powerful, actual Son of God? You guessed it: The latter is correct. Now if He is like that, and we are going to be like He is—what do you suppose we will be like?

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises [beyond the scope of human imagination]: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). "I [Jesus says] will make them [people, human beings] to come and worship before thy feet" (Rev. 3:9). Now, you know, and I know, and God commands that only God Himself is worthy of worship!

If we are to be changed from physical to spiritual—and not just any ordinary spiritual, but by and into the Spirit of

God; if what we are taught by Jesus is true, and we are to pray "Our Father in heaven . . ."; if He really is *our* Father and not just His Father; if we are (to be) His sons; if we are to share the Father's and the Son's glory and be one as they are one; if we are to inherit eternal life; if we are to partake of the divine nature; if we are to be just like Jesus now is; if we are to have the complete mind of Christ in us; if we are to be worthy of worship—then WE MUST BECOME GOD!

And when you become God's own born son, what will you *do*? Will God equip you with eternal life, His own Spirit, glory, power . . . just to sit around on clouds and pluck a harp? What do Gods DO? What does our Father have in mind to keep us *busy*, joyfully, eternally productive? And if God is eventually going to save the great majority of mankind anyway, why bother about it *now*?

Moses knew the answers to these questions—do you? If not, read on.

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

The great Creator of all that is has a plan for you and me which far exceeds the most vivid imaginings of men, who have come up with rewards for the saved which are so vague, ephemeral and basically undesirable. The good news, the gospel Jesus preached and the prophets and apostles wrote about, is the good news of the Kingdom of God.

All religions are aware of this, but have spiritualized away the heart of the good news by either making that Kingdom of God in heaven (and hence having nothing to do with the earth), or concluding that the church is the Kingdom. Neither idea is substantiated in the pages of the Bible. Believe it or not, there is no scripture from Genesis to Revelation which states that the reward of the saved is heaven! Yet, on the other hand, there are many very specific statements about the Kingdom of God being here on this earth.

Bible Unorthodox

Most of orthodox Christianity is unanimous in believing that the reward of the saved is heaven. Vague and misinterpreted scriptures are used to document this belief, along with a generous amount of human imagination. Fortunately, the Bible itself is not "orthodox" and has many plain, detailed, clear statements about the reward of the saved being God's literal rulership in His Kingdom here on this earth!

Let's choose to be biblical rather than "orthodox" and

see what is the reward of the saved as revealed in the Scriptures.

A Kingdom has four basic elements: 1) a king; 2) subjects; 3) sovereign territory; 4) laws. Everyone is in agreement with that as far as the kingdoms of this world are concerned. Each kingdom jealously guards its own integrity. Wars are fought over disputed boundaries, succession of rulers, laws regarding the subjects' rights. But when we come to the Kingdom of God the general desire is to make it seem unreal. God is "allowed" to be King, but God is in His heaven and we are here on earth, and the "spiritual realm" is deliberately made vague, powerless—except as represented by human beings using the name of the god they worship in order to exercise control over their subjects.

The whole concept of God and His Kingdom is put in fantasy land, never-never land, and the life hereafter. It is dismissed from today's or tomorrow's reality. To consider that the one who made the earth would ever be interested in governing what He has made is anathema! Separate church and state as much as possible (which is an excellent practice in today's world, seeing few pay any attention to what God says anyway). Keep God in heaven and out of temporal affairs at all costs—except as the idea of God might be used to control people. Plato put it this way: "It was indeed a wise man who first conceived the idea of God!"

If it really were man who "conceived" God, then we can continue to have our own concept of the future life. But if it were really God who invented mankind, and He did so with a specific purpose in mind which He reveals plainly in His Word, then it would behoove us to consider His ideas, purposes and statements. If you believe the former, then there is no need to read further. If you believe the latter, read on.

A Few Plain Scriptures

Since general belief goes contrary to biblical statements, let's examine just a few quotes from God's Word which have no meaning if heaven is the reward of the saved, but have tremendous impact if we believe exactly what the Bible says.

Abraham is the father of the faithful (Gal. 3:7). If you are Christ's you are his children and heirs to the same promises made to Abraham (Gal. 3:29). He was promised by God land forever! (Gen. 13:15)

The message of Daniel covers the entirety of history

from the Babylonian Empire until the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. "And in the days of these kings [the last resurrection of the Roman Empire, yet to come] shall the God of heaven [that makes the *who clear*] set up a kingdom [that makes the *what clear*], which shall never be destroyed [that makes the duration of that Kingdom's power clear] . . ." (Dan. 2:44). " . . . And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain [biblical symbol for government], and filled the whole earth [that makes the *where clear*] " (Dan. 2:35). "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints [that's us, we hoped], and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came [that makes the *when clear*] that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan. 7:21-22). "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom *under* the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions [territories, rulers] shall serve and obey him [them, as it is translated in the RSV]" (Dan. 7:27).

Daniel had no questions about whether God's Kingdom was to have power and dominion here on earth or not. He dealt with the first two of the world-ruling, earth-governing kingdoms (Babylon and Persia), and all his prophecies are very pointed and deal exclusively with the governments of the earth (including the Kingdom of the most High) and all its peoples.

Jesus Speaks

Jesus said in Matthew 5:5: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth!" Yet He said in verse 3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Does this mean that "meek" people have to settle for earth, while those who are "poor in spirit" get to go to heaven? Or does it simply mean, as the rest of the Bible corroborates, that the "kingdom of heaven" is to be established here *on earth*, and that both the "meek" and the "poor in spirit" (and it is rather hard to distinguish between the two, you must admit) will share that kingdom *of heaven on earth*?

Jesus exhorted us to pray—and surely no one is ignorant of this most oft repeated "Lord's Prayer"—"Thy kingdom *come*. Thy will be done *in earth*, as it is in heaven."

The book of Revelation, which tells in detail of the time

of God's intervention in the affairs of mankind, the coming of His Kingdom to this earth, plainly says: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world* are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). That certainly agrees with what Daniel had to say. And to make crystal clear the precise location of the heavenly control of earthly kingdoms, the same book reveals: "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth?" (Rev. 5:10.)

Would You Settle for Earth?

Reviewing the biblical doctrine we expound, a minister who believed that the saved go to heaven asked us cryptically, "Would you settle for earth?" I want to answer that question now.

A brief glimpse of all history proves that the great majority of mankind in every generation would not only "settle for earth," but has fought bitterly over the jurisdiction of all of its surface to try to ensure that they and their heirs would control some portion of it! A second glimpse will reveal that very religious-minded people have been in the forefront of proving "holy wars" to gain or regain "holy land"! "Settle" for earth? Man has fought, scratched, killed, connived, deceived, plotted, etc. throughout his entire history for just pieces of the earth!

They don't call it "real estate" for nothing, you know!

There is a biblical record of one who did have control of earth at one time (Jude 6), but was not willing to "settle" for it. Rather he made war in heaven and sought to take over God's throne and replace Him. He ascended above the clouds and stormed the very gates of heaven. He failed. You can read about that in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

Since God's promise to the faithful is the earth, my answer is: "Yes, I'll 'settle' for earth!"

Some Parables

The parables of Jesus have been grossly misunderstood. First, let's let Jesus Himself tell us why He used parables. "And the disciples came, and said unto him. Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He—answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is *not* given.... There-

fore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see *not*; and hearing they hear *not*, neither do they understand.... But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matt. 13:10-16).

Then follows Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed. Jesus Himself interpreted the parable and said: "The field is *the world*; the good seed are the children of the kingdom...." (Matt. 13:38).

The lesson is this: Do not conclude that the generally accepted understanding of the parables is correct. Usually they are applied as having some "spiritual" lesson only to be realized in some distant heavenly kingdom and as having little or nothing to do with the real life here on earth. Nothing could be further from the truth. And the purpose of Jesus' use of parables was to obscure, not to enlighten.

The parable of the talents is one which could only be applied to an earth-ruling Kingdom of God. Look it up in Luke 19. The successful users of the talents supplied by God are rewarded with "ten cities" (verse 17) and "five cities" (verse 19). Are there cities in heaven? If so, where does the Bible so state?

Some Jobs in the Kingdom

The Bible plainly states that King David and the twelve apostles will be in the Kingdom of God. But what will they be doing? Plucking harps? No. Floating on clouds? No. Wearing golden slippers? No.

What then?

Let's check on David first. Ezekiel 37 tells, as explained in chapter 4 of this booklet, of the resurrection of all the past generations of Israel and Judah—a physical resurrection: bones, sinews, flesh, skin and breath. All those who said, "Our hope is lost" (verse 11) are resurrected to hope eternal! "And David my servant shall be king over them.... And *they shall dwell in the land* [not in heaven] that I have given unto Jacob my servant... and my servant David shall be their prince forever" (Verses 24,25.)

Now David wrote in Psalm 86: "... For I am poor and needy." Wouldn't you say that was an attitude of "poor in spirit"? And yet the scripture we have just read clearly says David is going to be king of Israel here on this earth, forever!

How about that!?

If Israel is going to be here on this earth, and David is

going to be its king forever, where does that put the twelve apostles?

Jesus said (and that always seems good authority to me): "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29-30.) They must be the "meek" who "inherit the earth"!

Now if David and the twelve apostles are busy down here on earth governing Israel (finally with all its resurrected throngs), do you want to be in heaven doing nothing?

God's Government

Jesus consistently preached one gospel: the good news of the Kingdom of God. Jesus preached that one gospel through the prophets of old who wrote the Old Testament; He preached it personally during His life on earth; and He preached it through the New Testament authors, the apostles. It has never been a gospel divided—one kingdom in heaven and the other kingdom on earth—and it never will be. That one gospel has always been the gospel of the Kingdom of God (or of heaven) on the earth!

The Kingdom of God has never been just an ethereal idea, a spiritual concept, a nebulous notion. Nor has the Kingdom of God been by proxy, through vicars or third parties. The Kingdom of God is not an emotional experience, a religious dream, an opiate for the people.

The Kingdom of God is real!

The Kingdom of God is world government located on the earth, performing every facet of sovereignty ever known to any earthly government—and then some!

Isaiah and Micah make it plain. Let's read Micah. Governments are composed of three basic functions: executive, legislative, and judicial. Micah says: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord [the government of the Kingdom of God] shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills [over all governments, large and small]; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he [the God of Jacob] and the head of the executive branch of that government will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law

[the legislative branch of government] shall go forth of Zion [not heaven], and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem [the capital].

"And he shall judge [the judiciary branch of government] among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.... and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever" (Micah 4:1-3, 7).

The United Nations chose well their motto: "Swords into plowshares." But only the power of the Kingdom of God on earth will bring it to pass!

That will be the most real kingdom this earth has ever known!

Your Job in God's Kingdom

If you turned to Micah 4 which I quoted above, you noticed I skipped over a couple of verses. Let's notice them right now: "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever" (verse 4, 5).

Can this possibly mean that the Lord is going to allow many gods to be worshiped absolutely contrary to His own first commandment—and that "for ever and ever"?

No!

Since the purpose of God in creating us is to make us members of His family, sons of God, God as God is God, the saved will be God! There is only God the Father (one) and God the Son, Jesus (two), in the God family now. But when the last trump is blown, the dead in Christ resurrected and changed in a moment and a twinkling of an eye, then Jesus will be the "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29), and the Father will be delighted in "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10), all worthy of worship (Rev. 3:9), born members of God's family, each having different names (Rev. 3:12) but all sharing the name GOD! All sharing in the government of this earth in the Kingdom of God for ever and ever.

So, "all people will walk every one in the name of his God," the particular Son governing in that particular area,

"and we"—hopefully you and I, glorified as born sons of God at that time—"will walk in the name of the Lord our God"—total unity—"for ever and ever," and that is a long time!

David will be the son of God governing all Israel. The twelve apostles will be busy with the duties of judging and governing, one each, the twelve tribes of that one nation, Israel.

Some unnamed successful overcomers will have lesser duties governing five cities, or ten cities.

What will you and I be doing?

Just a Beginning

Now that we have scratched the surface, gotten the overview of the purpose of life and the Kingdom of God, we're ready for more details of that busy eternal life. "Governing" and "ruling" in the Kingdom of God are too general. Some people even say they don't want to be telling others what to do forever. They have too narrow a view of government. Life won't be just a piece of cake; sitting on a throne giving orders. Active doing in every facet of life is involved.

PERILOUS PRELUDE TO A COMING KINGDOM

Have you noticed lately how many biblical phrases are being used by nonreligious people and organizations? A Ph.D. who wrote in *Scientific American* as far back as 1970, focusing on the single problem of nuclear proliferation and the resultant possibility of "the war to end all wars," stated that he felt civilization and mankind had only a 50-50 chance of making it to 1980—and none at all to the year 2000. He went on to say that we are living in an age of a "crisis of crises"—food, fuel, water, soil, air, political, racial, nuclear weapons crises.

He sounds like Daniel—or Jesus—or John in the book of Revelation!

A science-fiction writer recently produced a book called *Doomsday*, 1989. Another equally serious, yet more factual book appeared at the beginning of this decade titled: *Famine 1975! America's Decision: Who Will Survive?* (Though 1975 has come and gone, the threat of massive famine still haunts the four billion occupants of earth!)

In the heart of Cheyenne Mountain, where the defense systems of the United States are buried in relative safety deep underground, there is a piece of electronic communication gear referred to as "the Armageddon button." If it is lighted up, it will indicate that that unthinkable war between the supergiants of nuclear power has been ignited; the balloon is up; the end of the world is a distinct possibility!

The End of the World!

Few scoff at that expression anymore. There are too many horrible means by which our world could be terminated. The end of the world has become deadly real!

In the past we have tended to think that the concept of the end of the world was just a religious idea to scare people into worship! This old world has been around a long time with all kinds of people predicting the end—and we're still here!

But with the power available and in the hands of mankind now since about 1950, more and more nonreligious people have begun to seriously predict terminal worldwide problems ending in the annihilation of all life!

This generation suffers from *unique* problems among all the generations of our history.

The concept of the end of the world that so many laughed at before was a little awry from what the Bible says anyway. The end of the world was fixed in many people's minds as being the breakup of the actual planet—an idea strictly unbiblical, yet, like so many other traditional religious ideas far removed from Scripture, considered to be just another biblical myth.

Perhaps that misconception came from the question the disciples asked Jesus: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3.) The word they used for "world" was the Greek *aion*. We have the word "eon" in English for that, or "age"—it had nothing to do with the planet itself. Yet in Jesus' answer, He used another Greek word, *cosmos*, meaning civilization, the present order of society (see verse 21). Admittedly, the end of the age of man—opposed to a coming age of God—on this earth will be accompanied by sufferings of the very planet itself, its flora, fauna, its total ecology—and that's biblical. But the phrase "end of the world" and those things to look for which would signal it dealt with age and civilization.

The Time of the Signs

Let's look at some of those things which Jesus said would signal the end. But first, let's get His overview so we understand what He did say in context. "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth

leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see *all* these things, know that it [my return] is near [answer to the first part of the disciples' question], even at the doors. . . . This generation [age] shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled [answer to the last part of the disciples' question]" (Matt. 24:32-34).

The significance of this lesson is this: *all* of the things Jesus mentioned in His answer must be visible, and *then* we will know that the "end" is near. Let's look at all those points (and surprisingly, we'll see Jesus said some were not to be taken too seriously all by themselves) and, most important of all, let's see the *one* point (missed by most) that fills out the "all" and so strongly indicates that *this* is indeed the generation of the time of the signs.

Deception of false Christs preaching in Jesus' name but not preaching His doctrine is the first thing He mentions. Wars, national and worldwide, and rumors of them form the next point. But surprisingly here Jesus says, "The end is not yet." Then He warns about famines, plagues and earthquakes and says, "But all this will be only the beginning of the horrors to come." Next He predicts terrible persecution for His true followers, rampant sin everywhere, then more warnings on false prophets. The good news being carried to the entire world is another point (Matt. 24:14).

Then comes the *one* prerequisite most important to us, in fact not even understandable until this generation: "... except those days should be shortened, *there should no flesh be saved [alive]...*" *That* was not possible until just a few decades ago! Nuclear annihilation is a greater and greater threat with each passing year.

Then comes the "great tribulation," more warning on false prophets, grossly disturbing signs in the very fabric of the universe itself ("heavenly signs"), Christ's actual return and hence "the end."

More Horrors to Come

In this brief overview Christ gave to His disciples, He mentioned more "horrors to come." Later He granted the apostle John a more thorough preview of those "horrors," and John wrote them faithfully in a book often called "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," but which John himself in the first words of the book calls "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"! It is also called the "Apocalypse," which is its Greek title.

I suggest you read the entire book in a good modern translation. It's not very long, yet it encapsulates the terrifying events yet to happen on this poor earth before "the end." Here is a short summary of some of the more significant things it says.

War, famine and disease will be responsible for the deaths of 25 percent of mankind; currently that represents *one billion people*. (Forecasts by military men and think-tank futurists predict more of a percentage of kill than the Bible does.)

A 200-million-man army of Asia is foreseen by John as destroying another third of mankind: *one billion more!* He states that the means of the destruction is "smoke, fire and brimstone"—as accurate a description of the horror of modern weapons anyone living two thousand years ago could be expected to give. More modern observers simply state: "War is hell!"

The sun itself, in an unstable condition, will increase its radiation seven times. The result is the burning of all grasses (that's wheat, rice, barley, food grains of all sorts, not just wild grass!) and forest fires ultimately destroying 33 percent of all the trees on earth.

All waterborne life will die, in the oceans and in the fresh water, and the water itself will bear resemblance to blood! (One-third of the world's food supply comes from the sea.)

After all these things, the armies of the earth are set to press that "Armageddon button" and destroy what's left of flesh on earth—but Christ intervenes and saves what's left alive!

And *that* is "the end"!

But that's *good news*: God is not going to allow mankind to commit suicide—cosmocide!

In short, before "the end," at Christ's intervention, this poor planet will be reeling from unprecedented catastrophes inflicted by its human occupants. It will become a charred relic of its former self, an inhospitable environment with death threatening on every side.

Busy Sons

It is mankind's last gasp, and Jesus intervenes. He resurrects the "dead in Christ" (including Moses, of course) and with them changes those few true followers of His still living,

in a moment and a twinkling of an eye, into *sons of God!* He establishes His Kingdom here on earth and immediately begins a cleanup program overwhelming and unprecedented in history—and all those sons joining His family-kingdom are going to be *very busy!*

All life will have to be restored to the waters of the earth! (Read about it in Ezekiel 47.) Would you like to help?

Trees will have to be planted by the billions! (Read about it in Isaiah 41.) Would you like to help?

Thousands of cities will have to be rebuilt! (Look that one up yourself: there are dozens of accounts of it in the Bible.) Would you like to help?

Great highways will have to be built. (Read about it in Isaiah 19.) Would you like to help?

Every nation will have to be reeducated in the ways of peace, health, prosperity; have to be positively taught not to go to war anymore. (Read about it in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4.) Would you like to help?

The deserts will be made to bloom; the total ecology of an abundantly productive earth restored. Would you like to help?

For a thousand years the sons of God of the first resurrection will have the opportunity to help humanity as it has never been helped before, to heal the earth scarred by so many thousands of years of human neglect and rapine, to assist in the establishment and administration of the Kingdom of God—*on earth!*

Then there are all the dead of past generations, to rise physically (Ezekiel 37)—fifty, one hundred billion?—and you can help in bringing to them, for the *first* time, the only name by which they can be saved: Jesus Christ. You can help reeducate them, inviting them into the same God family you may be a member of. Would you like to help?

Unbelievably, beyond that, God the Father comes to earth (read that in Revelation 21—a little different from doctrine you may have heard) and tells all His sons, "Behold, I make *all things new!*"

A vast, possibly unending, universe lies beyond this globe—and God says of His Kingdom: "Of the *increase* of his government and peace there shall be no end. . . . to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7).

That leaves an open-ended, ever busy, challenging, exciting eternity before us all!

Sorry, no harps, no clouds, no golden slippers—but when you're God's son, I think you can have them . . . if you want.

Two Prophets—Same Tale

Moses, friend of God, servant of Christ, merciful to the point of having his own name erased from the book of life if it would have helped the rest of his nation; Moses, *through* whom the law was given (but it was God's law), maligned and misunderstood in his heavy role as chief executive in the administration of death, will be very much present and busy in that Kingdom, as witnessed by his transfiguration on the mount.

And of Jesus, Son of God, Spokesman, Logos, Savior and certainly Prophet, Moses said: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren [Israel], like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). And God Himself is quoted as agreeing with that statement. The fact is, Moses was only passing on what he had heard from God (see verse 18)!

Jesus and Moses: *alike!* Both lovers of law—and of the people. Both working toward that same Kingdom. Can two walk together unless they agree?

Be there—and as a son of God, share friendship with both Moses and Jesus eternally!

About the Author

Vibrant personality and infectious sense of humor aptly describe Jon Hill. Born in Seattle, Washington, Mr. Hill entered Ambassador College in the fall of 1951. He holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree in theology. He taught Old Testament Survey in the college for many years. In his quarter of a century of service to the Worldwide Church of God, Jon Hill has labored in a number of important capacities, including director of Ambassador College Press and managing editor of Tomorrow's World and Good News magazines. Currently he is a senior editor of The Plain Truth.

Jon Hill is also an ordained evangelist in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He has pastored churches in Houston, Dallas and Big Sandy, Texas; Minden, Louisiana; Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma; Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; El Monte, Long Beach and Pasadena, California. As an evangelist he has conducted personal appearance campaigns in the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

He has authored several booklets over the years. Two on the Bible are titled Read the Book and How to Study the Bible. Another is titled Is There a Real Hell Fire? Thousands have come to know their Bibles better by reading these interestingly written publications.

RECOMMENDED READING

Apart from the main theme of this booklet—*A Tale of Two Prophets*—a number of vital topics are briefly introduced in support of the story of Moses and Christ. All of these topics are important subjects in themselves. Every thinking reader should be aware of this vitally important background material.

The Worldwide Church of God has produced many informative, interesting booklets and reprint articles explaining the significance of many of these subjects. Specific literature relating to each part of *A Tale of Two Prophets* is listed under each chapter heading.

- Chapter One: Moses—The Friend of God
 - Is Jesus God?*
 - Who Was Jesus?*
- Chapter Two: The Reluctant Prophet
 - No! You Can't Earn Your Salvation*
 - What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?*
- Chapter Three: From Crisis to Crisis
 - Read the Book*
 - How to Study the Bible*
- Chapter Four: Moses and the Mercy of God
 - Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*
 - Is This the Only Day of Salvation?*
- Chapter Five: The Mystery of God
 - Why Were You Born?*
 - Just What Do You Mean—Born Again?*
- Chapter Six: The Government of God
 - Just What Do You Mean—The Kingdom of God?*
 - What Is the Reward of the Saved?*
- Chapter Seven: Perilous Prelude to a Coming Kingdom
 - Are We Living in the Last Days?*
 - Coming—A New Age*

Be sure to write for any material listed above that you would find of special interest. They are all free of charge. Additional Worldwide Church of God publications are mentioned in our special brochure, "More For the Asking."

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