

# THE WORLD AHEAD

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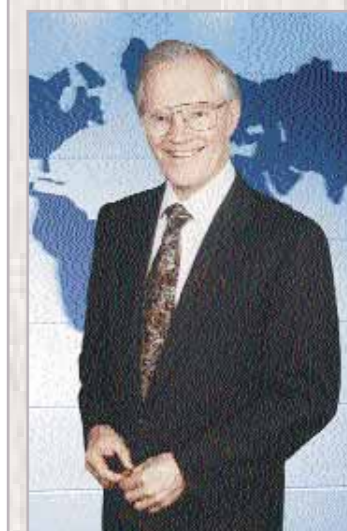
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## EDITORIAL



**Roderick C. Meredith**  
 Editor in Chief

## Should You "Stay at Home" to Worship God?

In the confusion caused by the virtual breakup of a formerly Bible-believing Church, thousands of sincere people have decided to just "sit it out" at home. Some even call themselves the "Stay-at-Home Church."

Perhaps many of you subscribers and viewers of the *World Ahead* telecast have felt it wise to worship God at home until you are sure about what God wants you to do. In view of the contradictory pronouncements regarding the very nature of true Christianity—and the confusion in many professing Christian organizations—that is understandable.

But *how long* should you sit on the sidelines? Is "worshiping at home" really a viable alternative in the sight of GOD? For it is *God's revealed will* that we should be concerned about—not our moods or emotions of the moment.

The book of Hebrews tells us to not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some," but to exhort one another as we see the return of Christ approaching (10:25). And as important as this topic was to the first-century Christians to whom it was addressed, how much more should *we* take this advice to heart—we who are living shortly before Christ's Second Coming?

Also, giving instruction to Israel regarding all of His Holy Days—including the *weekly Sabbath*—God commanded, "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a *holy convocation*" (Lev. 23:3). A "convocation" is a *commanded assembly*—in this case commanded by GOD Himself! So unless you are genuinely sick or otherwise prevented, you are instructed by God to meet with His people on His Holy Sabbath. The Scriptures make this crystal clear!

Another reason all Christians need to attend church services *regularly* is that we need instruction and teaching from true ministers. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:14, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

And contrary to the ideas and practices of some, your minister should

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**S**imple logic tells us that a deceived person *does not know* that he's deceived! Otherwise, he wouldn't *be* deceived, would he?

And so it is with millions of professing Christians who go merrily along their way, while a very real Satan the Devil is quietly snickering behind the scenes. He has *really* gotten most of these people confused! In fact, part of their confusion lies in the fact that most of them don't even believe in the existence of the one who is confusing and deceiving them—Satan! Yet the inspired Word of God is very plain on this subject. Revelation 12:9 tells us of a coming “spirit war” just before Christ's return: “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, **who DECEIVES the whole world**; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

The “whole world” truly *has* been deceived. In Revelation 20:1-3, the Apostle John described the yet-future time, right after Christ's return, when an archangel will bind Satan and thus prevent him from continuing his heinous activities and deceptions: “He cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, **so that he should deceive the nations no more** till the thousand years were finished” (v. 3).

The great Creator GOD is *allowing* Satan to deceive the whole world during this present age—the almost 6,000 years of human history from the creation of Adam to the present. Thankfully, this sinful age has almost come to an end. But for now, while it continues, Satan himself is the invisible “god” that most people ignorantly worship. The Apostle Paul made this plain in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of

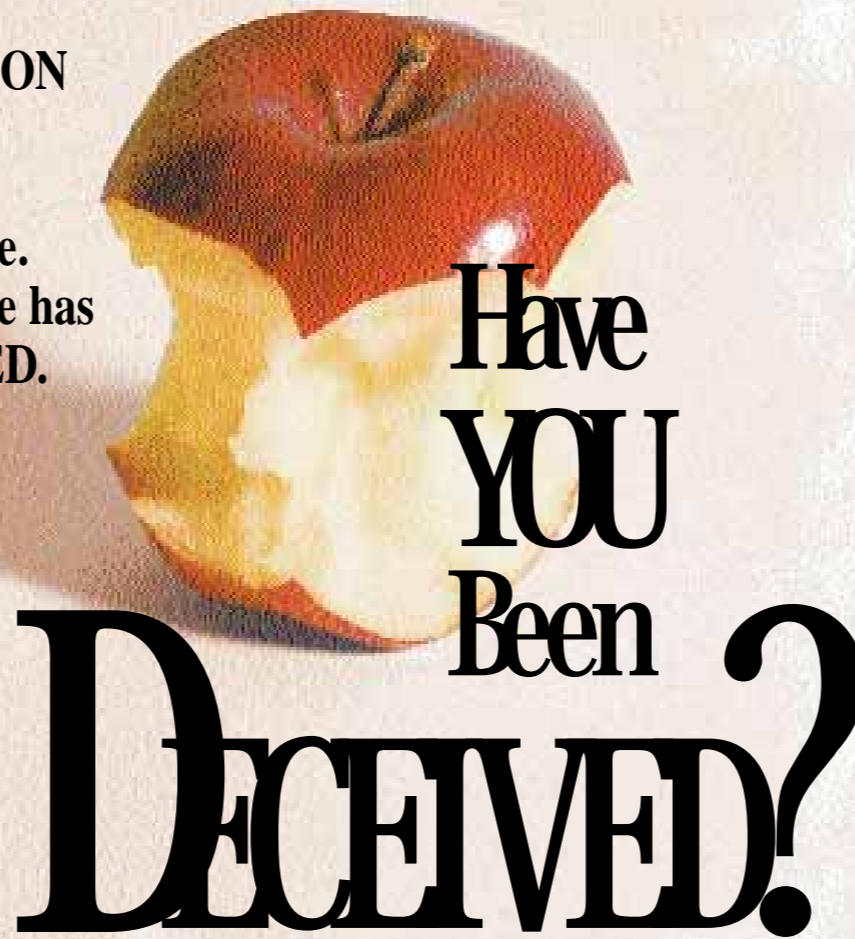
Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

In fact, the utter *confusion* that Satan has engendered in professing Christianity is so widespread and obvious that even the secular news media comment on it at times. Let me quote a few words of a recent book review from the January 3, 1997, edition of *The Wall Street Journal*. Reviewing Thomas C. Reeves' book, *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity*, David Klinghoffer says that it “could alternatively be titled, *Why Should Episcopalians Survive?* or *Why Should Presbyterians Survive?* After

all, the liberal Christian denominations have the same problem as their Jewish counterparts: Over the past century, the so-called mainline churches (e.g., Episcopalians, United Presbyterians, United Methodists, Evangelical Lutherans) have diverged further and further from Christian orthodoxy while losing parishioners in droves....

“In 1993, the Evangelical Lutheran Church drafted a statement on sexuality condoning masturbation. Active, open homosexuals are regularly ordained as Episcopal priests. The United Presbyterians, United Methodists and American Baptists

**This world is in total CONFUSION about the very purpose of human existence. Almost everyone has been DECEIVED. Are you one of these countless millions?**



by Roderick C. Meredith

*Think about that!*

According to your Bible, the powerful mastermind behind all this confusion is none other than the invisible Satan—the “god of this age.” He has led the vast majority of human beings into believing in rank idolatry—not just the worship of Buddha, the Hindu “gods” Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the African tree spirits and local demon-gods, but even various forms of false “Christianity.” The latter features many confusing beliefs, practices and traditions that are *not* found in the Bible, that were *not* believed or practiced by Christ and the original apostles and that—in many cases—just don't make sense!

#### What Would Jesus Say?

How would Christ respond to such total religious confusion? Notice what He said about the Pharisees, the “mainstream” religious leaders of His day: “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch” (Matt. 15:13-14).

“Blind leaders of the blind?” Most of the Pharisees of Jesus' day were highly intelligent and educated men. However, they were DECEIVED!

Note this carefully: **Your Bible clearly indicates that the major “key” to learning and following the real TRUTH of God's plan and purpose is one's willingness to study and obey the direct teaching of the Bible—refusing to follow the ideas and traditions of men.**

When Jesus was challenged on why His disciples did not follow the “traditions of the elders,” He replied, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?” (Matt. 15:3). And

later, Jesus added, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men’” (vv. 7-9).

Yes, you really *can* worship Jesus Christ “in vain” by following *human traditions!* With this in mind, Jesus issues this challenge: “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Again, the “key” is a willingness to OBEY what God clearly says in His inspired Word. Jesus also said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does the will* of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice *lawlessness!*’” (Matt. 7:21-23).

In this powerful passage of Scripture, the Son of God tells us that our focus must be to *do* the “will” of the Father. He especially warns those who claim to preach or do wonders in His name—but *without obeying the Father* and His law. As we just read, He will tell these deceived religious leaders, “I NEVER knew you; depart from Me, you who practice LAWLESSNESS!”

#### What Jesus Actually Taught

In the above passage, Jesus clearly indicts “lawlessness.” Yet untold millions of professing Christians have been taught that there is *no need* to obey God's law, that the Ten Commandments were “nailed to the cross” or in some other manner “done away.”

“Just *believe in Jesus,*” people

are told, “and you will be saved!”

But is that all there is to it? Salvation without obedience to God the Father? Forgiveness without *real repentance* of SIN? Cheap grace? A “lawless” gospel? Is that what Jesus Christ and the original apostles really taught?

NO WAY!

For, if you will *take the time* to actually STUDY the Bible, you’ll find that Jesus and the early New Testament Church taught and practiced loving *obedience* to the Ten Commandments, the great spiritual law of Almighty God. When Jesus was asked by a young man how to inherit eternal life, notice His inspired answer: “If you want to enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS”! (Matt. 19:17). Then Jesus proceeded to identify the commandments He was talking about—the Ten Commandments.

Part of Christ’s famous Sermon on the Mount, the entire fifth chapter of Matthew explains the principle of “magnifying” (cf. Is. 42:21), not DESTROYING, the Ten Commandments! Jesus taught that we are not only to *refrain from* murder, but we’re not even to harbor bitterness against our enemies (vv. 43-44). He said that we are not only to *refrain from* committing adultery, but that “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (v. 28).

Jesus said, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (v. 19). So it should be pretty obvious that Jesus taught *obedience* to the Ten Commandments! And after His crucifixion and resurrection—after *everything* that was going to be nailed to the cross already had

been—Jesus sent His disciples to “all the nations” to teach His Message.

What *were* they to teach? A sentimental message about the *person* of Jesus Christ? A message about “grace” and forgiveness *without* the need for REAL repentance and heartfelt obedience to God’s spiritual law? Hardly!

After Christ’s entire ministry of teaching His disciples obedience to God’s law and even magnifying that law, Jesus sent them out to all nations with these words: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe ALL THINGS that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

### What Paul and the Other Apostles Taught

Most modern “Christianity” believes that the Apostle Paul somehow “did away” with the need to obey the Ten Commandments. Frankly, NOTHING could be further from the truth!

Paul wrote in Romans 2:13, “For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.” And again, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but **keeping the COMMANDMENTS of God is what matters**” (1 Cor. 7:19).

Of course Paul taught, as did *all* the apostles, that “justification”—the forgiveness of past sins—is made possible *only* through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. However, even that justification is accomplished only after genuine *repentance* of sin. And what is sin? The Apostle John was inspired to tell us, “**Sin is the transgression of the LAW**” (1 John 3:4 KJV).

Since sin is breaking God’s law,

then genuine repentance would necessarily involve a commitment to NOT willfully break His law again. For *real* repentance is much more than being “sorry.” It is a TOTAL SURRENDER of the human will to the will of God!

Notice what the Apostle James was inspired to tell us about God’s law: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the **law of liberty**” (James 2:10-12).

So a true Christian is to live in the knowledge that he is going to be “judged” by God’s law—the Ten Commandments. Yet James calls the Ten Commandments the “law of liberty.” Why? Because the entire earth would truly be *liberated* if every human being lived by the Ten Commandments. There would be no more war or murders, no more stealing, lying or adultery. These factors alone would immediately free up countless BILLIONS of dollars that are now spent on the military establishment, on police forces all over the world, on jails and prisons, on security guards and electronic surveillance equipment, and on the endless paperwork and red tape that people and businesses have to fill out because *no one can be trusted!*

What a literal UTOPIA we would have if *everyone* really kept the Ten Commandments—the “law of liberty”—*as a way of life!* And the Scriptures tell us that God’s very own LOVE is expressed directly through keeping the Ten Commandments. The Apostle John was inspired to write, “**For this is the love of God, that we keep His**

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# Bible Prophecy US. Human Prediction

Do you understand the enormous difference? Why do some scholars and theologians ignore prophecy? Who really holds the keys to the future?

by Douglas S. Winnail, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Millennial fervor is brewing as the Western world approaches the mystical year 2000! Some are convinced they hear the approaching hoofbeats of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse announcing the end of the world and the return of Jesus Christ. A burgeoning number of books and tabloid newspaper articles champion this belief. Dr. John Walvoord, chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary states that “events of the twentieth century have alerted Bible students to the *tremendous potential* for fulfilled prophecy” (*Major Bible Prophecies*, 1991, p. vii). The appearance of ominous conditions on a global scale (ecological devastation, economic instability, etc.) have combined

World Ahead/1996 PhotoDisc Image

to “produce a sense of apocalyptic apprehension among the non-religious” (*The New Republic*, March 28, 1983). If this scenario is correct, events just over the horizon could be very frightening indeed!

But another widely held opinion is that “too much emphasis on the religious side of the [dawning of a new millennium] can smack of crackpotism” (*Arizona Republic*, Jan. 12, 1997). This more conservative, academic and scholarly approach regards as *disgraceful* the fact that supposedly rational people are surrendering to the “forces of commercialized superstition” (*New Statesman & Society*, Jan. 6, 1995, p. 32). Today, it is claimed, we see the “increasing appearance of *respectable prophecy, underwritten by the computer*” (p. 32). This more rational form of human prediction is based on scientific polling methods and computer-assisted trend projections to delineate the future.

Modern scientific forecasters like to emphasize that “futurism is not so much *predicting* tomorrow... as it is *inventing* it” (*The Futurist*, Sept.–Oct. 1996). Dr. Margaret Mead, a prominent anthropologist, articulated these same thoughts more than 20 years ago, stating, “Mankind’s future is not irrevocably determined. It is in mankind’s *own hands*” (Symposium: The Next Billion Years). Prominent forecasters John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene resonate with the same optimism. In their book, *Megatrends 2000*, they confidently assert that “on the threshold of the millennium, long the symbol of humanity’s golden age, we possess the tools and the capacity to **build utopia here and now**” (1990, p. 311). They conclude that “humanity will *probably not* be rescued... either in the form of a literal Second Coming... or by friendly spaceships... we will be guided by a revived spirituality, the answers will have to come *from us*” (p. 17).

What divergent worldviews! Which begs the question: Who’s got it right? Can we *really know* what the future holds? Believe it or not, there are some surprises ahead for skeptical scholars and perhaps even for most Bible students! The future is not the impenetrable mystery that some would have you believe, nor will it be determined solely by the design and will of men. Rather, the future has been written in advance by the Creator God. But some find that hard to accept. In our secular society, it’s easy to relegate prophetic Bible pronouncements to the realm of religious fanatics and favor more “rational” projections of the future. But such projections might not seem so rational if you honestly examine the *astounding differences* between these two opposing approaches. Few today seem to be aware of the *incredible facts* that are being ignored in discussions about the future. The biggest surprise of all is that the greatest single source of accurate information about the future is

*overlooked, ignored and misunderstood* by so many today—scholars, theologians, atheists and even most professing Christians! How did this come to be?

### An Incredible Book!

Paradoxically, the Bible is one of the most widely distributed, yet least understood books in the world. Millions of copies exist in thousands of languages. There are nearly two billion Christians in the world who purportedly believe in the Bible. However, surveys reveal that while 93% of all Americans have one or more Bibles in their homes, “it’s one of the most *unopened books*” of all time (*Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 13, 1991, p. 10).

Most professing Christians correctly believe that an essential part of the biblical message is that God loves us and Jesus came to save us. But so many are completely unaware that more than 25% of the entire Bible is devoted to *prophecy*. According to Dr. Walvoord, “about one-fourth of the Bible is *predictive prophecy*.” He also says that many “prophecies have *already* been fulfilled very literally. This leads to the conclusion that prophecies yet to be fulfilled will have the same kind of *literal fulfillment*” (*Prophecy*, 1993, p. 3).

It is amazing that so few in our world today understand just how *remarkable* the Bible actually is, and the incredible insight it provides for the future. It is an indisputable *fact* that “the Holy Bible is *like no other book in the world*. It is the only work that presents itself as the written revelation of the one true God, intended for the salvation of man, and demonstrating its divine authority by many infallible proofs” (Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 1964, p. 9).

But just how does Bible prophecy *differ* from the methods of modern forecasters? Why should it be considered a valid guide to the future?

### Divine Precision and Human Guesswork

Bible prophecy is both *bold* and *specific*. When he was given the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream—filled with accurate details of future world empires—the Prophet Daniel boldly stated, “The great God has made known to the king *what will come to pass* after this. The dream is *certain*, and its interpretation is *sure*” (Dan. 2:45). Jesus Christ astonished audiences with His bold statements. “He taught them as one having *authority*, and not as the scribes” (Matt. 7:29). Christ’s disciples asked Him, “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (24:3). His response was a *detailed list* of events that they were to watch for.

These bold pronouncements contrast sharply with the hesitant and speculative tone of human forecasts. Pollster George Gallop Jr. admits that “any attempt to prophesy or gaze into the future is going to involve some degree of speculation” (*Forecast 2000*, 1984, p. 15). He also acknowledges, “I approach the field of prognostication with great trepidation, because *one can’t really know* what the future holds.... **Everything I’ve said in the book... reflects only a calculated assessment of the probable outcome of the current trends and forces**” (p. 156). So much for pinpoint accuracy! Can you now see just how uniquely authoritative biblical prophecy really is?

Bible prophecy predicts *specific events*. And yet, Mr. Gallop states, “The ability of one person to predict the future has proven to be *extremely limited*.... It’s virtually *meaningless* to try to predict specific events” (pp. 16, 19). Nonetheless, in spite of these recognized difficulties, the fact remains that the “Old Testament contains *over 300 passages* that refer to the first coming of the Messiah. Within these hundreds of prophecies, Bible scholars have found 48 specific details about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus—*all fulfilled in detail*” (Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Signature of God*, p. 170). Bible prophets obviously had some help!

Modern forecasters, without divine inspiration, are forced to rely on opinion surveys and trend projections. The book *Future Vision* notes that “by analyzing past and present facts, the careful futurist can envision trend lines extending forward into the future. These trends map out the *probable routes* and *likely landmarks* we will experience” (1991, p. 1). However, this same work cautions us that “at any moment cataclysmic events could change the course of history, making trend predictions as obsolete as a map of the flat earth.” The Bible repeatedly predicts these specific, cataclysmic turning points—even for our immediate future. The return of Jesus Christ and events preceding it are prime examples!

Bible prophecy is also amazingly accurate. This is what makes believers out of skeptics. For example, Daniel 11 records a prophecy that has proved so exact in its fulfillment that many have claimed it was written after the fact. However, many others recognize that it was definitely written in advance. In fact, this prophecy spans 25 centuries and there is simply *no way* that it could have been written after—because what it foretells is continuing to our day! It is truly astonishing that so much of this prophecy has already been fulfilled in such incredible detail. It is real evidence of God foretelling the future and then exercising His divine power to bring it to pass.

Furthermore, Bible prophecy provides meaning for events. Modern writers readily admit that “forecasting

fails to reveal any recognizable human meaning in the flux of huge historical forces that seem to be overtaking us” (*New Statesman & Society*, p. 33). But an honest study of the Bible shows us that it “is not mere history... it is history from *one point of view*, history with an *aim*. Stories are recorded not simply because they happened, but because they reveal something of God and his activity in the world” (*Eerdman’s Handbook of the Bible*, 1973, p. 42). One reason for a growing interest in Bible prophecy is that the emerging pattern of current events—in America, Europe and the Middle East—so remarkably fits the “framework of prophecy as it is portrayed in Scripture for the end of the age” (*Prophecy*, p. 13).

Bible prophets view history from a *moral perspective*. They describe the rise and fall of individuals and nations as judgments from God. The prophets indicate that “disasters inevitably follow when people exploit the poor, trample on the weak, and turn their backs on God” (*Christianity Today*, Oct. 2, 1987, p. 20). This powerful and instructive moral dimension of history is essentially absent from the matter-of-fact language found in newspapers and TV news reporting. The prophets “pull aside a screen and permit a glimpse into the cosmic view of history” (p. 20). They allow us to see who is really running the world—that God is working out a plan and a purpose on this earth. Bible prophecy makes current events *come alive* with meaning! It teaches lessons. Prophecy reveals both the significance and outcome of major events in the drama of human history.

### Why Prophecy?

You might be wondering *why* more than one-quarter of the Bible is prophecy. Quite simply, **prophecy demonstrates the power of God to bring to pass what He decrees**. Isaiah was inspired to challenge skeptics to “show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods” (Is. 41:23). The inability of human beings to consistently and accurately predict the future and bring it to pass demonstrates our temporal limitations. Nebuchadnezzar’s astrologers were *powerless* before the God of Daniel (Dan. 2:10-11). The Pharaoh’s magicians were no match for the God of Moses (Ex. 7:9-12; 8:16-18). “Repeated and accurate predictions of the future must be *supernaturally given*,” conclude authors Norman L. Giesler and William E. Nix (*A General Introduction to the Bible*, 1968, p. 120).

Fulfilled prophecy is also *irrefutable proof* of the divine inspiration of the Bible—something that many have been led to doubt today. Jesus said of Scripture,

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# God's Gift of Healing

by Gary Foster

Many of us don't think much about it. Some, however, become obsessed with the idea—dramatically altering their lifestyles to fend off this “enemy.” And, of course, far too many are afflicted and must deal with the problem every day. Just what is this *enemy*? The age-old curse of human illness and disease.

It doesn't matter whether you're one who believes that some major disease can “never happen to me,” or whether you actively try to avoid sickness by eating right, exercising and leading as healthful a lifestyle as possible. No matter—because we're almost all in the same boat. Serious illness will affect *almost everyone* at some time or another during his or her life. Those who take care of themselves, have greater access to preventive healthcare and, in general, “play by the rules”—insofar as their personal health is concerned—will by and large lead healthier, longer lives and have fewer battles with disease. But no matter, they will still almost certainly face some severe health trials. And if you perchance are one of the very few people who will *never* personally experience a major illness, you will still almost certainly witness it secondhand as a loved one or

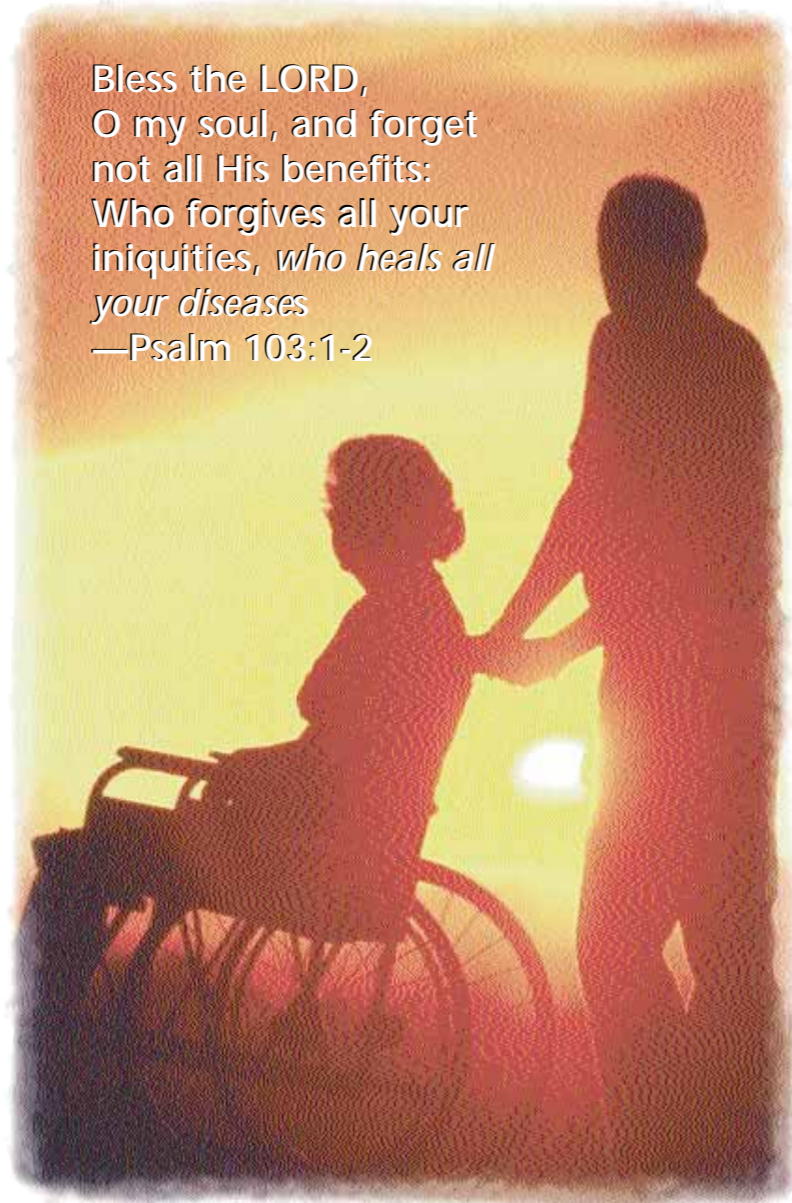
someone dear to you suffers.

But take heart! There is a God in heaven who created the entire universe, including planet Earth and those of us who inhabit it. And the exceedingly good news is that, as great and majestic as our God truly is, He is nonetheless willing to humble Himself and reach into the lives of each and every individual human being who calls on Him in faith and obedience. One important part of God's involvement in a true Christian's life is His mercy and willingness to supernaturally heal us.

## Why Is There Sickness?

It is true that sickness is part of the human condition. But such was not always the case. In Genesis 1, we read of the creation of the first humans, Adam and Eve. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’.... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them” (vv. 26-28). Since Adam and Eve were created in the very “image of

Bless the LORD,  
O my soul, and forget  
not all His benefits:  
Who forgives all your  
iniquities, *who heals all  
your diseases*  
—Psalm 103:1-2



God,” might they not have had many of His same attributes? God, for example, is never sick, never injured, never “out of sorts.”

Perhaps, then, mankind was created in health so perfect and robust that he was not even subject to illness. Some evidence of this is found in Genesis 2, where we learn that, after placing Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God commanded them to not eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (vv. 15-17). What would be the penalty if our first ancestors were to disobey? God warned them that the day they ate of this fruit, they would “surely die” (v. 17).

Had they obeyed God instead, they would have been offered the fruit of the *other tree* mentioned in Genesis—the Tree of Life. Eating this fruit would have opened the way to eternal life for our first ancestors. And, although the Bible does not specify this point, the indication is that mankind would never have known hardship, sickness or death—not even temporary, physical death.

But, of course, they *did* sin—they *did* eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. And on that day they *did* “die.” While this *could* mean that they died within a 1,000-year “day” as God views time (cf. 2 Peter 3:8), the more accepted meaning is that their fate of death was sealed from the moment they sinned. And their physical bodies began a process of deterioration that slowly, but certainly, led to their physical death some 900 years later. Part of this deterioration was sickness and the suffering it causes. And this may all have been avoided by Adam and Eve as well as by all mankind, their offspring, had they chosen the Tree of Life.

Illness, it seems, was never what God had in mind for the human beings He created. But it has become a part of the *human condition*—a consequence of the sin of our

original parents, which has been passed on to their offspring ever since. Of course, with regard to our *particular* infirmities, they are sometimes the consequence of our *own* sinful actions (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-30).

## YHWH Raphah

Even though mankind lived contrary to God's original plan and intentions, our Heavenly Father still does not enjoy seeing human beings suffer—through sickness or for any other reason. This is especially true of Christians, whom God is working with more directly at this particular time. We see an indication of God's will in this regard from the Apostle John's third epistle: “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things *and be in health*, just as your soul prospers” (v. 2).

God has repeatedly shown both a willingness and desire to heal the sick throughout the Old and New Testaments. In fact, we see this aspect of God's will and character when He spoke to the ancient Israelites: “If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight... I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. **For I am the LORD who heals you**” (Ex. 15:26). The original Hebrew in which this passage was written uses the term *YHWH Raphah*, which is translated “the LORD who heals you.” But this is more than a descriptive phrase. It is rather one of the very *names* of the Eternal God. As such, it tells us that **God sees His role as Healer to be so significant that it is part of His very identity!**

Let's look at just some of the many examples of healing as recorded in Scripture.

During the days of the Prophet Isaiah, King Hezekiah reigned over Judah as one of the most righteous kings who ever ruled that nation

(2 Kings 18:5-6). He *trusted in God* even in the face of a terrifying siege of Jerusalem by an Assyrian army that routinely conquered all of its enemies. God did not let Hezekiah down—delivering the Jews from this armed threat by slaying 185,000 Assyrian troops as they slept (19:35).

Hezekiah had confidence in God and obeyed His commands as few other men have ever done. So much so, in fact, that as the end of the king's life drew near—as he was stricken with a terminal illness—God sent him a personal message through Isaiah. “Thus says the LORD: ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live’” (20:1). But Hezekiah did not want to die. In tears, he turned in his bed and prayed to God for mercy and healing.

What was God's response? Even before Isaiah had left the king's house after delivering the first message, God gave him another: “Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; **surely I will heal you**. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. **And I will add to your days fifteen years**’” (vv. 5-6). God heard the prayers of this righteous man and granted his petition for healing. Likewise, God hears the prayers of righteous men and women today—those who heed His commandments and yield to His will.

## Christ Heals the Sick and Lame

There are no better examples of healing than those given us by our Savior, Jesus Christ. During 3 1/2 years of ministering to the Jews before His crucifixion, Jesus undoubtedly healed hundreds, if not thousands, of people. There are literally dozens of such healings recorded in the New Testament. In

examining just a few of these incidents, we can gain valuable insight into the very nature of illness and infirmity and the process of healing.

One day, as Christ was speaking to a crowd of people, some men arrived carrying a paralytic on a cot so that he might be healed (Luke 5:18). But due to the numbers of those listening to Jesus, they could not reach Him. Nevertheless, the men persisted, and found a way to bring their friend to Jesus—lowering him, cot and all, through the roof of the house wherein Christ taught. Jesus, seeing the sincerity and faith of the paralytic and his friends, said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you” (v. 20).

Some scribes and Pharisees—misguided religious leaders of Jesus’ day—were present and heard what Christ had said. Ever searching how they might discredit Him, they reasoned to themselves that Jesus had blasphemed, for surely no one but God had the authority to *forgive sin*. Of course, Jesus *was* God in the flesh—the very Son of God—but the scribes and Pharisees did not realize it. Christ was fully aware of their thoughts and challenged them, “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise up and walk?’” (v. 23). And the paralytic arose, walked and was healed (v. 25).

Luke 5:24 tells us that Jesus used this incident to show people He had the authority to *forgive sin*. But we can also see that, at least in this case, sin was in some way at the root of this man’s paralysis. We see also that *forgiveness of sin* is necessary if we are to be healed of an infirmity caused by our own sinful conduct.

Keep in mind, though, that personal sin is not always involved in an illness, injury or infirmity. The sins of another may be at fault. Consider a marriage in which one partner is unfaithful and contracts a sexually transmissible disease. If the innocent spouse also contracts that

same disease through normal marital relations with the unfaithful partner, both husband and wife have become infected. But the sin of only one of them is the cause.

In some cases, it may be that there is *no* sin involved, except perhaps the sin of Adam and Eve that contributed to our current human condition. Consider the case of a certain blind man whom Jesus encountered on the road. His disciples asked whether his blindness was the result of his own sins or those of his parents. Here is Christ’s surprising response: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned [to have caused this disability], but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (John 9:2-3). And, of course, the works of God *were* revealed in him because Christ healed the affliction and the man’s newfound sight served as a witness to others of the power of the Son of God (vv. 6-34).

We should pause to consider a lesson from this passage. Illnesses can be caused by a number of factors. Our own sins *may* be at fault or we may be completely *blameless* regarding our condition. Whichever is the case, God can heal any and all diseases. **And only God is the Judge.** We must *never* judge the cause of another’s affliction where we have no involvement or knowledge. Let us judge only *our own* actions—asking God’s forgiveness when we have sinned.

Another important key to understanding divine healing is found when Jesus met two blind men. They cried to Him to heal them of their condition. He asked them a curious question, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’” (Matt. 9:28-29). Christ wasn’t merely asking a silly question. Obviously they must have had *some inkling* that Jesus could heal the sick

or they never would have asked Him to do so in the first place! Rather, the question dealt with faith. Jesus was asking them if they trusted God and had the confidence that He could perform what they were asking. **For faith is an integral part of asking God to heal you when you are sick.** These men *did* receive their sight—*according to their faith* (v. 30).

Another important lesson we can glean from Christ’s healings is found in Luke 17. Jesus was beseeched by ten men to heal them of their leprosy (vv. 12-13). Having mercy on the lepers, He told them to show themselves to the priests. As they left to do so, they were healed. But only one of the ten returned to thank Christ for healing him (vv. 15-16). Let us make certain to thank God when He heals us or bestows any other blessing. We must never take God’s gifts for granted!

### What About Today?

You might be wondering at this point whether all this has any bearing on your life today. After all, healing was part of Christ’s earthly ministry, which ended nearly 2,000 years ago. But notice Matthew 10:1: “And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, **and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.**” These are the same apostles who later became the first ministers of the New Testament Church of God. And, in fact, this same power has been entrusted to God’s true ministry today.

As modern-day Christians, we have greater knowledge than those who sought healing in Jesus’ day. We have insight from the New Testament, which wasn’t yet written at that time. We now know the very “foundation,” if you will, upon which our healing is based. The Apostle Peter tells us this about Christ’s sacrifice: “Who Himself bore our sins in His own

body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—**by whose stripes you were healed**” (1 Peter 2:24; cf. Is. 53:5).

Just as Christ’s death paid the ultimate penalty for our sins, so His beating paid the physical penalties we have incurred. We must look to this complete sacrifice, in faith, to be forgiven of our sins and healed of our infirmities. We must remember that our healing has only been made possible by the brutal, physical scourging of Jesus Christ before He was crucified (Mark 15:15). A favorite form of public punishment by the Romans, this flogging or scourging was so savage that it often killed its victim before he could even *be* crucified. Thirty-nine lashes of a Roman whip literally *ripped the flesh* from the back of the recipient. **These, then, are the stripes of Jesus Christ by which we are healed!** It is His brutal, undeserved punishment that makes possible our deliverance from the ravages of disease.

### What You Can Do

Are you right now suffering from some major illness, infirmity or disability? Does physical pain or weakness compromise your ability to enjoy the wonders of God’s creation and the joys of your family and friends? If so, what should you do? And what about those of us who are not suffering from a major health problem at this time? Might we in the future? How will we respond?

If you have decided to accept the gift of healing and seek God’s intervention in your affliction, you should first spend some time in prayerful, meditative introspection. As we have seen, divine healing has only been made available to us through the physical torture of our Savior, Jesus Christ—the one Person in all human history who was totally and completely blameless and undeserving of any punishment. Before seeking

God’s healing, you should soberly consider the heavy price that Jesus paid on your behalf. You should also consider whether your own actions have led to the particular condition. If you have sinned, repent and ask God’s forgiveness. If your illness or injury was caused by someone else’s sin, then ask God to forgive that person, and *at least begin* the process of forgiving him yourself. And, of course, many times we simply *don’t know* why we are suffering. In this case, ask God to show you if you are at fault—perhaps in a way that’s hidden to yourself (cf. Ps. 19:12).

Next, you should follow the instructions given in the book of James. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. **And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven**” (5:14-15). If you sincerely believe God’s promise and have faith that God *does* perform miracles and can *triumph* over every human affliction, you may want to be anointed. The ministry of the Global Church of God, which publishes the *World Ahead* magazine, is committed to serving your needs. At your request, we will be happy to pray for your healing. Please feel free to contact us by phone or write to the address nearest you listed on page 3 of this publication.

### What You Should Not Do

If you are considering asking God to heal you of a physical infirmity, you should beware not to fall into some common pitfalls. There are those who claim that God has promised healing in such a way that He is “contractually bound” to heal any and all who ask Him. It sounds wonderful, *but it isn’t true*. Think for a moment—if God healed according to that philosophy,

“smart” people might never die! They’d just keep asking God to heal them of whatever ailments came their way. But we know that, with the sole exception of those living when Christ returns (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-17), *everyone* will eventually die a physical death. That may not have been God’s will from the beginning, but it has definitely been the human condition since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (cf. Heb. 9:27).

We must realize that God offers healing to His people, **but not to everyone at all times.** God doesn’t enjoy human suffering—He didn’t create humans so they would suffer. But since suffering is now part of the human experience, God sometimes uses it to **help teach us important lessons** and to build within us the character to make proper decisions in our lives. The Apostle James says that we should be joyful when we encounter trials—including sickness—because trials build patience within us, which moves us toward perfection (James 1:2-3). **It is God’s prerogative alone to decide WHEN and HOW He will heal!**

When we seek God’s divine intervention to heal us, He will very often deliver us quickly from our trial in His mercy and His love. But sometimes He will *delay* intervening to build the patience James was talking about. And sometimes God may choose *not to heal us at all* in this physical life. Of course, *everyone* will be healed who is born again as a son or daughter of God after Jesus Christ returns. Spirit existence precludes sickness or injury. But in this life, we have no such guarantee.

If God does choose not to heal you of some affliction—even after you have been anointed and prayed for by the ministry of His Church—then you can be assured that, although you may not realize why, that decision

*(continued on page 30)*

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## YOUTH SEEKS TRUTH

I am 16 years old and just started receiving the *World Ahead* magazine for myself not too long ago. I wanted to learn more about the truth and I also wanted to prove some things for myself.

Your magazine is really helping me a great deal. Thanks so very much for making this magazine possible free of charge. I look forward to every issue! Thanks again!

Jessica S. Driver  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

## MAGAZINE HELPFUL

Your magazine helps me to understand the importance of salvation and how God loves me. It helps me to grow mature in my Christian life. And I thank God for giving me your ministry to serve as a guiding light to my path as I continue serving Him.

I deeply appreciate your service and love to me. May God bless your ministry as you continue serving Him in this way.

Jean-Michelle J. Salgado  
La Castellana, Philippines

I feel very blessed with the privilege of receiving your magazine. The literature you provide has helped me to understand my Father's loving Word.

I am a mother of three young children. As they grow, I rely on God to help me raise them according to that Word. It's easier to do that when I understand it myself. I also believe we must not be

ignorant of the things to come. This is why your publications are so important to me.

Kellie Baker  
Apple Valley, California

Sir, I would like to know if I can get a subscription to *The World Ahead*. I am out of funds and doing time in a Texas Prison for my sins—and hope to God that, when I get out in November 1997, I will stay in God's way.

I happen to be reading one of my cellmate's issues that he gets from you. I think it is a very good issue to help read the Word of God. I feel it might do some good for others who are doing time—and maybe give insight to many that need it.

Thank you for letting people know the time is nearer than they realize.

D.S.  
Gatesville, Texas

I have been spiritually moved by your magazine and television show, *The World Ahead*. You are not afraid to preach the Truth, and may God truly bless you for that.

Jacky Richardson  
Woodbridge, Virginia

I thought I must write to you to say how much I enjoy reading *The World Ahead*. It could also be called "The WAY Ahead"—ahead in many ways.

Doug Winton  
Salisbury Downs, Australia

## MIDEAST SERIES

I wish to thank Mr. Raymond McNair for a most factual article in the July-August issue of the *World Ahead* magazine titled "Who Are the Palestinians?" For too long we have just concentrated on the Arabs of Abraham's line and excluded those nations that were to be driven out of the land, such as the Philistines. The prophecies of the Bible also show how God would deal with non-Arab Palestinians at the end.

Clyde L. Skeete  
St. James, Barbados

## BROCHURE "ASTOUNDING"

Your booklet *America and Britain in Prophecy* was astounding. I've devoured it three times already. I've learned so much from it.

Janet Buchanan  
Stroud, Ontario, Canada

## RESPONSES TO WGN

I was flipping through the channels this morning and came across your television program on superstation WGN.

I found your program full of information. Thank God for you and your program. I will be looking forward to hearing from you next Sunday morning.

I would like to start receiving your magazine and the new booklet you mentioned about Bible prophecy. Thank you.

Marie Wade  
Roxboro, North Carolina

*The booklet referred to is The Beast of Revelation: Myth, Metaphor or Reality? It will be sent free of charge to anyone who requests it. Just call us or write to us at our address nearest you, listed on page 3—ed.*

I was awake all night thinking about God when I saw your television program on superstation WGN. I noticed that the host of the show was explaining the true Gospel. He was not afraid of challenging anybody who disagreed

with him. And I, a new, fresh believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, want to hear more about his teaching of the Gospel.

Jose A. Locra  
Joliet, Illinois

## TRUTH ON TELEVISION

I didn't catch your name this morning near the end of your program. It is the first time that I have seen you, but I liked how you told it—*like it is!* I will look forward to seeing you each week from now on—God willing!

William Vollmer  
Dearborn, Michigan

I saw your program for the first time this morning. You're very good. This is what I believe—that we are to stay on this earth and not go to heaven. I can't wait to hear more from you.

Della Durham  
Streator, Illinois

I am writing to tell you how much I appreciate having the opportunity to receive your Saturday and Sunday morning programs by television. The work you are doing is of great value to me—and to anyone who will take the time to listen.

Josephine Simpson  
Lamesa, Texas

I enjoy the program every Sunday and wish it was an hour long instead of only 30 minutes. Thank you so very much.

Leanne Clark  
Golden City, Missouri

**We welcome your comments, criticism or questions. Please mail letters for this section to "Letters to the Editor" at our U.S. address. Be sure to include your name, address and daytime phone number. We reserve the right to edit your comments for clarity, propriety or space.**

## PROPHECY VS. PREDICTION

(continued from page 9)

"Your word is truth" (John 17:17). He also stated clearly, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Jesus not only fulfilled dozens of prophecies with His First Coming, He will fulfill *dozens more* when He comes again! Jesus Christ will vindicate the literal accuracy of prophecies that many contemporary scholars have "spiritualized" away as symbolic allegories. It should come as no surprise that one of the greatest minds in human history, Isaac Newton, "believed that a comparison of the fulfillments of prophecy with the original prophecies provided a *powerful proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures*" (Jeffrey, *Final Warning*, 1996, p. 12). Perhaps skeptics with lesser reputations should take note!

## Prophecy Denied!

If a major portion of Scripture is devoted to prophecy, and fulfilled prophecy demonstrates both the power of God and the inspiration of the Bible, then WHY is it discounted and downplayed by many theologians and most mainline Christian churches today? Why do prominent Christian publications write about almost everything else *but* prophecy? And why have many biblical scholars and theologians abandoned the field of prophecy to New Age psychics and grocery store tabloids? When was the last time you heard a powerful sermon about prophecy—one that made sense? The answer is simple and is easily found in the pages of ecclesiastical history.

In Old Testament times and well into the first century A.D., prophetic statements in the Bible were acknowledged to be *literally* true. But between the second and third centuries A.D., a school of theology arose in Alexandria, Egypt, that tried to harmonize the Scriptures with pagan Greek philosophy. Theologians Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Dionysius took a *non-literal* view of prophecy. They approached prophetic passages as allegories—wherein some hidden symbolic interpretation was assumed to be intended for the reader instead of the obvious, literal meaning. Augustine, the Roman Catholic bishop of Hippo in North Africa, was influenced by this non-literal, allegorical viewpoint. His ideas had a profound influence on the theology of the Roman Catholic Church and were widely adopted by Protestant reformers in the 16th century (Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, "Alexandria," 1963). These same explanations are still widely accepted today.

The combined effect of a non-literal, allegorical approach to prophecy and the doubt instilled by biblical criticism "has weakened the belief of many people in the inspiration of Scripture and eroded belief in Bible prophecy as God's genuine

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# Israel Victorious Again—But Barely!

**After its founding, Israel enjoyed stunning and decisive military victories. But how long could the Israelis continue to dominate their Arab neighbors?**

by Raymond F. McNair

This year promises to be one of increased tensions in the Middle East as Israelis and Palestinians seek to coexist peacefully in the Holy Land. Emotions ran high in January as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO, hammered out an agreement for the Israelis to withdraw their forces—turning over most of the city of Hebron to the Palestinians. But thorny problems yet remain: How much control over *other* areas of the West Bank (ancient Judea and Samaria) will the Israelis be willing to give up?

As Israelis and Palestinians continue their peace process, nervous Arab neighbors keep a watchful eye on what Israeli leaders are doing. Repeated threats of a new Arab-Israeli conflict loom on the horizon. Many believe it's just a matter of time until another bloody Mideast war erupts. Bible prophecy reveals that the bloodiest of all battles—Armageddon—is not far off.

It is impossible to understand today's Arab-Israeli problems without first examining the historic roots behind their bitter 50-year struggle. During that momentous period, Arabs and Israelis have fought *five major wars!*

In the previous article in this series, we examined the bitter fruits of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1956 and 1967—wars which, militarily speaking, went very well for the Israelis. This article, however, shows that all did *not* go so well during the Yom Kippur War of 1973 or the Lebanon War of 1982.

In fact, Israel narrowly averted being annihilated in the October or Yom Kippur War. And her “surgical operation” in Lebanon (to remove the PLO “cancer”!) was widely condemned.

## Arab-Israeli Stereotypes

Before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the typical Jew was often stereotyped as being

without roots and being unwilling to fight for his rights. Benjamin Netanyahu explains this stereotype: “Slowly and surely, through the centuries of the exile [after the destruction of the Jewish nation in A.D. 70], the *image* and *character* of the Jew began to change. For non-Jews, the glorious Jewish past faded into dim memory and irrelevance. **The word Jew became an object of contempt, derision, at best pity. It became synonymous with the word coward in a hundred different tongues.** The adjective *wandering* was affixed to it, signifying the rootlessness and precariousness of Jewish existence.... And many Jews came to view themselves as others had come to view them” (*A Place Among the Nations*, p. 363).

But after Israel's military successes, the image of the Jews was suddenly transformed from supposed inferiority to superiority—from *underdog* to *king of the hill*—especially after Israel's stunning victory in the Six-Day War of 1967.

But in the wake of that conflict, many Israelis became *overconfident*. In the euphoria of victory, some began to think of *themselves* as superior. And in Arab eyes, the Israelis became arrogant—holding Arab soldiers in contempt. United States President Jimmy Carter described this trend: “Opposing forces tend to become further radicalized by the *arrogance of victory* or the *hopelessness of defeat*. In any confrontation, the most abusive statements of a few are always remembered and nurtured by those who already despise each other. Insecurity breeds paranoia, and this... among the Israelis and Palestinians... prevents any move toward mutual recognition or alleviation of hatred” (*The Blood of Abraham*, p. 180).

Netanyahu says, “For if the rendering of the Jews from a militant to a docile people had taken place over *many centuries*, here in the space of only a *few years* a reborn Jewish sovereignty rediscovered the art of soldiering.... Much to the amazement of the world, the

Jewish state was soon producing fighters second to none and an army that proved itself capable of routing far larger and better-equipped fighting machines again and again. Furthermore, in the war against *terrorism* Israel's soldiers showed a demoralized and paralyzed world that civilized societies could fight this scourge: In countless raids and special operations culminating in the *rescue mission at Entebbe*, Israel proved that terrorism could be fought and beaten.

“All this not only changed the condition of the Jews of Israel, enabling the Jewish people to successfully resist assaults aimed at its annihilation for the first time in centuries. **It also changed the image of the Jew in the eyes of non-Jews.** [But] the respect for Israel's military prowess against overwhelming odds did not necessarily mean that the *anti-Semitic stereotypes* of the Jews were replaced everywhere and in every way” (p. 366).

Unfortunately, through the centuries many Westerners also belittled the *Arabs*—disparaging *their* character and abilities. The words of a British colonial

much for the Arabs, they do not know the meaning of gratitude; moreover they would be a liability; the Jew would be an asset.... The Jews have moreover proved their fighting qualities since the Roman occupation of Jerusalem. **The Arab is a poor fighter, though adept at looting, sabotage and murder”** (pp. 55-56).

It was the previous Israeli military successes that had convinced them the Arabs were no match on the battlefield. But the Yom Kippur War was about to prove a rude awakening for the Israelis, forever changing their view of Arab military might.

## Prelude to Humiliation

Just as the Israelis had launched a preemptive strike at Arab targets in June 1967—so, six years later, the Arabs retaliated by attacking the Jews in total surprise.

Egypt's President Nasser died in 1970—just three years after the Arabs' humiliating defeat in the Six-Day War. Anwar Sadat succeeded him in office. Still mindful of the humiliating defeat during the watch of his predecessor, Sadat began plotting revenge. His plan called for a surprise attack on the Israelis on the holiest day of the year for Jews: “An attack could coincide with Yom Kippur—Day of Atonement—on October 6 [1973] when all public services in Israel would be suspended” (Sadat, *In Search of Identity*, p. 141).

To mislead the Israelis, Sadat leaked “secret” *misinformation*, indicating he would be in New York “at the U. N. headquarters in [early] October 1973” (p. 244). This “strategic deception” was part of a larger military stratagem. When Israeli Gen. Moshe Dayan was asked why he hadn't mobilized in October, he said that Sadat “made me do it *twice* at a cost of ten million dollars each time. So, when

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat (2nd from left) at the Armed Forces General Command, follows progress of fighting on the Suez Canal front during the Yom Kippur War with Israel—Bettmann.

official, Col. Richard Meinertzhagen, illustrates this bias: “We cannot befriend both Arab and Jew. My proposal is based on befriending the people who are more likely to be loyal friends—the *Jews*.... Though we have done



it was the third round I thought he wasn't serious, but he tricked me" (p. 242).

President Sadat's rationale for the October War was that an Arab victory would erase the shame of past Arab defeats. **"First to go would be the humiliation we had endured since the 1967 defeat;** for, to cross into Sinai and hold on to any territory recaptured would restore our self-confidence" (p. 244). And victory would be all the more satisfying in light of Israeli *boasting* about the Six-Day War (p. 251).

President Carter noted this same attitude just before the Yom Kippur War: "Our final military visit was with Major General Eliahu Zeira, the chief of Military Intelligence.... He and other military commanders had an air of *absolute confidence*. Again and again they referred to the 1967 war, and they left no doubt that they were thoroughly prepared for any eventuality.... I recorded [a private comment indicating] the attitudes prevailing in the springtime of 1973.... **'No one should fear the Arabs. They have been badly beaten and will have to sue for peace'**" (pp. 26-27).

But was this Israeli overconfidence *justified*? The book of Proverbs warns us that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (16:18). Israel was about to learn the meaning of that proverb.

## Surprise Attack

According to Sadat, "on Saturday October 6, 1973... at 2:00 p.m. sharp... 222 supersonic jets took part in this first wave and accomplished their mission in twenty minutes. We lost only five aircraft.... The air strike... was a complete and stunning success. It *surprised* us... by achieving 90 percent of its targets; and it was equally surprising to Israel, and the world—both East and West" (pp. 246, 248-249).

The Egyptian president assessed his soldiers' performance: "The October 6 epic had begun, marked by the superb performance of Egyptian and Arab soldiers.... The moment the 222 aircraft passed overhead at zero altitude, crossing simultaneously into Sinai... [Egyptian soldiers] pushed their boats into the Canal... and crossed [into Israeli territory]" (p. 250).

Shortly after the October War began, Sadat congratulated the air force commander, General Hosni Mubarak (Egypt's current president), and "all the commanders in the Ops. Room on the air strike, which actually determined the future course of the war... Israel was to *lose her balance* entirely not only during the first decisive twenty-four hours of fighting but for the first four days. She lost

control of her forces in Sinai, and her lines of communications with the forces there were broken off completely. With this admirable air strike, **the Egyptian Air Force recovered all it had lost in the 1956 War and the 1967 defeat**, and paved the way for our armed forces subsequently to achieve that victory which *restored the self-confidence* of our armed forces, our people, and our Arab nation. It also **restored the world's confidence in us, and exploded**

forever the *myth of an invincible Israel*!" (p. 249).

When the Yom Kippur War erupted, the Israelis were caught off guard. Egyptian and Syrian forces had the decisive upper hand during the first four days of fierce fighting. But finally, after mobilizing and regrouping, the Israelis pushed the Egyptian forces back across the Suez Canal and even established an Israeli enclave on Egyptian soil. They also routed Syrian troops in the Golan Heights, who had made considerable advances before the Israeli counterattack.

Sadat complained that, although his air strikes had taken out *400 tanks* almost from the outset, the United States provided replacements immediately. But he also admitted that *Egypt* received 390 tanks during the war. In fact, Egypt was supposed to receive even more tanks from the Soviet Union, but they never materialized. When Sadat asked Premier Aleksei Kosygin why the Soviets hadn't delivered the tanks and other promised supplies, he replied, "We've concentrated on Syria because she took a thrashing and lost *1,200 tanks* in one day!" (p. 259).

## October War's Bitter Fruits

What were some of the tragic consequences of the Yom Kippur War?

**For the world:** After Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal and began to encircle the Egyptian Third Army, the United States and the Soviet Union faced a political standoff that could have ended in nuclear holocaust. American forces worldwide were put on heightened military alert. The superpowers' who-will-blink-first confrontation

**had taken the world to the very brink of nuclear Armageddon, threatening all humanity!** Fortunately, that crisis ended when they worked out a compromise that established a U.N.-monitored cease-fire on October 24.

**For the Israelis:** Their forces were badly routed by the Arabs during the first four days of fighting. According to Sadat, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's government sent an urgent appeal to the United States to "save Israel"—requesting immediate armaments. On a human level, only a massive U.S. airlift of tanks, planes and other vital supplies stood in the way of Israeli defeat.

Though they were able to turn the tide of battle after four days and were eventually victorious, the Israelis had nonetheless paid a terrible price, both in battle deaths and non-fatal casualties. The loss of tanks, planes and other military equipment was staggering. During the Six-Day War, Israel had sustained only 676 deaths. But the Yom Kippur War saw more than 2,500 Israeli soldiers killed in action. Further, they suffered the *humiliation* of the Egyptians parading Israeli soldiers through the streets of Cairo. Even though the Israelis won the war, this *close call* gave them new respect for Arab fighters, whose military prowess had been previously discounted. Much of Israel's overconfidence perished in the near-fatal Yom Kippur War.

**For the Arabs:** Though the Egyptians and Syrians scored decisive victories in some of the early battles, they nonetheless *lost the war*—their fourth such defeat in 25 years! On a personal level, President Sadat paid a heavy price: "In those early minutes of the war I lost my youngest brother—Air-Pilot 'Atif—who was as close to me as my own son" (p. 249).

Right after the war, the Egyptian president began having serious health problems. He said, "At this point I was in great pain. I was suffering daily, hourly.... For four days I hemorrhaged. The doctors who examined me... said it was due to *tension*" (p. 269). Was Sadat's "tension" the result of months of plotting the October War that was meant to *annihilate* the State of Israel? Was he paying a personal price for his military aggression? More than 3,500 years ago, the Great God said, regarding Israel's descendants, **"Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you"** (Gen. 27:29; cf. Num. 24:9). This should stand as a warning to those who would do battle with God's chosen people!

After the Yom Kippur War, Sadat frankly admitted that the Arab-Soviet alliance had been a mistake. He came to believe that the Soviets either *could* not, or *would* not,

deliver what they had promised. He admitted that only the "U.S. can play this role... of *mediator* between two sides that harbor intense hate for one another.... **the U.S. holds 99 percent of the cards in this game**" (p. 293).

The conviction that no other nation has the *military strength*, and therefore no other power on earth holds the key to mediation in the Middle East, is undoubtedly *why* Sadat later decided to promote his peace initiative with Israel and the United States.

Four major wars had only brought death, suffering and increased poverty upon the Arab participants. Both the Israelis and the Arabs were utterly *exhausted* by the time the October War ended. The bitter results of that war convinced Sadat that there must be a better way. So, showing great courage, Sadat began working toward *peace*. In an unprecedented move, he visited Jerusalem in November 1977 to present his plan for a peace settlement before the Israeli Knesset.

By September of the following year, under the auspices of President Jimmy Carter, a framework for the Camp David peace accords between Sadat and Israel's new prime minister, Menachem Begin, had been worked out. But an actual peace treaty was not signed until March 26, 1979. Because of the peace initiative, President Sadat's popularity rose in the West, but plummeted in Egypt. This

*Page 18 top: As smoke rises in the background, heavy Israeli tanks head down the road toward Damascus, Syria, during the Yom Kippur War. Bottom: Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir is shown at a news conference in Tel Aviv on August 13, 1973. Page 19 top: Beshir Gemayel, the president of Lebanon. Bottom: The massacre of Palestinian refugees at Camp Shatilla, Lebanon, in 1982—Bettmann.*

culminated in his tragic assassination by Muslim extremists on October 6, 1981—eight years to the day after he had launched the ill-fated Yom Kippur War!

## Incursion into Lebanon

Although peace now prevailed between Egypt and Israel, it wouldn't be long until Israel's war machine

*(continued on page 26)*

not have to preach smooth and “pleasing” things to keep you coming back! For God inspired Paul to tell Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

All too often, as we *should have learned by now*, the “pleasing” preachers tend to water down God’s law and His Word, and the people are NOT given the spiritual “meat” and the instruction and correction that we all so desperately need. The key thing to ask yourself is, “Pleasing or not, where can I go to regularly receive *true* biblical instruction, exhortation and the ‘whole counsel of God’?” (cf. Acts 20:27).

A third reason to attend is that we all need to share the fellowship, the encouragement and the exhortation of fellow Christians. Hebrews warns us, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (3:12-13). We cannot learn to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ if we are not at services getting to know them—*encouraging* them, *praying* for them and *helping* them in every way we can. We cannot learn to fully express Christ’s LOVE while hiding out at home, nursing old wounds and resentments, and refusing to GIVE of ourselves to others God is calling—however weak and imperfect they may be.

Finally, I want to encourage all of you subscribers—both old and new—to realize that if God is opening your mind to His Truth, then you have a responsibility to *help share that Truth* with others! If you will sincerely seek out the Church that is zealously and faithfully proclaiming to the world at large the true Gospel of the soon-coming Kingdom of God—and if you will *regularly attend* that Church and *support* it with your prayers, tithes and offerings—you will indeed be blessed.

For if we are going to be His faithful followers, we must *personally* apply Christ’s final instruction to His disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). The Gospel of Mark records Jesus’ final instruction this way: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (16:15-16).

We must all remember the “parable of the talents” recorded in Matthew 25:14-30. The men who *used* their talents, who were busy working—building and serving others—received a grand reward. But notice what happened to the man who stayed at home, sulked and “buried” his talent: “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. Therefore you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’” (vv. 24-30).

To come out of our shell, we’ll have to overcome hurts and betrayal from the past. We may even get our feelings hurt again. But by submitting to God’s instruction and correction—and becoming enthusiastically involved in the Work of the Church of the Living God—we will *grow* far more, we will *serve* far more and the *eternal reward* that will be given us will FAR EXCEED any little human inconvenience we may experience in this life. As Jesus said, “whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:25).



# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

If I come into a new faith, having been baptized before, should I be baptized again?

That depends. There are certain criteria to examine. For your previous baptism to have been valid, it must have been:

**In Jesus’ name.** Paul came upon some who had received “John’s baptism” and explained to them how that prepared the way for Christ’s ministry. “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). They were thus re-baptized. What does “in the name of” signify? John 4:1-2 says that “Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples).” These men were baptizing in Christ’s name—i.e. by His direction and authority. The person physically performing the baptism is not as important as the realization that Jesus is the One really doing it.

**“Into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”** (Matt. 28:19 ASV). This means we are becoming part of God’s Family. The Father begets us as His children. It is through Jesus Christ that our sins are forgiven and we are able to live righteously. Through the Holy Spirit—the very power and mind of God—both the Father and Son live in us and we in them (cf. John 14:23; 15:4). And thus we all become “one” (17:21).

**Done with real repentance.** Peter gave the formula: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). “Repentance from dead works” (Heb. 6:1) is more than just being sorry for past mistakes. The word literally means to turn around. Thus, at baptism, we are effectively making a *covenant with our Creator* that we will stop breaking His law and, with His help, begin to obey Him. Of course, that’s realizing that we’ll stumble on occasion—but not as a way of life.

**Accompanied by faith in Christ’s sacrifice.** Christ’s blood has been “shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt.

26:28). Each person must genuinely accept Jesus Christ as His *personal Savior*, having “faith toward God” (Heb. 6:2) that the death of Jesus Christ has paid the ultimate penalty for every sin we’ve ever committed. As Acts 10:43 says, “through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”

**Of the proper form.** The Greek word *baptizo* means to “immerse,” “plunge into” or “dip”—not “sprinkle” or “pour.” John the Baptist baptized in a particular location *because* there was “much water there” (John 3:23; cf. Matt. 3:16; Acts 8:38).

**A symbolic burial with Christ.** Notice Romans 6:3: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” Our old self, with its sinful ways, is to be put to death at baptism. We then come up from this “watery grave” in a figurative resurrection, ready to begin putting on Christ’s nature through the Holy Spirit (v. 4).

When the Bible talks about “oracles,” it almost seems like they’re a type of magic. Just what are these oracles?

Strictly speaking, in the Scriptures an “oracle” is a general term meaning something communicated by God. This is the sense in 1 Peter 4: “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the *oracles of God*” (v. 11). According to *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, these oracles of God are “anything uttered by God—a Divine communication—a revelation” (1970, p. 1,430). Romans 3 presents a better-known New Testament example: “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the *oracles of God*” (vv. 1-2). This means, then, that the Jews profited greatly by having received and preserved the Old Testament Scriptures and other forms of written and oral wisdom. In other words, the oracles they received were communications from God—principally the Old Testament.

As to the “magical” qualities of oracles, this probably refers to a number of Old Testament examples. The most *mysterious* of these would be the “Urim” and “Thummim” (“lights” and “perfections”). These were semi-precious gems placed *within* the breastplate of the high priest of Israel (Ex. 28:30). God used them to communicate with His people. The Urim and Thummim “formed the medium through which the high priest ascertained the will of [God] in regard to any important matter affecting [Israel]” (*Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 1967, p. 1,128). The Jewish historian Josephus believed that these stones shone with a great light when the Israelites went into a battle they were to ultimately win (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 3, chap. 8).

God used these extraordinary stones to impart more specific information as well. In 1 Samuel, we read of David consulting the Urim and Thummim as to whether King Saul would come down to the city of Keilah and destroy it lest the residents betray David into his hands (23:9-12). The answer? “He will come down” (v. 11).

Another oracle of God is the *casting of lots*. Although the exact “mechanics” are not now known, this was a method of deciding doubtful questions by making an “appeal to the Almighty, secure from all influence of passion or bias” (*Unger’s*, p. 667). Perhaps some form of religiously sanctioned “picking the short stick,” the casting of lots was a way for God to guide specific decisions that affected His chosen nation. Some of the numerous biblical examples include partitioning the Promised Land among the tribes of Israel (Josh. 18:10), choosing the symbolic goats on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:8) and determining the apostle to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:26).

Other oracles mentioned in the Bible include God communicating through His prophets, directly speaking to individuals (1 Sam. 3:1-14) and sending prophetic dreams and visions (Dan. 7).

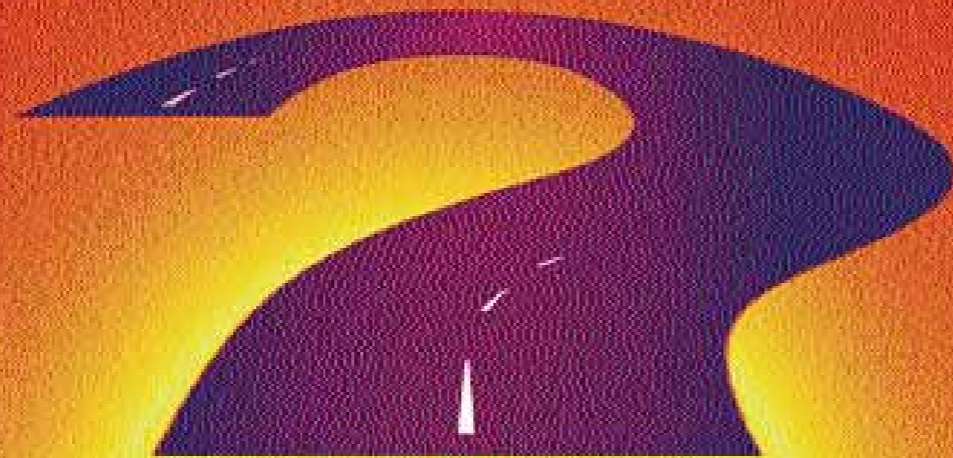
There is nothing “magical” about oracles—at least in the sense of an occult phenomenon. Oracles, however, are most definitely *supernatural*, since they are specialized ways for God to communicate with His people or with certain individuals.

**T**he future is big business. Many economists turn a handsome profit by selling their version of the future to newsletter subscribers. Major government departments have analysts whose job is to anticipate what's to come. Almost everyone, it seems, is curious about what the future holds in store. From corporate analysts perusing exclusive research reports to supermarket shoppers gawking at the latest psychic predictions in the tabloids, people want to know where our present unstable world is headed. And there is certainly no shortage of books and other media offering visions of the future.

Not too long ago, cable television's Learning Channel ran a four-hour series titled "Ancient Prophecies" that focused on the end of the 20th century. Much time was devoted to the psychic predictions of Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce as well as to supposed apparitions of the Virgin Mary. (In contrast, only about five minutes were spent on the Bible.) While virtually all of the featured "prophecies" focused on calamitous events in the years ahead, none offered any real assurance of GOOD NEWS! Whether in print or on video, there are ever-growing ranks of analysts and would-be prophets offering an already-dizzying array of futuristic scenarios.

Billions of dollars have been spent by educational institutions and government agencies to answer two vital questions: "Where did we come from?" and "Where are we headed?" But for all the time, energy and money invested, we don't seem to really

# Origins, Apocalypse



and the

# Future

by John H. Ogwyn

**We continue our examination of the first book of the Bible. How does it relate to the last book and coming world events?**

know any more than we ever did! As the new millennium approaches, there will be an even greater interest in anticipating the future. But what are the chances of analysts and self-proclaimed clairvoyants getting it right? Is there any source that we can place our confidence in?

## From Genesis to Revelation

The twin questions of our origins and our future are inexorably linked. If the universe originated as a cosmic *accident*, then life is meaningless and the future is irrelevant. If, on the other hand, it came to be by the power of a Great Designer, then we need to know how to make sense of it all. We need to know where we've been and where we're going!

As uncertain as the future is, you would think that everyone could at least agree on the *past*. But, alas, such is not the case. Particularly when it comes to origins. Some scientists speculate that mankind originated in Africa. Others espouse theories of *regional* evolution. Most used to agree that *homo erectus* was an ancestor of modern *homo sapiens*—humans. Now, however, scientists have discovered *homo erectus* bones on the island of Java that were found in the same stratum as—and, therefore, were contemporaneous with—"early" *homo sapiens*. So their chronological scheme has been upset. Time to search for a new ancestor! And these aren't the only problems evolutionists face. In fact, it

seems that new discoveries call established evolutionary theories into question on a regular basis.

But if not through evolution, then how *did* man come to be on planet Earth? And where are human events leading us? The world's perennial bestseller, the Bible, begins at the beginning and concludes with the distant future. It does so in a way that's far more interconnected than most realize. Let's examine more closely our Creator's revelation. It makes sense of our world in a way that nothing else does.

Fifteen centuries elapsed between the writing of the first and last books of the Bible. Though written in different languages and in vastly different cultural settings, these two books correspond to one another in a remarkable way. Only when we put them together can we really understand the full message of either.

The first book in the Bible is Genesis. Its Hebrew name is *Bereshith*. This is the first word of the Hebrew Scriptures and means "in the beginning." The word "genesis" is derived from the Greek and means "beginnings" or "origins." So God chose to start His book at a beginning point—the initial creation of the universe.

What about the end of the story? The last book of the Bible, Revelation, is also called the *Apocalypse*—from its original Greek title meaning an "unveiling" or "disclosure." For it is just that: a final *disclosure* of where man's civilization is headed and what his ultimate destiny will be. In its very first verse, we are told that the entire book is a revelation received by Jesus Christ from God the Father. Its purpose was to disclose to the servants of God the things that would soon begin coming to pass.

Many themes first introduced in Genesis are not resolved until Revelation. In reading these two

books, it is made clear from beginning to end that there is a great plan and purpose being worked out here below.

Genesis reveals not only the origin of the human race, but also the purpose *behind* that origin. In the first chapter, God says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (v. 26). So we are made to actually *look* like God. Other passages of Scripture show that we are God's children—and will become part of His very Family. And in Revelation 21, we learn that God the Father will ultimately come and dwell with His Family for eternity.

But, in the meantime, we are faced with staggering human problems and suffering. Can these issues—introduced in the book of Genesis—ever be truly resolved? Genesis frames the questions while Revelation discloses the ultimate solution.

Genesis 3 records the introduction of sin and the resultant pain, death and other curses. Our first parents yielded to the devil's coaxing and partook of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As a result, they cut themselves off from the Tree of Life and from having their Creator be closely involved in all aspects of their lives. They rejected divine revelation—opting instead to learn by experience. The book of Revelation records the concluding chapters of humanity's experiment launched in the Garden of Eden almost 6,000 years ago.

Revelation 20 describes the time when Satan will finally be removed from the human equation—for all eternity! The next chapter records the introduction of new heavens and a new earth, a recreation of what was introduced in Genesis 1. In this new heavens and earth will dwell righteousness. There will be no more pain, suffering or death because there will be no

more sin. Curses will be lifted once and for all (v. 4). And an intimate fellowship between man and his Creator will at last be established.

Redemption, too, is a story that flows from Genesis to Revelation. God told Adam that if he ate of the forbidden fruit he would die. After Adam and Eve's sin and prior to their expulsion from the Garden, the Creator began teaching them about how their sin could be expiated and how they could be redeemed from death. Animals were slain, and from their skins God made clothes for our first parents (Gen. 3:21). We know that God instructed them because, in Genesis 4:4 and throughout the remainder of that book, we read of humans offering sacrifices to the Creator. How did Abel and subsequent humans *know* about sacrifices if the Creator had not instructed our first parents when He slaughtered the animals in Eden?

Now the shedding of animal blood couldn't *atone* for sin, but it did *picture* the sacrifice of the Son of God who offered Himself as one sacrifice for sins forever (Heb. 10:10). In Revelation 13:8 Jesus Christ is described as the "Lamb" who was, as far as God's plan and purpose was concerned, "slain from the foundation of the world."

Those who have come to learn that "it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23), and so to really trust their Creator as Savior and Redeemer, will inherit a Kingdom prepared for them. In that Kingdom, mankind will have free access to the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:14) from which all were excluded after the events of Genesis 3.

### How Accurate Is Genesis?

Before going further, let's first examine how dependable the book of Genesis really is. After all, it was written a very long time ago. Noted

scholars of the 19th century, primarily from German universities, questioned the authenticity of the Bible's first book. Assuming that writing was unknown in Moses' day, they quickly dismissed the idea of Mosaic authorship. But subsequent discoveries from archaeology have long since proven that the written word was known well before Moses' time.

While there are still "minimalist" scholars who contend that very little of the history recorded in early parts of the Bible is accurate, archaeological advances are increasingly making their claims insupportable. Recent discoveries tend to confirm the historicity of the Bible to even the smallest detail.

Notice, for example, the account in Genesis 37:28 regarding the sale of Joseph into slavery by his brothers. We are told that the price was 20 shekels. Later, in Exodus 21:32, slaves are priced at 30 shekels of silver. The account of Joseph is set in the 17th century B.C. while the account in Exodus is set in the 15th. Historian and author Kenneth Kitchen notes, "From ancient Near Eastern sources we know the price of slaves in some detail for a period lasting about 2,000 years, from 2400 B.C. to 400 B.C.... In each case, the Biblical slave price fits the general period to which it relates. If all these figures were invented during the Exile (sixth century B.C.) or in the Persian period by some fiction writer, why isn't the price... 90 to 100 shekels, the cost of a slave at the time when that story was supposedly written?" (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, March-April 1995, p. 52). It would indeed have been very difficult for some unknown Jewish author to have concocted, in such accurate detail, a "pious fraud" many centuries after the fact.

There are many other examples of the historicity of Genesis being confirmed when archaeological discover-

ies are properly understood and interpreted. But while this kind of authentication validates Genesis as a reliable historical guide and shows that its origins must go back to the time period represented, it doesn't of itself prove this book's claim of supernatural origin. However, evidence has come to light in recent years that goes beyond confirming that towns and customs mentioned in Genesis were authentic.

In 1988 a remarkable report prepared by three Israeli scholars was published in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*. In it, Doron Witztum, Eliyahu Rips and Yoav Rosenberg demonstrated an amazing fact. There is a kind of *cryptograph* built into the text of the Hebrew *Torah*—the first five books of the Bible—that is far beyond the capabilities of the most powerful and sophisticated of modern computers. "The authors, mathematical statisticians, discovered words encoded into the Hebrew text that could not have been accidental—nor placed there by human hand. After publication, the authors continued their work and found that some pairs of words were predictive—that is, they could not have been known to the supposedly human authors of the Hebrew text because they occurred long after the Bible was composed" (*Bible Review*, Oct. 1995, p. 28).

A subsequent paper was published by the same authors in the August 1994 issue of *Statistical Science*. This study has in turn been critiqued and its methodology endorsed by mathematical scholars from Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins and Hebrew University. Working from the Hebrew text officially transmitted in the Jewish tradition—the Masoretic text—these scholars have demonstrated letter sequences forming words that *simply cannot be* the result of blind chance. Subsequent attempts to duplicate this phenomenon by using Tolstoy's

*War and Peace*, the works of Shakespeare and even the Samaritan text of the Torah have failed. Apparently, it only works on the Masoretic Hebrew text.

What do these "word pairs" that were found in the Masoretic Hebrew Torah really mean? "These words they found in close proximity are not simply the words of the text... They were rather words composed of letters selected at various equal skip distances, for example, every second or third or fourth letter. **It was as though 'behind' the surface meaning of the Hebrew there was a second, hidden level of embedded meaning**" (p. 29).

The point is that there is evidence of a divine hand behind the writing of Genesis and subsequent books of the Torah. So this book that purports to reveal origins is no mere human work. But did the inspiration end there? Not at all. For the questions it poses aren't fully answered until we look at another book written 1,500 years later—the final book of the Bible, Revelation. This very cohesion of subject matter testifies to a unity of authorship.

### The End from the Beginning

The book of Revelation is the final scriptural disclosure from Jesus of Nazareth. Written by the Apostle John more than 60 years after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, this book gives us a broad sweep of human history from its beginning to a time well beyond our own. Describing the rise and fall of human empires, Revelation sets the world scene as it will appear just prior to the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. It tells us of His Second Coming and the 1,000-year period that will follow. Chapters 21 and 22 take us beyond that Millennium to the very threshold of eternity.

Looking back, Genesis opens

with an account of the seven days of creation. From this and other evidence, we see that the number seven is often used by the Creator to denote completion and perfection. The book of Revelation refers to the number seven more than fifty times. The book itself is described as being sealed with *seven* seals (5:1). There are *seven* Churches to whom the book is addressed (1:11). These seven Churches are symbolized by *seven* lampstands with Jesus Christ standing in the midst (vv. 12-13, 20). There are not only seven Churches, but seven trumpets, seven last plagues and seven heads on the mysterious "beast." (If you've not yet done so, please write for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*.)

Moreover, Genesis introduces the 12 sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. These sons represented the organized beginning of the nation that God was to build from the family of Abraham. The rest of the Old Testament deals with the subsequent history of the 12 tribes that were fathered by these sons. The book of Revelation concludes with a city, the New Jerusalem, which is depicted as having 12 foundations and 12 gates. These gates are each named for one of the tribes (21:10-12). Before He ever initiated His great plan, God had the ultimate outcome in mind. The New Jerusalem, where the Father, Christ and the redeemed of this age will ultimately dwell (vv. 2-3, 23-24), was envisioned by God before that time "in the beginning" when He created the physical universe. After all, He declares "the end from the beginning" (Is. 46:10). Genesis records the founding of a human

family through whom God chose to work. Revelation provides a final disclosure of where God's Work through that family will lead.


We live in a world of turmoil and uncertainty. In the years leading into a new millennium and immediately beyond, both the turmoil and uncertainty will get worse. But there is a *source* from which we can come to understand our world and discover where global events are ultimately headed.

Genesis reveals our origins and

**Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last**

—Revelation 22:12-13

sets the stage for all that comes after. Revelation is the final disclosure. It corresponds to Genesis and relates the ultimate destiny of all that was introduced "in the beginning." In the concluding chapter of Revelation, Jesus Christ says, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with me, to give to every one according to his work. **I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last**" (22:12-13).

It is impossible to really understand where we're going unless we first take stock of where we've been. The book of Genesis, then, has much to tell us. It is part of our Creator's Word to us, bearing His divine stamp of authenticity. Let's make sure we value that Word—looking to it and the rest of the Bible as our authoritative guide through the confusing days ahead. 

## MIDEAST CONFLICT (continued from page 19)

trained its sights on new targets. In 1982, almost a year after Sadat's death, Israel undertook a "surgical invasion" of Lebanon. "Having neutralized Egypt, the largest and most powerful of the Arab states, Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, a hero of the 1973 war, planned an invasion of Lebanon to secure [1] **the elimination of the PLO** and [2] the selection of a new president of Lebanon who would sign a peace treaty with Israel along the lines of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty of 1979" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., "Israel").

But what the Israelis didn't know was that their military venture into Lebanon would not go as planned. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* continues, "On June 6, 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and subsequently defeated the PLO, the Syrian armed forces, and assorted leftist Lebanese groups. By June 13, Israeli forces and their Phalangist Lebanese allies had encircled West Beirut, and the trapped PLO and Syrians were forced to agree to leave the city. The assassination of the pro-Israeli Lebanese president-elect, Bashir Gemayel, provoked Israeli troops to move into West Beirut, where they allowed Lebanese Christian Phalangists to massacre Palestinian civilians in two refugee camps."

Benjamin Netanyahu explains that Israel's June 1982 invasion of Lebanon resulted in a "limited war, waged on the soil and over the skies of Lebanon. While Israel's aim was the uprooting of the PLO bases, it encountered resistance from the Syrian armed forces that were, and still are, occupying most of Lebanon.... Israel was pushed to commit what in Arab eyes was a most egregious sin, entering an Arab capital" (pp. 201-202).

He also says the Israelis failed to explain to the world exactly *why* they had to clean out the PLO from Lebanon: "Rather than *fighting* the political battle, Israel did the *opposite*, imposing an information blackout for the first crucial days of the war—the chief effect of which was to ensure that the *Israeli side* of the story went virtually unreported.

"Completely left out of the picture was the fact that Israel's northern cities had been tormented by PLO rocket and terror attacks for a decade, as children grew up in bomb shelters and urban populations dwindled from year to year. Left out was the preceding decade's history of PLO murder, rape, and looting in South Lebanon and the fact that **even the Shi'ite Moslems there greeted the Israeli soldiers as liberators**" (pp. 383-384).

Netanyahu adds, "But [the political battle] was

worse than lost. For if there is one thing for which the Lebanon campaign is remembered internationally, it is the *massacre* of several hundred Palestinian Arabs by Christian Lebanese [Arabs] allied with Israel in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla outside Beirut. This horrifying massacre was not perpetrated by Israeli forces but by *Arabs* seeking to avenge the assassination of Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel (who was a Christian). It was yet another bloody chapter in a civil war in which Palestinians and Christians had massacred each other again and again since the early 1970s. **Israeli forces did not participate in the massacre, did not enable it, did not even know about it**" (p. 384).


But if the Israelis didn't know about it, then how did the blame get laid at their feet? Netanyahu goes on to say, "In fact, Israel's judicial commission of inquiry, the Kahan Commission, recommended the resignation of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon in the wake of the massacre *because* he knew nothing about it, and, according to the commission, should have *foreseen* that the Christians would slaughter the Palestinians and should have acted to pre-empt the massacre" (p. 384).

### Bittersweet Results

Israel achieved its objective of driving the PLO out of Lebanon. But many Israelis resented the West pressuring them to allow PLO gunmen to be safely escorted out of Beirut. "The result was mounting Western opposition to the Israeli operation and mounting pressure to stay Israel's hand and prevent the PLO, trapped in West Beirut and surrounded by the Israeli army, from being destroyed.... **In the end Western pressure prevailed**, and the PLO's ten thousand gunmen were escorted out of Beirut, rifles in hand, and spirited away to the safety of the PLO's bases in Tunisia and other Arab states" (Netanyahu, pp. 384-385).

Israel was further condemned for not preventing the Sabra and Shatilla massacres. No one doubts that the Israelis suffered a political setback in the eyes of the world as a result of their invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Following this disastrous military incursion, violence and bloodshed continued. Although the PLO was driven out of Lebanon in 1982, a spontaneous uprising, the *Intifada*, and various terrorist organizations (*Al Fatah*, *Hamas*, etc.) have taken up the banner of violence. But despite this litany of continued bloodshed, Bible prophecy reveals that the Jews and Arabs will yet learn to dwell together in peace (Zech. 8:20-23; Is. 2:1-4).

In the next installment of this series, we will examine the continuation of the sometimes uncertain peace process from 1982 until today. 

## PROPHECY VS. PREDICTION (continued from page 15)

message to the church today.... The real danger comes from trusted pastors and theologians who have privately abandoned their confidence in the prophecies of the Bible. Over the last few generations, the leaders of many mainline churches have progressively abandoned the 'faith once delivered to our fathers'" (*Final Warning*, pp. 21-22).

Ironically, this tragic situation itself was actually *prophesied* to occur at the end of this present age! It is one of many signs that would precede the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. Peter warned that the end of the age would be marked by scoffers and doubters *willfully ignorant* of God's prophesied actions and intervention in human history (2 Peter 3:3-5). Paul warned that in the last days people would practice a "form of godliness but [deny] *its power*" (2 Tim. 3:5). One way to deny God's power is to turn your back on the supernatural foretelling of world events that is Bible prophecy! But whether or not you as an individual accept God's prophetic messages, they are very real, nonetheless. And they *will* have a major impact on our society.

In Matthew 24, Jesus outlined a sobering series of prophetic milestones that would signal the nearness of His return. He clearly instructed His disciples to *watch* for these events and not be taken by surprise (v. 42). However, Jesus also predicted that "as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage... and did not know until the flood came and took them all away" (vv. 37-39).

Christ tells us that most people will be going about their own business and will be totally *shocked* by the sudden turn of events that will bring this age to a close. And Jesus *knew* what He was talking about. He commanded His disciples to in turn teach others what He had taught them (Matt. 28:19-20). And still, the "wise" of this world—the educators, the futurists and most of the clergy—continue to deny the importance of this message.

## A Voice in the Wilderness


But the Bible takes quite a different view! The prophecies that the God of Moses, Isaiah and Daniel inspired and that Jesus Christ taught to His apostles actually provide guidance for those living in the latter days—our time today! Peter states that "we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Peter 1:19 KJV). He is speaking of the Church's understanding of prophetic Scripture. He indicates that prophetic understanding will increase as the end time draws near. This understanding of Scripture and prophecy is imparted by God's Holy Spirit (John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

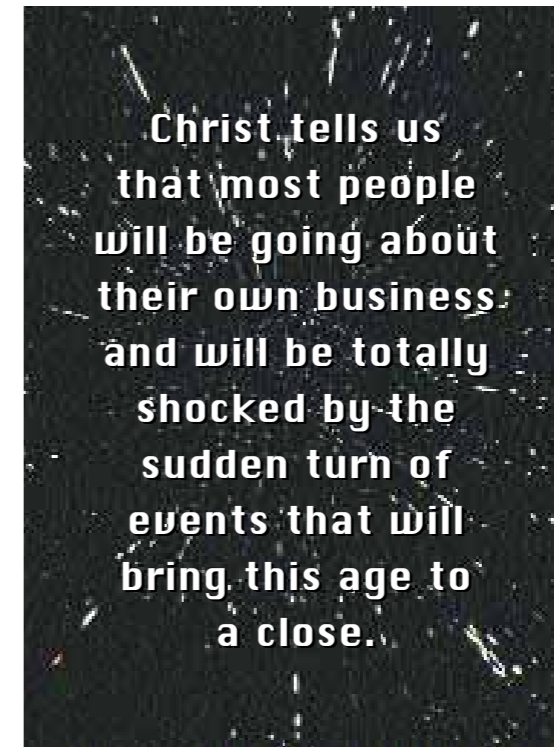
The Scriptures indicate that the Church of God and His true ministers—led by that same Spirit—will understand Bible prophecy. They will not downplay the importance of prophecy or substitute hidden allegorical meanings for literally prophesied events. They will speak and write plainly and powerfully about major future events that will unexpectedly change the course of human history.

Just as there is a difference between Bible prophecy and human prediction, there is also a difference between the true Church of God and churches that merely *profess* His name, but deny His true Gospel. His

Church will not be perfect, but *will* be preaching a powerful message about the approaching Kingdom of God and warning mankind of what is coming just over the horizon.

According to Revelation 12:17, those in God's true Church "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." And the same book later states that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (19:10). Furthermore, God's Word specifically commands us, "Do not despise prophecies" (1 Thess. 5:20).

Will we believe and follow churches and ministers who doubt the Bible and ignore prophecy or those who understand prophecy and explain it clearly? Will we put our faith and trust in fallible and speculative human predictions or in the astonishingly accurate and sure word of Bible prophecy? Let's let the Holy Scriptures lead us to make the right decision! 



**DECEIVED?**  
(continued from page 6)

**COMMANDMENTS. And His commandments are not burdensome**” (1 John 5:3).

But in this mixed-up world, *how* can we receive the very “love of God”—the love that will enable us to *keep* the Ten Commandments and to live the kind of life Jesus Christ led?

**How to Become Truly Converted**

The word “convert” is not merely a theological term. It is also used in *chemistry*, and in that regard can help us better understand true Christianity. Chemically speaking, “convert” means to CHANGE something into something else. *Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (1995) defines “convert” in these terms: “CHEM. To cause a substance to undergo a chemical change: *to convert sugar into alcohol.*”

One of the main problems with most professing Christians is that they have definitely NOT been *changed*. They have merely accepted the *person* of Christ. Or perhaps they simply “joined” a local church for social or business purposes! But most have NOT REMOTELY gone through the dynamic stages of *deep repentance* and *total surrender* to God—a sincere and heartfelt acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and consequently receiving the Holy Spirit to live within them.

On the first day of Pentecost in the Christian Era, the Apostle Peter was inspired to set forth some of the terms and conditions of real conversion. Peter told the assembled Jews, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

Let’s analyze this inspired command. First, we are to “repent.” Repent of *what*? Since, as we have seen, sin is the “transgression of the law,” we must *repent* of breaking God’s law. We must not merely be “sorry” that we have broken the Ten Commandments in the past. We must be *so overwhelmed* by our own

**It is Christ’s strength—His power and His spiritual love placed within us by the Holy Spirit. For Christ lives within the true Christian. That is the key!**

weakness and by the recognition of SIN that we make a “covenant with our Creator” *to turn around and go the other way*. Realizing we will never be “perfect” in this life, we nevertheless—upon the PROMISE God gave of receiving His Holy Spirit to strengthen us—covenant with God to STOP our life of sin and promise Him that, with His help, we will “GROW in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

As the Apostle Paul wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20 KJV). *That* is what true Christianity is all

about! Not merely believing *in* Christ, but having the *Living* Jesus Christ literally DWELL within us by the power of the Holy Spirit! *That* is what gives us the spiritual strength and love to live by God’s law. It is not *our* strength. It is *Christ’s* strength—His POWER and His spiritual LOVE placed within us by the Holy Spirit! For Christ LIVES within the true Christian. *That is the key!*

As we have seen, the next step after real repentance is to be “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). The word “baptism” is derived from the Greek and means to *put into, plunge into* or *immerse*. It can NEVER be correctly translated “sprinkle” or “pour.” And yet we behold the spectacle of hundreds of millions of professing Christians who have NEVER been baptized properly! Many of these innocent victims of false Christianity had water sprinkled or poured on them when they were just infants—unable even to distinguish their right hand from their left, and TOTALLY incapable of deeply REPENTING of sin and making a profound covenant with their Creator to utterly surrender their will to His!

Again, as Jesus said, “if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a ditch”! (Matt. 15:14).

**Are You Ready for Baptism?**

Perhaps *you* are one of thousands of subscribers who are really beginning to *understand*. Perhaps you have been reading and *studying* the *World Ahead* magazine and our other literature for many months. Perhaps *God Himself* is opening your mind and “calling” you to real repentance and true conversion. For *genuine* conversion is NOT growing up in your parent’s church or “joining the church of your choice.” Jesus Christ made that very clear. Notice

His inspired words: “**NO ONE can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day**” (John 6:44). And again, “Therefore I have said to you that NO ONE can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (v. 65).

God has to supernaturally “call” or “draw” an individual to Himself. Then, by further opening up the person’s mind to see his own sins, God *leads* him to repentance. As God began to call the Gentiles to a real understanding of His will, Peter was inspired to state, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (Acts 11:18).

If you who now read this have been granted real understanding, then I strongly encourage you to ACT on the precious knowledge that God has revealed! For by making a heartfelt covenant with your Creator, through genuine repentance and baptism, you will receive the promised Holy Spirit—through which the very *nature* of God Himself will be placed within you. For God’s Word tells us, “And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5 NRSV).

But first you must sincerely REPENT of sin—of breaking God’s law in the letter *and in the spirit* over and over again! You must come to the place where you recognize that your life is utterly *worthless* apart from God. As King David of Israel, you too must learn to pray sincerely, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me” (Ps. 51:1-3). You must

(as we *all* must!) quit making *excuses* for selfishness, vanity, lust and greed. You must truly REPENT of your selfish human nature and throw yourself on God’s mercy.

Then you must, in FAITH, accept the shed blood of Jesus Christ in payment for your sins. Although, through God’s indwelling Spirit, you must learn to LIVE a life of obedience to His laws, you cannot EARN forgiveness for your past sins. Neither can you earn forgiveness for the sins you will *continue to commit* through human weakness as you *gradually* grow in “grace and knowledge” and learn to more fully surrender to let Christ live His life in you. ONLY the shed blood of Jesus Christ can pay for your sins. For He is *your Savior!* And He will continue to strengthen and cleanse you as your LIVING High Priest if you give your life to God through Him in faith (Heb. 4:14-15).

**Growing in Christian Character**

As you learn to truly *study* and “feed” on the Bible, God and Jesus Christ will become more and more REAL to you. You will, in a sense, “feel” the help of the Holy Spirit. You will *experience* the fact that God’s way of life works and that you now have “extra help” in overcoming yourself, the world and the pulls of Satan. And, as you study and grow spiritually, you will become increasingly aware of more and more powerful prophecies of

the Bible that are being fulfilled right now—or are in the *beginning stages* of their fulfillment.

Hopefully, you will also build the *extremely important habit* of regular, extended, fervent PRAYER to God on your knees every day. You will see that *all* of the great men and women of the Bible were “people of prayer.” You should *study* the “Lord’s prayer” (Matt. 6:9-13) as an outline of how to correctly approach your Creator—NOT repeating this or

any other memorized prayers or chants continually as some who worship falsely (v. 7), but talking to God *in detail* from the heart.

In all of this, you will learn to “walk with God” as your real Father. You will develop a continuing heartfelt *relationship* with God and with Jesus Christ at His right hand. Through His Spirit within you, *God Himself* will help you to be an “overcomer”—one qualified to assist Jesus Christ in RULING this entire earth in the soon-coming Kingdom of God. “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter’s vessels shall be broken to pieces’—as I also have received from My Father” (Rev. 2:26-27).

As you walk with God and grow in the character of Christ, the “fruit”—the *results* of the Holy Spirit in your life—should become more and more evident. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness,

**God has to supernaturally “call” or “draw” an individual to Himself. Then, by further opening up the person’s mind to see his own sins, God leads him to repentance.**


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faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Understand that in developing holy, righteous character, God doesn’t do it *for* you. He does it *through* you with your zealous, active participation—along with the power of the Holy Spirit working in your life. You have *your part* to do. But, as God literally LIVES in you through His Spirit, He gives to you the love, strength and wisdom that you need in order to overcome. As the inspired Apostle Paul wrote, “for God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

Do *you*, then, want to be in the Kingdom of God and serve under Jesus Christ in His coming government on this earth? Do *you* want to SURRENDER your life to your Creator—to let Him fashion and mold you in His own image—and so fulfill the supreme PURPOSE for your existence?

If you do, then I urge you to call us or write us at the address nearest you. It is listed on page 3 of this magazine. We have either ordained ministers or trained representatives in most areas of the world. They will be glad to talk to you and counsel you about baptism and the true Christian life *if* you so desire. They will NOT push, argue or “pressure” you into doing *anything!* They will be there simply to discuss the Bible, answer your questions thoroughly and, *if you wish*, counsel you about repentance and baptism. And they will always call or write you to set up an appointment *before* showing up at your home.

So if God is opening your mind and you now realize that through this Work you’re learning the TRUTH, then **don’t fail to act on that precious Truth!** Instead, as James 1:22 states, “be DOERS of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” 

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## HEALING (continued from page 13)

*is* the best one for your particular circumstances (Rom. 8:28). You can also know that you’re not alone. King David of Israel, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22), sought healing for his newborn son. He prayed and fasted for seven days, and yet God let the child die (2 Sam. 12:16-18). The Apostle Paul asked God three times to heal him of some physical affliction—a “thorn in the flesh.” Yet again, God decided not to do so. And Paul understood that this decision was for the best (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Another pitfall to avoid is a condemning approach to healthcare and the medical profession. Some believe that there is an inherent conflict between seeking medical treatment and asking God to heal a medical condition. But there need not be. Part of the problem is that some people look *only* to the medical profession to help them when they are sick. That’s probably because, especially with the most recent advances in healthcare, doctors can do a lot to improve the quality of our health and our lives. **But they can’t HEAL—only Almighty God can do that!** So the answer is to *look to God* for healing. Appreciate medical advances and the benefits they bring to mankind. Avail yourself of medical treatment you deem prudent. But NEVER make “gods” out of doctors or medical science. The Eternal God alone is *YHWH Raphah*, the God who heals you!

Another part of the problem lies in the fact that medical “science” is sometimes more like medical “arts.” Although many medical procedures and treatments are almost universally beneficial, others are not nearly so effective and may carry with them debilitating side effects. Some might reason that God would never bless submitting to medical treatment that would itself harm you in some way.

But this is no reason to *reject* the entire medical profession out of hand. It is rather a reason to make informed decisions about the role of all your healthcare options in treating whatever disease or condition you have. And understand that such decisions are *personal*—what may be right for one person may not be right for another.

Others might argue that seeking medical care or attention somehow *invalidates* asking God to heal you. But how could that be? A time-honored biblical principle is that God is our Provider, but we must *do our part* in whatever enterprise it may be. You don’t rely on God’s promises to clothe and feed you (Matt. 6:31-33), while refusing to get a job. In fact, God says that those who will not work *should not eat!* (2 Thess. 3:10).

Isn’t it the same for healthcare? If you have made a prudent, informed decision about appropriate and safe medical treatment, why would you abandon it simply because you are also asking God to heal you? Wouldn’t that be like not looking for a job if you ask God to give you adequate income? In fact, seeking *appropriate* medical attention and treatment IS one of the ways you can “do your part” in maintaining good health.

Almighty God showers His people with abundance and blessings of all sorts. Undoubtedly, one of the most important of these is *divine healing*. If you are sick, disabled or afflicted in any way, start studying the many examples of healing that are recorded in the Bible and begin to reflect on the awesome sacrifice that was made by Jesus Christ so that you might be well. For we worship a Great God who is more powerful than any disease and stronger than any affliction. And He wants the best for each and every one of us. “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, *who heals all your diseases*” (Ps. 103:1-2). 