

THE WORLD AHEAD

A view of today... A vision for tomorrow!

July-August 1997

The Truth About

ANTICHRIST

And on page 18—
Countdown to
Armageddon!

THE WORLD AHEAD

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EDITORIAL

WHICH Jesus Christ?

All over the world, evangelists and ministers are regularly holding meetings at which they exhort audiences to “accept Christ.” The listeners are often urged to “give their hearts to the Lord” or “make a decision for Christ.”

But a vital question that very few bother to ask, let alone answer, is *which* Christ? For in the confusing milieu of organizations and ideas that people call “Christianity,” there are *many different* ideas about Christ. When you consider the full religious spectrum—from ultra-conservative Catholic bishops or hard-line Baptists on the one hand to liberal Episcopalians or even far-left “New Age” groups on the other—you often have totally opposite views of what Christ and Christianity are all about.

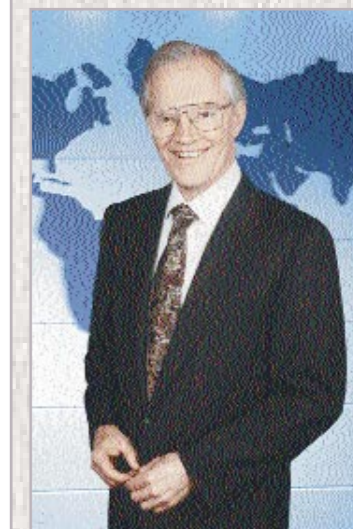
The Apostle Paul specifically warned us about *false Christs* who would be presented by various religious leaders: “For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it!” (2 Cor. 11:4). *Another Jesus?* Absolutely. The fact of the matter is that the *true* Jesus Christ—the Jesus of the New Testament—is *disgusted* at the way *His name* has been plastered all over the widely divergent and often unbiblical brands of “Christianity” found in the world today!

The Jesus of your Bible said, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). And His beloved Apostle John said, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:4-6).

The “key” truth in all of this is not just to talk about Christ or use His name, but to OBEY God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ as They have commanded us to do over and over in Their inspired Word, the Holy Bible. Likewise, we must follow the *example* of Jesus Christ.

When a young man came asking how to receive eternal life, Jesus answered, “If you want to enter into life, *keep the commandments*” (Matt. 19:17). Then He began to name some of the Ten Commandments. WHY do most professing ministers of Jesus Christ reject this very clear instruction? *Why* have they invented literally dozens of arguments and strategies

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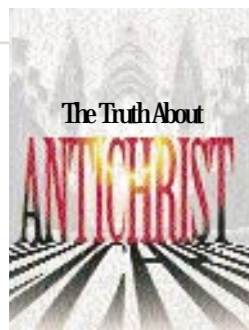
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Editor in Chief

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The Truth About ANTICHRIST

Many Evangelicals are watching for an end-time, Satan-inspired world dictator bearing this title. But surprising as it may seem, “ANTICHRIST” is already among us.

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Where East Meets West

The British lease is finally up on Hong Kong. Looking back on its remarkable history, we ask the question: Does a legacy of Western rule now rule the West?



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WHO or WHAT
is the mysterious
“Antichrist”?
Have YOU been
deceived by him?
The truth is
now made
absolutely CLEAR!

The Truth About

ANTICHRIST

by Roderick C. Meredith

There's a very *real* Satan the Devil. Jesus Christ twice called him the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30). Satan is the great DECEIVER. And the Apostle John made it very clear that Satan *deceives the vast majority of mankind*: “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” (Rev. 12:9).

“But I’m not deceived!” you might say. *Don’t be too sure!*

For we will now show you, in this article, what is undoubtedly THE MAJOR DECEPTION that Satan has palmed off on mainstream Christianity. In fact, this deception is so thorough that thousands of professing Christian ministers and priests are *themselves deceived* and therefore don’t even realize that they are perpetrating a lie! Jesus Christ similarly described the false religious leaders of His day: “Let them alone. They are

blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch” (Matt. 15:14).

How Millions Have Been DECEIVED

This mass deception is so widespread and so believable because many of its tenets “look good” on the surface. Most of its practitioners will say that we must believe in Christ. They will say that Christians should exhibit love, kindness, mercy and patience. That Christians should “do good” to their fellow man—give to the poor, support hospitals, charities, homes for unwed mothers, etc. They will say that Christians should respond to Jesus’ “law of love.”

All of this *sounds* biblical. It *sounds* very GOOD!

But what these practitioners DON’T tell you is *which* of the laws of God are to be kept—and exactly HOW God’s laws are to be obeyed. These people will talk sentimentally about Christ being the “Lord” of our lives. But they will inevitably FAIL

to explain that if Jesus is “Lord” then *we must obey Him!* They’ll never tell you that Jesus directly and consistently taught obedience to ALL of the Ten Commandments!

Therefore, because of this SATAN-inspired deception, many of the bloodiest wars in modern history have been waged between professing “Christian” nations in Europe. Bishops on one side would bless their troops as they prepared for battle. The bishops on the other side did the same. Then thousands of young men—*often still in their teens*—would rush up some hill to shoot or brutally *stab to death* other young men who were often of the very SAME church denomination! All were supposedly “Christian.” All were supposedly of the “body of Christ”—the Church of which Jesus is the living, active Head (Eph. 1:22-23).

Does reading this make you a little “uncomfortable”? Well, it *should!* And, more importantly, I hope and pray that it makes you THINK. Because all too many of us have just grown up in some mainstream church

and taken our religious beliefs for granted—simply ASSUMING that all would be well if we just went along with the crowd, blended into this world, and lived reasonably decent and “respectable” lives.

That is precisely how most of us, including myself in years past, have been terribly DECEIVED—and have unwittingly come to believe in a FALSE gospel, a WRONG way of life and a “different” Jesus Christ!

Satan Wants You to “Miss the Mark”

One of the Greek words for “sin” in the New Testament literally means “to miss the mark.” So Satan is content to let you “believe in” God and Christ as long as he can still *control* you, make you “miss the mark.” His goal is to keep you OUT of the coming Kingdom of God, which will replace him and his demons—by *blinding* you to what’s really happening! God inspired the Apostle James to write, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!” (James 2:19).

Then James explains how the true Christian must not merely *believe in* God, but must surrender to God’s will and DO what He says (vv. 20-24).

“Justified by works?” Yes—along *with* faith! Read verse 24 for yourself. It should be very clear that true Christianity involves more than just accepting Christ’s death in faith as full payment for our sins—which IS a *free gift* from God. For when we accept Christ’s sacrifice, we must also make a literal “covenant with our Creator” to QUIT SINNING in the future—to truly *surrender to let Christ live His obedient life in us* through the Holy Spirit! This involves *continued obedience*—the “works” of keeping God’s laws and commandments.

But when men cleverly misuse “grace”—teaching “cheap grace”

without REAL REPENTANCE from sin—it is the very ESSENCE of the doctrine of the Antichrist! This false concept has allowed *millions* of professing Christians to go through life regularly and habitually disobeying the Ten Commandments—yet still assuming they are “good Christians”!

The Apostle Jude was inspired to warn us of *this very deception*. “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 3-4).

Notice that Jude warns of false teachers using the idea of “grace” as a vehicle for “licentiousness”—license to DISOBEY the very laws of God!

“Oh, my minister would NEVER do that!” you protest.

I’m sorry, my friends, but chances are that he or she will verify what I am saying if you *approach your priest or minister directly* with this question: “Pastor Jones, does God REQUIRE true Christians to keep the Ten Commandments?”

If you ask the question *directly* in these words, most ministers will begin to mumble something about being “saved by grace.” Then, they may hastily add that the Ten Commandments are a good moral guide but that “you don’t *have* to keep them since you are saved by grace.”

If you press on and try to pin your pastor down on this matter, he may try to skirt the issue or point you to the “new” commandments of Jesus. Or, perhaps, he will finally come right out and say what virtually ALL mainstream theology actually

teaches—the Ten Commandments were either “nailed to the cross” when Christ died or the Apostle Paul somehow “did away” with them! As I will now clearly explain, *this is the very doctrine of the Antichrist!*

How so?

And *why* is this such a *serious matter*? Because it creates a “lawless society”—a society CUT OFF from God since the Ten Commandments actually portray His CHARACTER. God’s awesome purpose involves putting His “divine nature” into us through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:4). It involves our going through a process of spiritual growth and “overcoming” to reflect the very *character* of God and be fit to *rule* with Christ in His soon-coming Kingdom. Jesus directly states, “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).

A Doctrine of DISOBEDIENCE

The true saints of God are being prepared by Him to *replace* Satan and his demons in ruling over this earth. For Satan is now the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). He is now the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of DISOBEDIENCE” (Eph. 2:2).

Yet the Apostle Paul tells us, “Do you not know that *the saints will judge the world*? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that *we shall judge angels*? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

Why haven’t you heard a lot more about this awesome purpose of the true Christian to exercise RULERSHIP in the future? Because

Satan wants to block this knowledge from reaching human beings so they will be UNABLE to replace him and his demons in ruling this earth. Therefore he, the “father” of lies (John 8:44), has DECEIVED the vast majority of all humanity—including two billion professing Christians—regarding God’s PURPOSE for man and the WAY to fulfill that purpose!

Among Satan’s deceits, surely none is as great as his system of “counterfeit Christianity”! The apostles *knew* this was going to happen. Paul warned, “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [of Christ’s return] will not come unless the falling away [from the Truth] comes first, and the **man of sin** is revealed, the **son of perdition**.... For the **mystery of lawlessness** is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the **lawless one** will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:3, 7-8).

Notice that the false religious system that was to arise is called “the mystery of LAWLESSNESS.” Shortly before Christ’s return, it will be headed by a figure called the “man of sin” or the “lawless one.” This man, who will perform “lying wonders” (v. 9) can be found elsewhere in Scripture as the great, miracle-working “False Prophet” (Rev. 13:13; 19:20).

But realize that Paul said this false Christianity was “already at work” when he wrote these verses—even as it still is today. The proponents of this lawless system *talk* about love and about the Lord—but they LEAVE OUT Christ’s powerful instruction to keep the commandments of God! Yet we know that when the young man came to Jesus asking *the way* to eternal life, He answered, “If you want to enter into life, KEEP

the commandments” (Matt. 19:17). Then Jesus began to name some of the Ten Commandments. And in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us, “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” (Matt. 5:19).

Again, Paul warned the Christians of his day, “For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted; you may well put up with it”! (2 Cor. 11:4). Unwittingly to be sure, most of us have grown up hearing about “another Jesus,” a “different spirit” and, very definitely, a “different gospel” than the one Jesus and the apostles preached!

Again, WHY?

Because Satan has employed every stratagem available to get people to believe the “doctrine of the ANTICHRIST”! If you are willing to face REALITY, if you truly want to fulfill the very PURPOSE for which you were born, *you need to understand* what that doctrine is and avoid it like the plague!

Antichrist REVEALED

The word “antichrist” is first introduced in 1 John 2:18: “Little children, it is the last hour; **and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come**, by which we know that it is the last hour.” First of all we see “THE Antichrist” whom they’d heard about. This, of course, is

the “lawless one” Paul wrote about and the “False Prophet” of Revelation. Some mistakenly identify the Antichrist as the coming world dictator and *political* system called the “Beast” in Bible prophecy (please write for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*). But the Antichrist is

the false *religious* leader.

More importantly, note that John was inspired to tell us that “even now MANY antichrists have come”! So it should be clear that the term “antichrist” does not apply *solely* to the False Prophet—though he will certainly be teaching the doctrines of antichrist. Rather, as most modern scholars acknowledge, “antichrist” simply means a spirit or person *in opposition to Christ*.

John continues to describe the *many* who are “antichrist,” saying, “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father” (vv. 22-24). Notice that John was inspired to warn Christians to hold on to the *original teaching* that they had been given—“abide in... [what] you heard from the beginning.” This would mean “abiding in”—or obeying—the Law of God.

For *from the beginning* Jesus had taught them to “keep the commandments.” He had continually warned them about using His name and yet DISOBEYING His teaching! Jesus said, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which

I say?” (Luke 6:46). And again, “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” (Matt. 7:21).

So we “abide” in Christ and in the Father by OBEYING Them and living AS Jesus actually did—by

EVERY word of God. Jesus explained, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me” (John 14:23-24).

John’s first epistle goes on to describe the “spirit of antichrist” in greater detail: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but TEST the spirits, whether they are of God; because MANY false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and **every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist**, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (4:1-4).

Obviously, a vital key to understanding the teaching of the Antichrist is to recognize that this false doctrine does not admit the *full humanity* of Jesus Christ. It does not admit that Christ truly “has come in the flesh.”

“Why?” you might ask. What is so special about Christ having “come in the flesh”?

First let’s understand why Satan is continually trying to deceive people into disobeying God’s law—the Ten Commandments. Such lawbreaking constitutes *sin* since “sin IS the transgression of the LAW” (1 John 3:4 KJV). And “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). So if Satan can

somehow keep human beings from obeying God—and so yielding to let God build within them His very *nature* and *character*—then these disobedient men and women will continue to be under the death penalty. Cut off from God, they will be UNABLE to prepare to be kings and priests in Christ’s coming Kingdom on this earth (cf. Rev. 5:10) and so replace Satan and his demons.

Diabolical Arguments

So that people will not even *try* to keep God’s commandments, Satan uses the doctrine of antichrist to foist off on an unsuspecting humanity the idea that people could NEVER keep them! Thus, Roman Catholic and most Protestant theologians have taught, in effect, that although Christ was human, He was not *fully* “in the flesh.” That is, He was not subject to the “pulls of the flesh” and really tempted like we are—and thus NOT capable of sin. The Catholic doctrine of the “Immaculate Conception” tries to explain this, teaching that the “Virgin Mary” was the perfect, sinless “Mother of God.” Therefore, she did not pass on to Jesus Christ the normal human nature the rest of us have. Thus, Jesus *could not sin!*


The Protestants almost universally believe that Christ was fully human and fully God at the same time. This means, in practical terms,

that although in the flesh, He was NOT CAPABLE of sin! They have ingenious arguments to explain away this biblical contradiction. Yet they present a Christ who was not setting an example for US of keeping God’s commandments *while fully in the human flesh*. And, therefore, the argument goes, since no true human being has EVER kept God’s commandments, *neither can we!*

Yet the book of Hebrews tells us, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (2:18). And again, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (4:15). Was this through some supernatural power of His own? No! For He Himself said, “I can of Myself do nothing” (John 5:30). That being so, it becomes clear that there is a way for US, too, to keep the Ten Commandments while fully in the human flesh!

But how? The same way Jesus did! Hebrews further tells us that “in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death... [He] was heard because of His godly fear” (5:7). If Jesus had to literally CRY OUT with tears to the Father to “save Him from death,” it should be obvious that He *was* truly in the human flesh—and that we should cry out for God’s help in the same way! So Jesus DID set the example for us in keeping the Ten Commandments *in the human flesh*. We have a Savior and High Priest who DOES fully understand the pulls of human nature we have to contend with. And *through His Spirit within us*, as we will see, Christ will EMPOWER us to overcome temptation and keep

(continued on page 28)



Britain's return of Hong Kong to China is merely the latest episode in a fascinating history of East-West relations. It is a story of cultural imperialism, religious freedom and a drug connection that may surprise you.

Where
EAST
Meets
WEST

by John H. Ogwyn

The last British colony in Asia is no more. On July 1 the Union Jack was lowered from flagpoles in Hong Kong for the final time. This proud banner, upon which the sun literally never set at the end of World War II, is now entirely gone from Asia.

Hong Kong was under British rule for more than 150 years, the island itself having been ceded to the British in perpetuity in 1842. However, much of the additional territory of the colony, which really made Hong Kong viable, was leased by the British in 1898 for a period of 99 years. The lease has finally come to an end and Britain agreed several years ago to relinquish its hold on all portions of the colony at that time. As the magic day has approached, the mood in Hong Kong has been cautiously hopeful, yet tinged with apprehension.

Without question, Hong Kong played an important part in the early development of Britain's commercial relationships with the Far East. Its role as a center for Asian banking and finance has been vital in the years since World War II. In recent decades, Hong Kong's reputation has shone brightly as a bastion of free-market capitalism surrounded by Asian socialism. Its vibrancy and prosperity were contrasted to the drab austerity of China proper.

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From the earliest days, Hong Kong's lifeblood has been trade and commerce, and for many years it has been a symbol of the worldwide commercial dominance enjoyed by Great Britain. The British Empire was the greatest and most extensive that the world has ever seen. And to its credit, its influence on other cultures during its time of dominance was generally positive. Hong Kong's early history, however, stands in sharp contrast to the general humanitarianism of British rule. It reflects a dark side of British history, containing seeds that are still yielding bitter fruit to this day. That dark side holds the real origin of the West's Asian drug connection. And therein lies an amazing story.

The Opium Connection

Opium is a powerful narcotic obtained from the immature fruit of the opium poppy flower. Morphine and codeine are opium derivatives used in medicine as powerful painkillers. Opium is best known, however, by its illicit and highly addictive derivative—heroin. Both physically and psychologically addictive, its long-term use inevitably produces marked physical and mental deterioration as well.

From antiquity there has been a record of the medicinal use of opium. There are even ancient Assyrian cuneiform tablets that refer to such use. Slowly, over many centuries, the cultivation of poppies for their opium content spread eastward from Greece and Mesopotamia into India and surrounding countries. By the 7th century A.D., cultivation of opium poppies was introduced into China by Arab traders. Opium smoking followed later. It didn't develop in the Far East until after the discovery of America at the end of the 15th century. Smoking, after all, was a custom that the Old World first learned from the New.

By the early 1600s the use of pipes to smoke tobacco had reached China. Some began mixing opium with the tobacco, and before long this new practice was sweeping the country. By 1729, addiction to opium had become such a problem for the Chinese that the emperor outlawed both its sale and use in pipe smoking. This early "war on drugs" met with scant success. It did nothing to stem the tide of abuse and addiction. The result was more laws. Before 1800, efforts were being made in China to halt the import of opium and wipe out domestic cultivation of the poppy.

This is the point where Western interference proved to be crucial. Portugal was the first European country to establish an Asian presence. Beginning in the early 1700s, the Portuguese found that they could

export opium from India to China for a considerable profit. By the last quarter of the century the British had discovered this trade as well. Quickly outmaneuvering

Woodcut illustrating the Opium War of 1841. Portrayed is the bombardment of Guangzhou by the English under Captain Elliot—Corbis-Bettmann.

the Portuguese, the British East India Company took control of the drug trade. The company established a monopoly on opium production in the Indian province of Bengal and moved to gain total control of the Chinese market. Thus was set in motion a series of events reaching to our day.

Since the Chinese government had banned opium imports, the British East India Company didn't initially engage in direct sales to the Chinese. Instead, they "licensed" Chinese citizens to do the illegal marketing for them. The amount of opium coming into China grew from around 200 chests a year in 1727 to more than 40,000 chests by 1838 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., vol. 7, p. 552). By this time, opium sales were producing a very favorable balance of trade for the British. They, in turn, were using the revenue generated to purchase Chinese tea and silks.

Attempts by the Chinese emperor to enforce his ban on this addictive drug led to the first Opium War (1839–1842). This war was actually precipitated by the seizure and destruction of 20,000 chests of opium in Guangzhou by the Chinese government. The war ended in British victory. And one of the treaties made in the war's aftermath ceded the island of Hong Kong to Britain. What had originally been a small, sleepy fishing village now became a British port. In fact, this important port was the main gateway by which British ships brought Indian opium to sell to the Chinese masses.

From 1856 to 1860 the second Opium War was fought. Defeated once again, the Chinese government was forced to legalize the opium trade, but was also

allowed to tax it. Now things went from bad to worse. Over the next 30 years, the amount of opium consumed by the Chinese skyrocketed.

This burgeoning trade had become an enormously important source of British wealth. A number of present-day, “respectable” fortunes had their actual origins in these early drug deals. In 1839, at the outset of the first Opium War, the Chinese emperor wrote to Britain’s Queen Victoria demanding to know why “barbarian ships” traveled so many miles to engage in such trade. “‘I have heard,’ he wrote, ‘that the smoking of opium is very strictly forbidden by your country; that is because the harm caused by opium is clearly understood. Let us ask: where is your conscience?’” (*St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Feb. 15, 1972). The Chinese government’s protests fell on deaf ears.

Chinese Sabbath-Keepers

During those early years that saw the rise of the opium drug culture in China and the emergence of Hong Kong as a great commercial center, another movement began as well. Shortly after the first Opium War, something occurred in a remote Chinese village that proved to have far-reaching consequences. At the center of this part of the story is a young schoolmaster by the name of Hong Xiuquan. In 1843, after having recovered from a serious illness, he began to read a Chinese translation of portions of the Bible at the urging of his cousin Li Jingfang. Hong and Li were soon convinced of the truth of what they read. They prayed to God, asking Him to cleanse them from their sins and promising to no longer worship evil spirits—part of the popular religion. They cast away their idols and then baptized one another. Not content to simply discard his own idols, Hong proceeded to destroy the idols in the little schoolhouse where he taught. This action fueled the wrath of his neighbors. Consequently, Hong and Li fled the village, heading deep into the heart of China.

Hong preached to the peasants and villagers wherever he would encounter them. As the months went by, many hundreds responded to his preaching. He gradually obtained more of the Bible during this time and also had contact with several Western missionaries. These missionaries were displeased with Hong’s understanding of the Scriptures and were often jealous of his growing influence in southern-central China. Over the next several years Hong not only won converts to his religious teachings, but in addition, many thousands of malcontents flocked to him from the countryside and sought him out to be

their leader. These were individuals whose lives had been disrupted by the internal strife in China caused by the opium trade and the resultant wars. They were generally resentful of the Manchu dynasty, the foreign overlords who had ruled China since the 1600s.

From studying the Bible, Hong concluded that God didn’t want people to use opium, or, for that matter, even to smoke tobacco. He also prohibited his followers from practicing foot-binding, then prevalent among the Chinese. This painful custom involved binding the feet of young girls to inhibit normal growth and produce dainty feet. Most importantly, Hong came to understand from his reading of the Scriptures that the seventh day of the week was the true Sabbath and was holy to God. And this truly is what the Bible teaches (please write for our free booklet, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*).

Chinese translations of a large portion of the Bible were prepared for Hong’s followers. He instructed them to study the Bible every day, one day reading from the Old Testament and the next day reading from the New Testament. “Every Sabbath, in addition, they read the Ten Commandments” (Jonathan Spence, *God’s Chinese Son*, p. 253).

By the 1850s, Hong and his followers had set up an independent state in southern China. Dubbed *Taiping*, meaning the Heavenly Kingdom, its influence spread. In 1853 they captured Nanking and made it their capital. “The core of the *Taiping* religion was a monotheism tinged with fundamental Protestant Christianity. But it was mixed with a strong anti-Manchuism and an intolerant attitude toward the Chinese cultural tradition [i.e. idolatry]” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., vol. 4, p. 360).

The spread of the *Taiping* movement began to seriously threaten the profitable opium trade that then held China in its grip. Western missionaries, hostile to Hong’s religious teachings, soon joined with merchants to lobby for Western governmental intervention to help the Manchus destroy Hong and the *Taiping*. In 1864 the *Taiping* capital of Nanking fell to Chinese mercenaries led by British and American officers. Hong himself had died several months previously.

Over the next 25 years, memories of the short-lived “Heavenly Kingdom” were kept alive. Remnants of Hong’s followers—primarily some of the political malcontents who had looked to him as a leader without ever really understanding or embracing his religious teachings—launched another rebellion. They called themselves the “Righteous Fists of Harmony,” but are better known in the West as the “Boxers.”

Their efforts culminated in the “Boxer Rebellion” of 1900. The Boxers fought for expulsion of foreign powers from China and the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty. But they could not overcome Western troops, which provided the might to crush their movement.

That was not the end of anti-Western and anti-Manchu sentiment, however. Just over a decade later, in 1912, the Manchu dynasty was finally overthrown by Dr. Sun Yat-sen. A new Chinese republic was proclaimed. After Dr. Sun’s death in 1925, there developed a struggle between two would-be successors. Each of these, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong claimed to be the true heir of the revolution.

Shortly after World War II, Mao’s Communists defeated Chiang’s Nationalists, who then fled to the island of Taiwan off China’s coast. Thus, the roots of today’s Communist China run through the Boxer Rebellion to the Taiping movement of Hong Xiuquan and his Chinese Sabbath-keepers.

What Goes Around Comes Around

In the 19th century, British (and, to a lesser extent, American) merchants monopolized the illicit drug trade and amassed great fortunes in its wake. In those days India was the source, China was the target and Western merchants were the means. The terrible societal and personal consequences of drug addiction ravaged China just as they do America and Britain today. Drug trafficking engendered corruption on a massive scale. Moreover, the opium trade carried on by smugglers in southern China encouraged gangsterism and piracy. These activities eventually became linked with powerful secret societies that came to control much of China for the first half of this century.


Today, in the final years of the 20th century, illicit drugs still produce horrible consequences in the lives of millions. However, though Asia remains the source of many drugs, the Western World is now the *target*. Since the days of the Vietnam War, when many young American soldiers were exposed to illicit drugs for the first time, use of addictive and narcotic substances has exploded throughout the entire Western hemisphere.

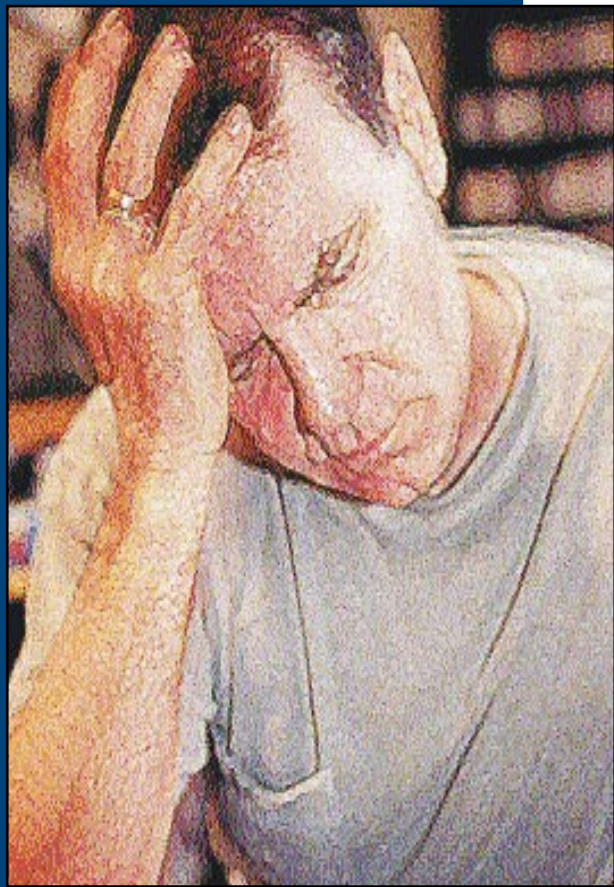
The lessons of what British Prime Minister Gladstone called one of the “darkest spots” in the history of his nation should not be lost on modern society. Far too many leaders have simply looked at the bottom line, without letting ethical issues get in the way. “It’s just business,” they reason. No one should ever forget, however, that old sins can cast very long shadows.

The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Smokers in an opium den in China—Bettmann Archive.

Greed for gain has tempted many to turn a blind eye to what is right and good. Western merchants—professing Christians all—were well aware of Christ’s simple statement in Matthew 22:39: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Their lack of neighborly concern for the Chinese clearly engendered suffering for millions. It is ironic that the descendants of those who helped flood China with narcotics are the ones now smitten with this terrible curse. It was in Asia that an entire generation was introduced to drugs. But, today, Britain and America are *reaping what they sowed* in China a century and a half ago.

One of the most fundamental lessons demonstrated in history is that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is always a reproach (Prov. 14:34). It is in the days ahead of us that the God of heaven shall finally set up His Kingdom. Human greed and selfishness won’t be the motivating factors in that Kingdom. Rather, we’re told in Isaiah 11:9-10 that at this time “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.” In that wonderful World Ahead, East and West will finally come together in a spirit of reconciliation and brotherhood. Thank God that time is almost here! 



On March 26, 1997, acting on a telephoned warning, sheriff's deputies entered a wealthy estate in the tiny, affluent Southern California community of Rancho Santa Fe. What they found was worse than any crime scene they had ever witnessed. Thirty-nine members of Heaven's Gate, termed by some a religious cult, were found dead inside the house.

The scene was as orderly as it was bizarre. Each body was arranged lying face up, wearing black clothing and athletic shoes, and carrying a five-dollar bill in a pants

pocket. Personal effects were neatly packed and waiting close at hand. But waiting for what?

The answers would come in the days and weeks to follow. The members of Heaven's Gate believed they were in the process of "evolving to the next level" beyond human beings. They thought they could board a spaceship following the Hale-Bopp comet that was then visible in the night sky. This, according to cult leader Marshall Applewhite, could only be accomplished by leaving their earthly "containers"—that's to say, by dying.

From the moment it first broke on the press wire services, this story was destined to be BIG NEWS! More people

died in this mass suicide than in any other on American soil. Television crews from around the globe descended on this normally peaceful community transforming it into a media circus. Heaven's Gate became synonymous with suicide.

And it has happened before. Also grabbing headlines were the 1978 Jonestown murder/suicides in Guyana and the Order of the Solar Temple mass suicides in Switzerland and Canada just three years ago. Some have even suggested that the 83 Branch Davidians who died in Waco, Texas, in 1993 were also part of a huge murder/suicide initiated by their leaders.

These are the faces of suicide that you see on the evening news. But tragic as these incidents are, they tend to mask the *bigger* problem. The hundreds of senseless deaths claimed by these sensational, international incidents pale in comparison to the *tens of thousands* of suicides annually in the United States alone. But the vast majority of *these* deaths are less remarkable. Most of the victims are ordinary, sometimes even marginal, members of society. And we seem to take less notice when they die one or two at a time.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, more than 32,000 Americans took their own lives in 1994 (*The World Almanac*, 1996, p. 964). Suicide researcher and author Eric Marcus points out that this translates to a "suicide rate" of nearly 12 per 100,000

population (*Why Suicide?*, 1996, p. 3). *The World Almanac* further indicates that men are almost five times as likely as women to be among these statistics—whites are *nine* times as likely as minorities. And although all age groups were well represented, statistics show that the suicide rate for seniors is almost *double*—23 per 100,000.

Perhaps the most disturbing trend of all is that "suicide rates are rising steadily for teenagers" ("Suicide's Shadow," *Time*, July 22, 1996, p. 40). This is all the more serious in light of the fact that the suicide rate for all other age groups is holding steady or even declining. From 1980 to 1993, suicides rose 120% for ages 10 to 14, and 30% for ages 15 to 19.

As troubling as these figures are, the truth may be worse yet. The commonly accepted belief is that the *real* number of suicides in the United States is *three to five times higher* than official statistics indicate (Marcus, p. 2). Family members trying to save the pain and embarrassment of an official suicide ruling, aided by sympathetic medical practitioners, is one of the main causes for this discrepancy.

And what happens when we factor in those who attempt to end their life but do not succeed? The incidence of *attempted* suicide is simply astounding. The American Association of Suicidology estimates that for every person who successfully takes his own life in the United States, there are 8 to 20 others who make the attempt unsuccessfully (Marcus, pp. 4-5). Marcus goes on to say that "for young people, there are *two hundred attempts* for every completed suicide" (p. 5). A 1993 study of 16,000 high school students by the Centers for Disease Control found that "an astonishing 1 in 12 had attempted suicide the previous year" (*Time*, p. 41). That's more than 8% *in just*

one year! This is truly an American social epidemic—and it's growing.

But this monumental problem is by no means limited to the 50 states. Other industrialized nations face an even greater challenge. According to the World Health Organization, Japan's annual suicide rate is 15 per 100,000. Worse yet is France at 19, Denmark at more than 20, Finland at almost 27, and Hungary at a horrendous rate of 34—almost *triple* that of the United States! (*Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1996, p. 832).

Why Do They Do It?

What drives so many people from all levels of society to cut their lives short? Why do tens of thousands apparently fear dying less than they fear living? Psychologists who study suicide and how to prevent it—called suicidologists—give a number of reasons. We will examine just a few of the more common ones.

Depression: It's probably no surprise that depression is

A suicide victim at the Rancho Santa Fe residence lies on a mattress covered with a purple shroud. 39 Heaven's Gate cult members killed themselves in a mass suicide over a number of days in March by drug overdose
—San Diego Sheriff's Dept., AFP.

often associated with suicide. Who hasn't been down in the dumps or felt depressed from time to time? In fact, most people have thought *casually* about killing themselves when life's frustrations seem to have the upper hand (Marcus, p. 9). But for those whose thoughts of suicide are more than fleeting ideas, for those who will attempt—and perhaps succeed—in ending their lives,

severe depression is often involved. It's more than just garden-variety "blues." It's a force that can virtually hold someone hostage.

In his book, *Darkness Visible*, William Styron talks of his personal journey through depression, calling it "the despair beyond the despair." He writes, "The pain of severe depression is quite unimaginable to those who have not suffered it, and it kills in many instances because its anguish can no longer be borne" (quoted by Marcus, p. 30).

This major or "clinical" depression can show itself in a number of ways. Symptoms include irritation, loss of interest in once-enjoyable activities, weight gain or loss, sleeping too much or too little, fatigue, and feelings of guilt. There is often a sense of *hopelessness*. In *Suicide: The Forever Decision*, author Paul Quinnett points out that hopelessness is "the one common thread among the majority who elect the suicide option" (quoted by Marcus, p. 43).

Illness: Physical disease and

infirmity are the driving forces behind many who take their own lives. Some suicide victims are seriously, perhaps even terminally, ill. This is a particularly common reason for suicide among senior citizens. They may be facing months or years of severe pain and decline in the very "quality of life."

Some who are particularly at risk for suicide because of illness

By Their Own Hand... by Gary Foster

Increasing numbers of American youth are taking their own lives. But the deadly toll of suicide is not exacted solely from the young—it strikes almost every segment of modern society. What leads seemingly rational, functioning people to this last, desperate act? How can they be helped?

are AIDS patients. Due to the nature of this disease, and the understanding that the end stages can be almost intolerable, those with AIDS have a 10 to 20 times greater suicide rate than the national average (Marcus, p. 19).

Aging: Even barring some dreaded medical condition, the simple process of growing older can be a risk factor. Remember that the suicide rate for senior citizens in the U.S. is twice that of the population in general. But why? Part of the reason is that as some people age, they cannot seem to cope with the gradual decline in their bodies' physical functions and the increasing loss of control over their environment and life circumstances. Others worry that they will become a burden to family members, or that the expenses related to aging—nursing care, medical bills, etc.—will consume their children's inheritance. And, of course, when one partner dies in an older couple's marriage, the remaining spouse may feel that he or she can't continue alone.

There are many other reasons for committing suicide. Revenge, public humiliation, confusion over sexual orientation and loss of employment have all prompted some to take this drastic, final step. And whatever the reason, the use of alcohol or illicit drugs often contributes to the act, in that they impair good judgment, loosen inhibitions and tend to intensify the already-powerful negative emotions encompassing those who contemplate putting an end to their existence.

Teens Are Different

As tragic as the reality of suicide is under any circumstance, it's perhaps the hardest to face when it involves youth. After all, doesn't modern Western society teach that young people have *everything* to

live for? Aren't these the carefree years, anyway? The time to kick back, have fun and party? And golden achievements will surely follow because teenagers have their whole lives ahead of them!

The only problem is that too many teens aren't buying it. The notion that childhood and adolescence are idyllic years free from

Dale Ellenberger holds a framed copy of a poem his son Andrew wrote in 1978, reflecting the emptiness Andrew felt even then. Andrew committed suicide in December 1996; his high school picture hangs on the wall at the right. The family is now working through their loss—KRT Photo.

stress and worry may or may not have been true in generations past. But this much is certain—it doesn't describe the world that *today's* teens live in!

The adolescents of this generation face far more stress and uncertainty than their predecessors. There are *more* teen pregnancies, *more* broken homes, *more* confusion about sexual identity and *more* of their peers committing suicide than at any other time. Add to this the age-old problems of adolescence—conflicts with parents, romantic breakups, substance abuse and feeling awkward. That's a lot for our youth to carry around with them. **It's too much for some of them to bear.**

There is another factor that makes young people more vulnerable to this social crisis. Adolescents are often poorly equipped to deal with setbacks or emotional trauma. According to *The Christian Science Monitor*, "a young person often does not have enough *life experience* to tell the difference between small problems and serious ones. A

triviality to an adult is often perceived as *unbearably painful* to a child" ("Rise in Teen Suicides Spurs New Solutions," March 5, 1997).

This same lack of experience can contribute to poor judgment. Focusing solely on the present without regard for future consequences can have fatal results for the teen who's contemplating suicide.

Rosemary Rubin is a consultant for the Los Angeles Unified School District suicide prevention unit. She notes that children who aren't thinking rationally see suicide "as a way of getting the recognition they don't have in life. For many kids, *death is not real*." They might say, "I'll kill myself and get my picture in the paper." **They don't see that death is final**" (quoted by *Time*, p. 42).

And whenever news comes that a teenager has succeeded in taking his life, then beware. The so-called "copycat syndrome" is more prevalent among youth. "Teenagers—impulsive and susceptible to fashion in all things—are considered *particularly vulnerable* to copycat behavior when it comes to suicide" (p. 42). The more publicity that surrounds the first incident, the more likely another will follow.

Consider the case of an Indiana community in 1994. A high school girl used a handgun to end her life. Up to then, this town had no more

than one suicide every five years. So naturally, this story got a lot of press. The result? Two days later *another* high school student killed himself with a gun (Marcus, p. 73). This was no coincidence. It was an example of the undue influence that suicide has on the youngest, most vulnerable members of our society.

The Missing Dimension

We have seen the scope of this self-destructive behavior. We have examined many of the reasons that lead people to end their physical lives. What we will now explore is something vital these victims have *not* been aware of. They have focused on their physical infirmities, their depression, their losses and their emotional wounds. But they have ignored the *spiritual dimension* of their mental and emotional difficulties.

God warns us through the Prophet Hosea, "My people are destroyed for *lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6). But *what* knowledge do people lack? What could potential suicide victims learn that would stay their hand and give them renewed zeal for life? The answer to these questions is the most important knowledge anyone could ever have. And it's readily available for all to learn—from the pages of the Holy Bible!

The Scriptures reveal that there is more to life than physical existence. There is a spiritual dimension that affects us all—whether we acknowledge it or not. Deep depression, feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy, and the overwhelming fear of living are problems of attitude—problems of the mind. These mental and physical afflictions have a *spiritual* component. Our great adversary, Satan the Devil, virtually *assaults* mankind by "transmitting" negative attitudes and emotions—including the most

self-destructive of all, the impulse to end one's own life. The Apostle Paul tells Christians, "You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience**" (Eph. 2:1-2). And without even knowing that Satan is infecting their very thoughts and attitudes, it's no wonder that so many succumb to the lie and succeed in destroying themselves.

Those who are severely depressed, emotionally unstable or seriously ill must first realize that there are often *causes* for these conditions. And these causes aren't necessarily obvious, since spiritual forces may be at work. God has given a great law to mankind—summarized in the Ten Commandments—which, when obeyed, yields the fruit of peace, equity and happiness. But disobeying God—breaking His commandments—will exact punishment. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Gal. 6:7-8).

Much of the time, it is *our own sins* that lead to depression, emotional problems and even physical illness. That is not to say that *every instance* of these afflictions is our own fault, or even the fault of others (cf. John 9:1-3). Nevertheless, **untold heartache, emotional trauma and physical illness is the direct or indirect result of breaking God's laws.**

But that's not what God wants for us! Jesus Christ said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). It is true that you have sinned and that I have sinned. In fact, "*all*

have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). ALL, therefore, have merited the problems in life that stem from sin, to be followed by eternal death (cf. Rom. 6:23). But God has given us a way of escape. If we will *repent*—turn from our sinful ways, forsaking them entirely—God stands ready and eager to forgive us.

In Acts 2, we find the Apostle Peter preaching to fellow Jews on the Feast of Pentecost following Christ's death and resurrection. Peter accuses them of having put to death the Savior of all mankind (v. 36). The next verse shows that they were convinced of their guilt—"cut to the heart." Some of the very audience he preached to had no doubt directly taken part in Christ's trial and crucifixion. They cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's response to them is the same as Christ's response to sinners today: "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" (v. 38).

These men were in mental anguish. They were in despair over their guilt for having helped put Jesus Christ to death. This is the same guilt and despair that had led Christ's betrayer, Judas Iscariot, to commit suicide just weeks before (cf. Matt. 27:3-5). But God was prepared to forgive their sin. God was prepared to pour out His Holy Spirit to give them the spiritual help and mental soundness needed to lead a successful and prosperous life. Just as God stands ready to forgive *your* sins and pour out His Holy Spirit upon *you*. Around 3,000 people *heeded* Peter's message of hope and were baptized (Acts 2:41). What about *you*?

Now repenting from sin and receiving God's Holy Spirit is not some magic spell that instantly removes all human afflictions. It

(continued on page 30)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



INTO ALL THE WORLD

I am a 17-year-old Filipino. I have already received two issues of *The World Ahead* and am looking forward to more. My friends and classmates say that I am very fortunate to be a subscriber because you teach the Truth and clarify things that I have been confused about.

Your magazine is really a big help. God bless and more power.

Gilbert Salazar
Cebu City, Philippines

Just a note to say thank you for your explanation on whether giving alms is the same thing as paying tithes (Jan.–Feb. 1997, “Questions & Answers”).

Luke Sparrie Supa
Lale Village, Ranonga, Solomon Islands

I am 14 years old and heard about your magazine from a friend. I received my first issue recently and want to receive more so I can learn the real Truth about how our Savior wants us to be. I thank God for making this magazine available to me and at no charge.

Lawrence Arukwai
West Bauro, Makira, Solomon Islands

FROM BEHIND BARS

I am an inmate incarcerated in Indiana, and also a new subscriber. I want to say that I am pleased with your magazine, particularly the very informative articles. Your article in the May–June 1997 issue, “Is the Old

Testament Still Valid?,” was a real eye-opener for me. I have begun my search for the Lord because of such articles. You have my deepest appreciation for your magazine and other literature. They have helped me to discover my walk with the Lord.

D.M.
Tell City, Indiana

I really enjoy reading your articles—especially the one titled “Does the Bible Contradict Science?” (Jan.–Feb. 1997 issue). I am very interested in learning more. I am serving a nine-year prison sentence and am grateful for the literature you provide free of charge.

T.R.
Hutchinson, Kansas

APPRECIATE ARTICLES

I have been a Sabbatarian since 1986, and I feel very blessed to receive the *World Ahead* magazine. In the March–April issue, I enjoyed reading the two articles titled “Have You Been Deceived?” and “Should You ‘Stay at Home’ to Worship God?” May God bless your ministry as you continue serving Him in every way.

Jackie Adams
Athens, Alabama

I wish to commend you for the March–April issue of *The World Ahead*. It was particularly good and informative. I thought the editorial by Roderick Meredith, “Should You ‘Stay at Home’ to Worship God?,” was very timely. A few of

us were discussing this very subject recently at Church. We are aware that some folks do keep the Sabbath at home.

I was also pleased with the cover article, “Have You Been Deceived?” The other articles on prophecy and healing were also outstanding. I’m pleased there are still a few Churches left that take God’s warnings literally.

John Bouknight
Columbia, South Carolina

Congratulations to Mr. Raymond McNair for his commendable article, “Does the Bible Contradict Science?,” in the January–February 1997 issue of *The World Ahead*. I appreciated it very much.

David Mwanjia
Kajiado, Kenya

BEAST OF REVELATION

I wish to write how much I appreciated Mr. John Ogwyn’s most recent booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*. I especially liked chapter five, which talked about the mark of the Beast. I feel that this is a fulfillment of the Scriptures, which explain that in this modern age, we will have understanding of prophecies that will soon come to pass.

William Butler
Durham, Ontario, Canada

AMERICA AND BRITAIN

I’ve been wanting to say thanks for a long time now concerning the time put into *America and Britain in Prophecy*. I especially enjoyed the information that the dollar bill holds a clue pointing to the United States as part of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.

Randy Samson
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada

The reference to the American one-dollar bill is made in the section of our brochure titled, “Clues from Our National Heraldry.” The dollar bill and other national symbols clearly point to a distant ancestry that most people are unaware of today. If you would like to learn more about the heritage and roots of the American and British peoples, please

write for our free brochure today—ed.

I would like to express my sincere and deep gratitude for the brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*. It’s clear that a lot of time and research was spent on this project. A new understanding dawned on me of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I had never before seen that He fulfilled those promises. Thanks for all the hard work!

Charles Mandizha
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

THANKFUL FOR BLESSINGS

I am writing to say thanks for such a great magazine! It has brought so much help in understanding the Word. I also want to thank God for the help given me by one of His true followers. Her Christian example has been a great blessing to me. God bless you as well.

Ronnie Culpepper
Thomasville, Georgia

CONTINUE THE WORK

Thank you very much for continuing the Work of the late Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. The *World Ahead* magazine and all of the booklets are outstanding. I pray daily that God will strengthen and prosper you, while blessing the Work with wide-open doors.

Harry Schaer
Bishop, California

For our readers who may be unfamiliar with him, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was our predecessor in preaching and publishing the Gospel of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. He faithfully served God in this capacity from his ordination as a minister in 1931 until his death in 1986. Today, the Global Church of God, publisher of The World Ahead, continues in the same doctrines that Mr. Armstrong

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.

EDITORIAL (continued from page 3)

to convince their followers that Christians *don’t* have to keep the Ten Commandments—that they were “nailed to the cross” or that “the Apostle Paul did away with them”? Other arguments are that you can’t keep the Ten Commandments because they are a *spiritual* law and we humans are “just physical,” or that although the Ten Commandments are a “good guide” to our general conduct, the fourth one—to keep the Sabbath holy—was “ceremonial,” part of the “Jewish law,” and must therefore be *jerked right out* of the middle of the Ten Commandments since it doesn’t apply to us today.

WHY all these artful arguments?

The full answer to these vital questions is contained in this month’s cover story, “The Truth About Antichrist.” If you carefully read it—with an open mind—you will come to understand what may very well be the most harmful and COLOSSAL deception in modern “Christianity.” This article will help you grasp what *true Christianity* is all about—and what the *real* Jesus of the Bible could be doing in your life right now.

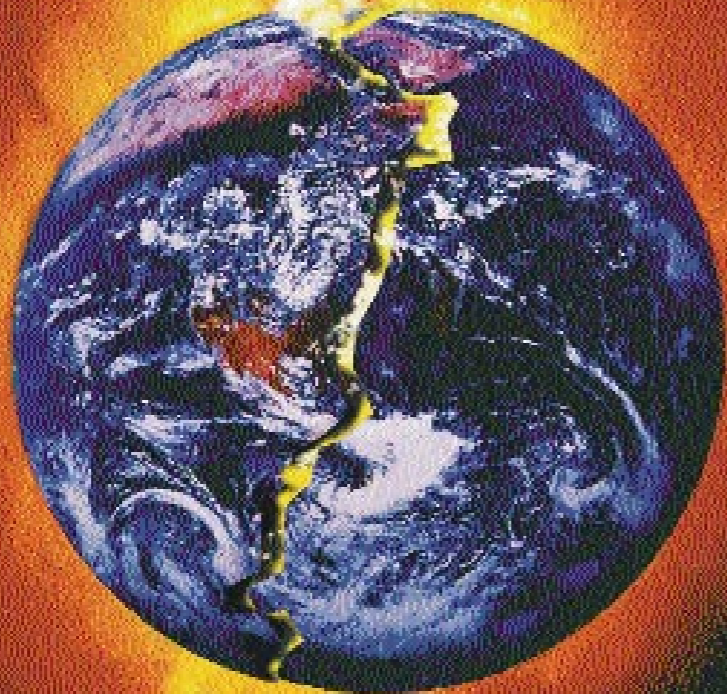
The Apostle James called the Ten Commandments the “law of liberty.” He was inspired to write, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do 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 we are now to LIVE as if we will be “judged” by the “law of liberty”—clearly meaning the Ten Commandments that James listed right in this passage. When you understand it, God’s law truly *is* the “law of liberty”! Think about the abundance of peace and JOY the entire world would experience if the commandments were fully obeyed as Jesus magnified them in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). No more murder or even attempted murder or violence. *No more war!* No more rape, lust or adultery. Happy, joyous marriages, obedient children. A veritable utopia here on earth with genuine peace and prosperity for all (Is. 2:2-4).

Within the lifetime of many of you reading this article, that utopia *is* coming! It will come during the reign of the true Jesus Christ as King of kings here on earth (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). It will be a totally new and different society—the Kingdom of God on earth—the “World Ahead,” as we often refer to it in this magazine. *God speed that day!*

Meanwhile, be sure to read in this issue one of the most important articles we have ever published. Again, it is titled, “The Truth About Antichrist.” You *personally* need to understand and ACT on this vital information so you can *be there* (Rev. 5:10) with the *true* Jesus Christ in the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Countdown to



by Raymond F. McNair

Where are Mideast events heading? Many warnings have been sounded about a coming "Battle of Armageddon." Just what IS this apocalyptic term, "Armageddon"? Does it involve nuclear destruction that will spell the end of all human life?

Why is the Middle East being "armed to the teeth"? Will the ongoing political battle for control over Palestine—and Jerusalem in particular—spin out of control, thereby igniting a military firestorm that will engulf the entire world? The concept of "Armageddon" has been familiar to the English-speaking world since at least the 1500s, and is now well entrenched in our culture. But most of those who speak of Armageddon don't really understand its prophetic significance.

Many of this earth's nearly two billion professing Christians are acquainted with the idea of a "Battle of Armageddon" that is supposed to occur at the end of the world. But most people couldn't tell you much about it. Just what *is* Armageddon? And what are some of the events that will lead up to it?

Some Perceptions

Today, even though the long, nightmarish Soviet-American standoff is seemingly over, we still sometimes hear about "nuclear Armageddon" that could erase all human life from our planet. But for centuries, men in the midst of one catastrophe or another have believed that "Armageddon" was almost upon them. Some even thought that World War I—and later World War II—would end in this "doomsday battle." But not until the end of the second world conflict had man unleashed the destructive power necessary to annihilate all human life from the face of the earth.

When the Japanese surrendered after atomic weapons were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the allied supreme commander in the Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur, made a historic broadcast to the American people: "Today, the guns are silent.... The destructiveness of war has in fact now reached a point which revises the traditional concept of war.... We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, **Armageddon will be at our door.** The problem basically is theological and involves... improvement of human character.... It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh!"

But has human character improved since World War II? Sadly, no. Rather, it is now clear that human conduct is rapidly becoming more debased the world over. Violent crime is out of control in many areas of the world. And during the past 50 years countless millions have been butchered through genocidal wars in Southeast Asia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Africa, Central America, the Middle East and other troubled areas. It is obvious that the nations have not heeded MacArthur's warning! And as world events continue to spiral out of control, we may well wonder—more than at any other time in history—if our precious "minutes to midnight" are fast running out.

Concerned that Arab hatred of Israel could engender such an apocalyptic scenario, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu states, "For close to a century Arab society and Arab politics have been commandeered by an anti-Jewish obsession that has known no limits: It harnessed the Nazis, promoted the Final

Solution, launched five wars against Israel, embarked on a campaign of global terrorism, strangled the world's economy with oil blackmail, and now, in Iraq and elsewhere, is attempting **to build nuclear bombs for the great Armageddon.** This obsession must be stopped not only for Israel's sake but for the sake of the Arabs themselves and for the sake of the world" (*A Place Among the Nations*, pp. 330-331).

Mideast Arms Buildup

The entire Middle East—but especially Israel—has become an "armed camp," with the highest concentration of weapons of any place of comparable size on earth. According to the article on "Israel" in the *1997 Britannica Book of the Year*, each Israeli spends nearly three times as much on national defense as does the average citizen in other countries of the world! And Arab nations—especially the oil-rich states—also spend very heavily on armaments and war-related materiel. Of course, all of this comes at a terrible cost. For with so much financial and material resources devoted to "war," much less is reserved for the "peacetime" investment of building a thriving, prosperous economy.

How does the Israeli military compare with that of her Arab neighbors? *The Jewish Press* reports, "Israel has become the **third strongest world power** and its air force is seven to eight times stronger than the combined might of those of the Arab Nations. This is what the prestigious military magazine, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, concluded in a report it just released. The British periodical says in its 25-page report that the IDF [Israeli Defense Force] is a generation ahead of its Arab counterparts. War in the Middle East, the study notes, is closer than ever before, but would result in another Israeli victory.... [If some] general confrontation [developed] into a united Arab stand against the Jewish state... concludes *Jane's*, Israel is capable of destroying the Arab armies within 10-15 days" (March 7, 1997, p. 26).

Yet even with the balance of military strength tipped in their favor, there is little reason for jubilation among Israelis. Since December 1987, the Palestinian *intifada* (often-violent civil unrest) has kept them off guard—with its terrorist bombings of civilian targets in cafes, marketplaces, cars, buses, passenger planes, etc. The Israeli government seemingly does not know how to cope with such violence. And many Israelis have become weary in waging a constant defensive war against an elusive enemy.

As we've seen in previous installments in this series, the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin tried to

strike a deal with Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians by agreeing to grant them limited sovereignty over certain Israeli-occupied territories including Gaza, Jericho and Hebron (prompting his assassination in 1995 by an Israeli extremist). But violence has not abated since ceding control to the Palestine Authority. Furthermore, the Israelis agreed to allow tens of thousands of Palestinians (some say up to 40,000) to arm themselves. This is a potential source of carnage in the event of another full-scale Arab-Israeli war. In such a scenario, the Israelis would have to fight an *internal* enemy—reoccupying such areas as Gaza, Jericho and Hebron—while waging a war of survival on two or three *external* fronts!

Islamic Fundamentalism

Many wonder what persuaded Israeli leaders to go to Norway in 1993 and sit down with Yasser Arafat, whom they had repeatedly labeled a terrorist, to negotiate for peace. Why did they endorse the “Oslo Accords” when they apparently did not trust the other side to abide by its terms? One reason is that the Israelis became convinced they were losing the “propaganda war” to the Palestinian

Muslim world—looming on the horizon! Muslim nations—most of which are *not* Arab—now have a combined population of more than one billion people! Even Arab leaders fear Islamic fundamentalism—especially in light of how easily this movement swept through Iran and gained control of its government in 1979.

Author Thomas L. Friedman makes an interesting point: “Islamic fundamentalism is going to be a permanent challenge for the Jewish state. Rabin and [then Foreign Minister Shimon] Peres were calculating, though, that if they could strike a deal with the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab states, it might give the Arabs a stronger hand to deal with some of their economic problems, reduce the ability of the [Islamic] fundamentalists to blame every blight in their society on Israel, and maybe, just maybe, secure a Muslim majority ready to live and let live with the Jews. That, at least was their theory. As Peres put it, **‘In twenty years there will be 500 million Arabs and 2 billion Muslims. There is no way to defend ourselves unless we overcome the hostility’**” (*From Beirut to Jerusalem*, pp. 548-549).

As Israelis look to the future, they realize that the Muslim population could reach this two billion mark *within one generation!* Hundreds of millions of Muslims might throw their political, economic and military support behind the Palestinian Arabs, whom they believe to have been dispossessed of their rightful homeland by Israeli Jews. This is why the specter of Islamic fundamentalism haunts Israel today. What will be its end? Islamic *jihād*? An Arab-Israeli holy war could engulf the Middle East, eventually escalating into World War III!

Prime Minister Netanyahu says, “Islamic fundamentalism continues to gather momentum. Worse still, **the development of nuclear weapons by Arab states and Iran continues at a feverish pace....** Now the U.S. is trying to ferret out of Iraq the multiple hidden nuclear weapons projects that Saddam has built and continues to build, using technologies sold to him by the West.... But this is precisely the danger that the world faces today. Iraq, Iran, and Syria are now all vying to develop nuclear weapons and the missile systems to deliver them” (pp. 249, 390).

Israeli Nuclear Arms?

From its inception in 1948, Israel realized the day might come when she could no longer defend herself against hostile Arab neighbors with conventional arms. Therefore, the Israelis quickly began a nuclear weapons

program. It is common knowledge that they have now possessed nuclear weapons for decades.

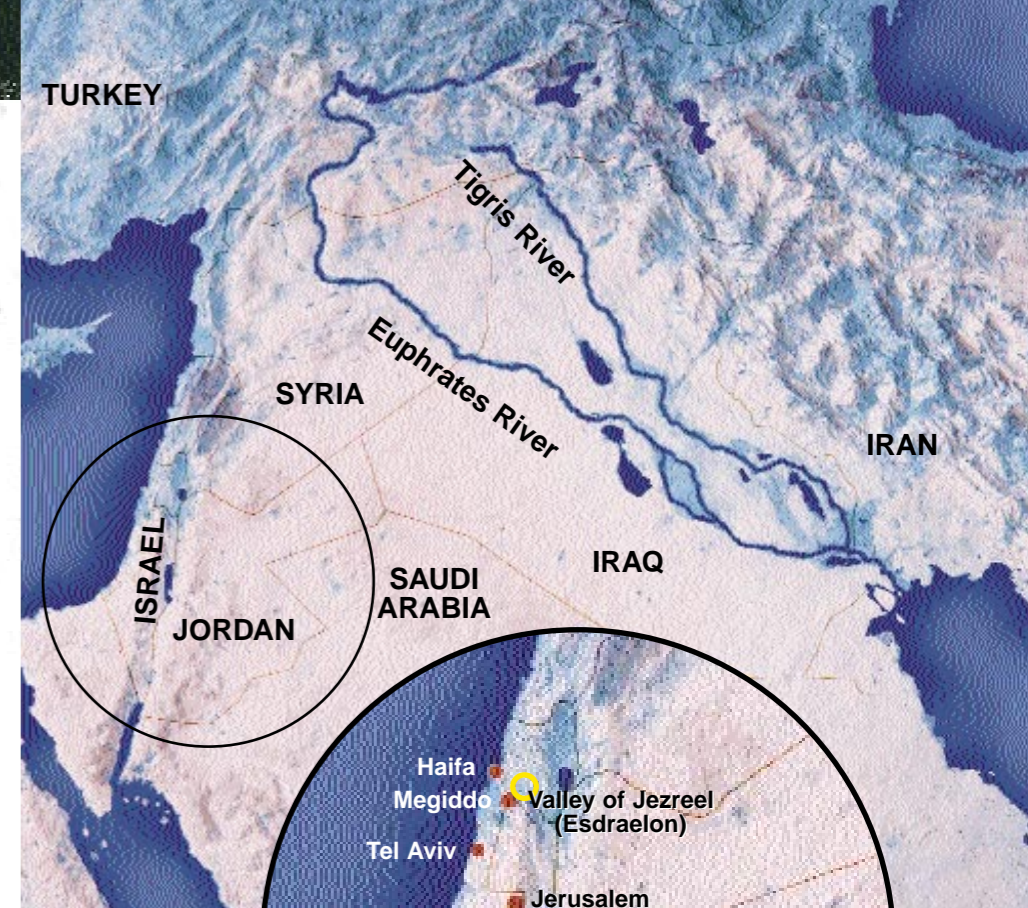
But would the Israelis use these weapons? Certainly not under any normal circumstance. But what if they found themselves with their backs to the wall, about to be overwhelmed by some numerically superior Arab army?

Netanyahu says, “When advocates of an Israeli withdrawal [from the Occupied Territories] are presented with the facts, they usually fall back on one final argument: **Israel can always unsheathe a nuclear sword**, thereby ending all threats to its existence. But Israel has promised not to be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East, and even if it were to change its policy and introduce them, it is unclear how even this would serve as a deterrent.... But would Israel really be willing to threaten nuclear war every time a Palestinian battalion changed its position? Would nuclear weapons be used if an Arab column crossed into Israeli territory... or would they be reserved for the actual arrival of such a force in downtown Tel Aviv twenty minutes later?” (p. 282).

The prime minister leaves no doubt what Israel would do if hostile armies threatened to snuff out her very national existence: **“If Israel were to face a threat to its existence, it would respond with awesome power** [i.e. nuclear war]—something that no sane person, Arab or Jew, could possibly desire”! (p. 334). If deemed absolutely necessary, Israel would probably not hesitate to act. Former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban (1966-74) says, “It is the anomaly of our times that small countries... sometimes have more mobility and resilience than greater powers whose eyes are always fixed apprehensively on each other’s potential reaction and on **the perils of Armageddon**” (*My Country*, p. 236).

Meaning of Armageddon

Having talked about the potential for an end-time battle, there remains an important question. Just what *is* “Armageddon”? The dictionary defines this term thus: “Armageddon... Gk. *Armageddon, Harmagedon*, scene of the battle foretold in Rev. 16:14-16... the site or time of the final and conclusive battle between the forces of



And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.
—Revelation 16:16

good and evil” (*Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.).

Let’s look at Revelation 16. It is set during the “Day of the Lord,” at the time of Jesus Christ’s return to this earth. This is when the seven last plagues of God’s wrath are poured out on the nations as punishment for their wicked behavior—meant to humble them into submission to God’s supreme will. Notice what the Apostle John foresaw, nearly 2,000 years ago, concerning the *sixth* of these plagues: “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl [symbolizing God’s awesome power] on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.... [Then Satan’s]

Massive crowds gather in the streets, marking an anniversary of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The Islamic Republic was born in 1979 when the late Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah—AFP.

Arabs in the eyes of the world. They believed that the international news media nearly always took the side of the Palestinians.

Another reason is that Israel, with a population of less than 6 million, is surrounded by Arab nations with a combined population of 150 million!

More ominous still, the Israelis saw Islamic fundamentalism—the most powerful force in today’s

demons... go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.... And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon" (vv. 12-16).

Students of Bible prophecy have long understood that a gigantic Eastern army is prophesied to sweep down, cross the Euphrates River and enter the land of Israel. There it will meet other Gentile armies—of the “kings of the earth and of the whole world”—at a specific location called Armageddon. But exactly where is this place? *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* explains that the New Testament term “Armageddon” comes from the Hebrew *har-megiddon*, meaning “hill of Megiddo.” This hill lies to the north of the Carmel Ridge in Israel, commanding “the most important pass from the coastal plain to the valley of Esdraelon [or Jezreel]” (vol. 2, p. 975).

The ancient site of Megiddo, overlooking the Jezreel Valley, has historically been the scene of untold bloodshed due to its important strategic location. The road between Egypt and the ancient empires of Mesopotamia passed through this area. Around 3,500 years ago, Pharaoh Thutmose III claimed that he who controlled Megiddo controlled a thousand cities.

Megiddo was a fortified city in ancient Israel. It was at Megiddo that King Ahaziah of Judah died in battle as he warred against King Jehu of Israel (2 Kings 9:27). King Josiah of Judah was also killed in battle at Megiddo while fighting Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:29).

Near the end of World War I, Britain's General Allenby won a signal victory over the Turks at Megiddo in 1918: “The engagements fought between 19 and 25 September came to be collectively known as the Battle of Megiddo, after [British forces emerged] on to the plain of Esdraelon.... [Megiddo] was the site of many Old Testament contests and is associated with that great battle of nations, Armageddon, described in... Revelation (16:16). Megiddo was a decisive victory” (Lawrence James, *Imperial Warrior*, p. 167).

The Final Battle

But you may be surprised to learn that the prophesied “great battle of nations” will not actually take place at the ancient, war-ravaged site of Armageddon. The Bible only says that the armies will be *gathered together* at the hill of Megiddo—and certainly in the vast plain of Esdraelon that adjoins it—for this final end-time battle. As *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* notes, Armageddon is “the *assembly-point*” (vol. 1, p. 111).

Where, then, does the actual *battle* take place? Speaking through the Prophet Joel, God says, “Proclaim

this among the nations: ‘Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up [to Jerusalem]. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, “I am strong.” Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around.... Let the nations be awakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.


—Joel 3:14-15

there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations” (Joel 3:9-12). The Valley of Jehoshaphat, a term meaning “the Eternal’s judgment or decision,” is the ancient name for the Kidron Valley in East Jerusalem.

God continues, “‘For their wickedness is great....’ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from [Mount] Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and the earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people” (vv. 13-16; cf. Zech. 14; Rev. 19).

Clearly, then, the Bible does not say that Armageddon in northern Israel will be the actual end-time battle site. Rather, that is the place where hostile armies will marshal their forces. They will then march 75 miles south to Jerusalem, where the final “battle of that great day of God Almighty” will actually take place.

Will this *final showdown* involve nuclear weapons? The Bible doesn’t say. But you may be surprised to learn that, according to prophecy, weapons of mass destruction of some sort will already have been unleashed a few years *before* the gathering at Armageddon. And though millions upon millions will die, many will be spared. (This subject is more fully explained in chapter five of our full-color brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*. Please write for a free copy if you don’t already have one.)

Which nations will take an active part in this final battle of the end time? Who will be the victors? And who will be given ultimate control of Jerusalem—and all of Palestine? These and other questions will be answered in a future issue of *The World Ahead*, as we examine the climactic battle for control of Jerusalem! 

Questions & Answers

Your brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*, explains how Israelites may have become known as Celts, Scots, Scandinavians and Saxons. How did some acquire the name “British”?

Let’s look at some fascinating possibilities. Legend has it that Britain derives its name from its first high king, Brutus—the great-grandson of the Trojan royal family member Aeneas (from whom Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, descended). You can find this account in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain* (1139). Aeneas was descended from ancient Troy’s founder Dardanus, also known as Darda. And according to the first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, Darda is the same as the biblical Dara, grandson of Judah—the father of the Jews (1 Chron. 2:3-6; 1 Kings 4:31).

Interestingly, the roots of a number of European royal families have been traced to the ancient house of Troy. If all of this is so, then much of British and other European royalty are of Jewish descent! This would make a particular prophecy given by Jacob, father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, more encompassing than many have thought: “The scepter [kingship] shall not depart from Judah” (Gen. 49:10).

Not surprisingly, the majority of scholars reject the story of King Brutus as having any bearing on the etymology of the name Britain. According to them, the Britons are named after one of the two major branches of the early Celts in the British Isles. One branch was that of the Goidelic Celts, from whom the Gaels of Scotland and Ireland trace their ancestry. The other was that of the Brythonic Celts, from whom the peoples of Wales and Brittany are descended.

It should be noted here that the word *Brython*, from which Britain came, would mean place of *bryth* or *brit*. Since, as pointed out in *America and Britain in Prophecy*, the Celtic language very likely developed from that of the ancient Israelites, we might wonder what *brit*

means in Hebrew. Remarkably, this is how to pronounce the Hebrew word for “covenant.” The Israelites were the *people of the covenant* (cf. Ex. 19:5). The word *b’rit* (or *berith*) could be combined with a name—as it is in that of the false god Baal-Berith (cf. Judges 8:33; 9:4). Does Britain, then, essentially mean place or land of the covenant—or of the covenant people? Perhaps. And perhaps it is only a coincidence that the English word “British” can be broken down in Hebrew as “covenant man”—for though *ish* is a familiar suffix in English meaning “pertaining to,” it means “man” in Hebrew.

Also quite interesting is a statement in an audio study course called *An Invitation to Hebrew* in its section on the “Vocabulary of Jewish Life.” After the teacher confirms that “covenant in Hebrew is... *b’rit*,” he mentions its occurrence in the term “*b’nai b’rit*, the children of the covenant” and in referring to “the USA, which is called, in Hebrew, *Artzot Ha-brit*, the lands of the covenant” (Mordecai Kamrat, Spoken Arts, Inc., 1960).

How astonishing! For both America and Britain are indeed the lands of the covenant—the lands God promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. For those who wish to understand this subject in greater detail, please write for your free copy of *America and Britain in Prophecy*.

Is God’s Holy Spirit given in measure? Should Christians hope

You may have heard people say something like this: “I’m praying for more of God’s Holy Spirit to overcome my sins.” But others would argue that being begotten of God by the Spirit is much like a couple hoping to conceive a child. The wife either **is** or **is not** pregnant, a person either **is** or **is not** a Christian—with no degrees of variation.

Those who believe this usually point to a passage in John 3: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from

and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (v. 8). Since some suppose that the Spirit is a third *Person* in the Godhead and since it is not physical in nature, then by definition it cannot be “measured” or “quantified.” Therefore, the theory goes, it is impossible to have more or less of the Holy Spirit within you. In fact, they say the very *terms* “more” and “less” are inherently inapplicable to God’s Spirit.

But that’s not what the Bible shows us. Acts 10:45 says that “the gift of the Holy Spirit had been *poured out* on the Gentiles also” (cf. 2:33). Now you would think that something that could be “poured out” could also be measured.

An even more telling scripture in Philippians speaks of the “*supply* of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (1:19). How can you have a “supply” of something that cannot be measured?

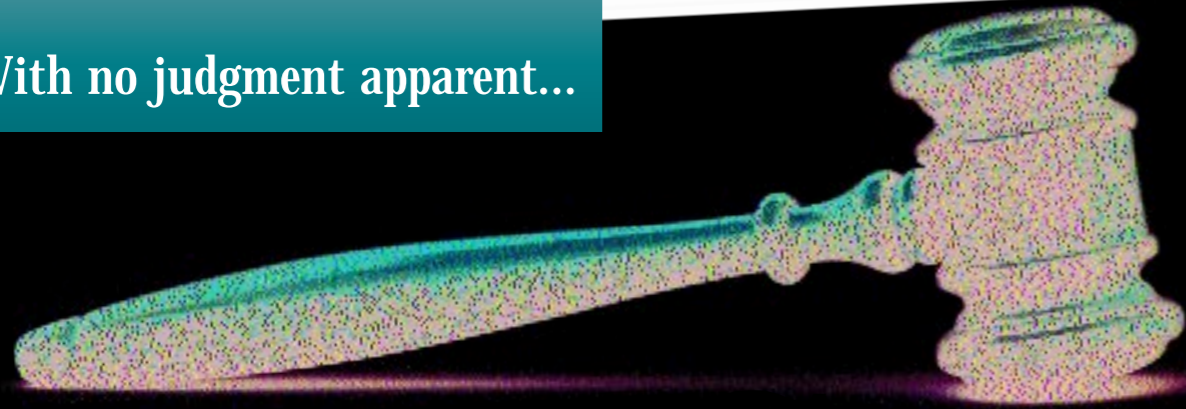
Perhaps the most revealing passage of all is found in John 3. Speaking of Himself, Christ says, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto HIM” (v. 34 KJV). Jesus Christ alone, of all humans, had an “inexhaustible supply” of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, then, the rest of us have “less” of the Holy Spirit than Him!

Now those who believe otherwise correctly point out that the Holy Spirit is beyond the realm of our physical existence. *But they draw the wrong conclusion!* Just because we, as physical beings, cannot *understand* exactly how the Spirit functions or *quantify* it physically does not mean there cannot be MORE or LESS of it within individual Christians. Consider that the Apostle Paul could not “measure” how bright it was outdoors. That would have required a photometer—a device that wasn’t even invented until modern times. Nevertheless, he certainly knew that a fair day had MORE sunlight and a cloudy day had LESS!

In like manner, we know by an individual’s fruits that there are varying measures of the Spirit within Christians. Therefore, let us all pray to have MORE of the Holy Spirit as we “GROW in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!” (2 Peter 3:18).

To understand more about what the

With no judgment apparent...



Does God Overlook SIN?

by Rex Sexton

It seems apparent that “sin” doesn’t matter anymore in modern Western society. “Right” and “wrong” are terms that are rarely used. High school graduates across the United States are told every year in commencement speeches to “find your own standards” and “discover the values that you want to live for.” But it wasn’t too many years ago that speakers on such occasions urged their audiences to “take the moral high ground” and “uphold the values that made our nation great.”

Children today often grow up confused and disoriented when it comes to understanding the concepts of sin and morality. And no wonder—from the time they are able to hear and learn, they’re pummeled with a barrage of confusing standards.

Children are told that violence against others is wrong—but see adults entertaining themselves by watching violence and murder on television and in movies. They are told that sexual relations out of wedlock are wrong—but witness, over a year of TV viewing, hundreds of sexual encounters between unmarried characters and hear thousands of innuendoes promoting immorality.

These are just two of many such examples. And the end result is apparent to many—children reaching adulthood without a moral compass or foundation.

It’s Not My Fault!

In his epic bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, the

late Dr. Allen Bloom observed, “There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative” (1987, p. 25). He later laments what has become the very real goal of modern educators, “The purpose of their education is not to make them scholars but to provide them with a moral virtue—openness.... There is no enemy other than the man who is not open to everything” (p. 27).

This moral confusion has influenced every aspect of our modern society and has led to people refusing to accept accountability for their actions. For an entire generation, the search has been on to replace the concept of sin and broken law with a “blame-something-else-and-rehabilitate” philosophy.

Our headlong rush to define ourselves as *victims* and shun responsibility is apparent from our court systems to our schools to our own entitlement programs. We want *sin without guilt*, and we have concocted

a philosophy that promises just that. “Victimism” has become so accepted in our culture that one might say the victim has become the very symbol—indeed the *mascot*—of modern society.

In *A Nation of Victims: The Decay of the American Character*, author Charles J. Sykes suggests that this is badly eroding the moral character of our nation. He observes, “Whatever the future of the American mind—and the omens are not propitious—the destiny of the American character is perhaps even more alarming.... The National Anthem has become The Whine.... There is always somebody else to blame.

“Now enshrined in law and jurisprudence, victimism is reshaping the fabric of society, including employment policies, criminal justice, education, urban politics, and in an increasingly Orwellian emphasis on ‘sensitivity’ in language. A community of interdependent citizens has been displaced by a society of resentful, competing, and self-interested individuals who have dressed their private annoyances in the garb of victimism” (1992, p. 13).

On virtually a daily basis we read in newspapers and magazines stories of criminals finding something to blame for the heinous crimes they’ve committed. The excuses are as imaginative as they are outrageous. Recent times have seen defenses based on bad dreams, the influence of drugs or alcohol, stress, past or present family problems, repressed memories, and job or financial difficulties, just to name a few! Quite a number of obviously guilty criminals have either been acquitted or received reduced sentences based on such arguments. But *everyone* faces stress. *Everyone* has family problems, financial difficulties or trouble on the job at times. Yet we aren’t all driven to *rape,*

steal or commit murder!

Consider what is arguably the most outrageous and preposterous excuse of them all. Dan White was convicted of the 1978 murders of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk. Yet he wasn’t convicted of the charge of murder, but rather the lesser charge of manslaughter. This due to his claim of “diminished capacity” resulting, in part, from having eaten large quantities of “junk food.” This legal strategy, now known as the infamous “Twinky Defense,” succeeded in reducing White’s punishment from a potential death sentence to only a five-year prison term. What’s next? Should surviving family members sue Hostess for having marketed Twinkies? Whatever happened to the idea of personal responsibility?

In years past, children who misbehaved or caused problems in school were more often than not punished and made to behave. Today they are more likely to be sent to a psychologist for analysis and therapy—often involving prescription drugs. This is not to say that all psychiatric care is wrong or that all drug therapy is groundless. We are more aware today of treatable medical conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). But ADHD is not the cause of all the problems children have in school. *Sometimes they just misbehave!* Sometimes they just need to be *disciplined* until unacceptable behavior is replaced by proper social conduct! But it seems easier to transfer the blame and avoid responsibility.

What kind of message is this sending to our children—the future of this nation?

Dr. John F. MacArthur, Jr., in his recent book, *The Vanishing Conscience*, makes this observation: “It is theoretically possible today in

America to commit the most monstrous crimes and get off scot-free, simply by blaming some imaginative mental or emotional disorder, or by inventing some affliction to explain why you are not responsible for what you have done” (1994, p. 22).

A Moral Perspective

But how does our Creator look at all of this? Since He has not intervened to stop crime and evil, can we assume He approves? Can we expect our nation to continue to receive what Abraham Lincoln called the “blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies... these bounties which are so constantly

We want sin without guilt, and we have concocted a philosophy that promises just that. “Victimism” has become so accepted in our culture that one might say the victim has become the very symbol—indeed the mascot—of modern society.

enjoyed... from... the ever watchful providence of Almighty God”? (Proclamation for Thanksgiving, Oct. 3, 1863).

Will we continue to receive these unparalleled blessings, or will we be held accountable as a nation at some future time? How about as individuals? Can we live as if there were no laws regulating behavior—and, thus, no sin? Or will we eventually *reap the consequences* of ignoring God’s commands? Will we always be able to explain away our

misdeeds by blaming something or someone else?

The Word of God is very plain on this subject—**denying guilt is futile and will only serve as a temporary diversion.**

In 1 John 3:4, sin is defined as “the transgression of the law” (KJV). When we break God’s law—which is “holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12)—we have acted contrary to our Creator’s instructions. We have “missed the mark” and separated ourselves from God: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you” (Is. 59:2).

One of the most important aspects of our Creator God is His mercy and love in dealing with humanity. He much prefers repentance and forgiveness over punishment. Some people think of God as harsh or anxious to punish—but, in fact, the exact opposite is true.

The human tendency to deny responsibility for sin or to try to cover it up is not new. Almost 3,000 years ago, wise King Solomon was inspired to write, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Prov. 28:13). Many years later, the Apostle John warned his audience about the same thing: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our

sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9).

So the biblically prescribed way to deal with sin is to confess our misdeeds and seek repentance and forgiveness. The Bible is very clear on this subject. It also describes a coming judgment and time of accountability—Jesus Christ spoke of it many times (cf. Matt. 10:15; 11:22; 12:36).

How then can we understand the world we now experience? Why is there seemingly no evidence of justice from a Higher Power?

The answer is that one of the most important aspects of our Creator God is His *mercy* and *love* in dealing with humanity. He much prefers repentance and forgiveness over punishment. Some people think of God as harsh or anxious to punish—but, in fact, the exact opposite is true.

Consider how God describes Himself: “Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, *slow to anger*, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm” (Joel 2:13). God is not eager to execute punishment but, rather, *tolerates* sinners with patience and longsuffering in order to give us a chance to repent and truly seek Him!

There are many such examples in the Bible. When God first appeared to Abraham and told him that his descendants would be given the land of Canaan as their possession, he was also informed that there would be a delay of 400 years. Why? Because, according to God, “the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (Gen. 15:16).

The term “Amorites” was used in a general sense at this time to refer to all the inhabitants of Canaan. The sins of the Amorites are listed for us in Leviticus 18:6-23. They include incest, adultery, idolatry, child sacrifice, homosexuality and bestiality. Even though

God had pronounced a curse on those peoples and decreed that they would lose their land, in His great mercy He delayed many years, giving them a chance to repent and change their ways. History shows that they did not forsake their sinful practices, but instead became even more perverse.

God says plainly through Jeremiah that He is merciful in dealing with nations: “The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, **if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it**” (Jer. 18:7-8).

The concept here of judgment being stayed upon repentance should be very encouraging to us. **Our God is merciful and long-suffering and is giving our nation TIME to repent and change**—but are we willing to listen and take heed?

One serious problem we face, however, is the human tendency to interpret lack of punishment as approval. We might reason that since God hasn’t stepped in to stop us from doing evil, it must be all right! Some come up with the erroneous conclusion that either God doesn’t exist or He doesn’t care. We like to think, “I’ve gotten away with it!”

But this is faulty reasoning. Let’s look at the very next words of the passage we just examined in Jeremiah 18: “And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it” (vv. 9-10). In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his

flesh will of the flesh reap corruption” (Gal. 6:7-8).

Now notice this passage from the book of Psalms and how it applies to our society today: “But to the wicked God says... ‘What right have you... seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you? When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit... **These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you**’” (50:16-21).

It is easy for humans to reason that, since God is silent for now, He must approve! There is no punishment or penalty for breaking His laws! But God continues with a strong warning to nations and individuals who reason this way: “I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (vv. 21-22).

What History Teaches

Even though God has often sent His servants to warn nations or societies, the sad truth of history is that precious few have listened or responded.

Take the example of Noah. Genesis 6:3 records that God gave the society of Noah’s day a time limit—120 years—during which time Noah warned them both through words (2 Peter 2:5) and building the Ark. But the people refused to listen. The sad record for us is that “the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen. 6:11). All but eight people were drowned in the Flood as a result.

The same sad story of Israel and other nations refusing to listen to God’s warnings is chronicled

throughout the Bible. However, these accounts are recorded for our benefit, so that we might not sin as they did (1 Cor. 10:6).

But let’s examine a society that *did* repent from sin, heeding the warnings God gave. The Prophet Jonah was sent to warn the city of Nineveh because of the great sins of its inhabitants (Jonah 1:1; 3:4). And “the people of Nineveh *believed God*” (v. 5). They turned from their sins, humbled themselves through fasting and asked God’s forgiveness. And the result? “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and **God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it!**” (v. 10).

Lessons for Today

So what do these things have to do with us today? We need to look at two aspects of God’s reaction to sin: 1) how does it apply to our nations; and 2) how does it apply to us as individuals.

Nationally: We need to understand that God is aware of the moral slide and degeneration of Western nations. There is a time of coming judgment. He will not always look the other way. (For a fascinating study about the heritage of the American and British peoples and how God’s promises apply to us today, write for our free brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*.)

Speaking prophetically about our time, God inspired Hosea to record for us: “Israel is not hidden from Me... Israel is defiled. They do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God, for the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and they do not know the LORD... Among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure... I will pour out my wrath on them like water” (Hosea 5:3-4, 9-10).

Make no mistake about it, this and many other prophecies are strong warnings for our nations that a time of punishment is coming if we do not change our ways!

But even in punishment, God is merciful once His purpose has been accomplished. Hosea continues, “I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will diligently seek me” (v. 15).

So God’s *purpose* in punishing our people will be to *bring us back* to seeking and obeying Him!

Individually: Each one of us must understand that God is aware of everything we do, say and think (Luke 12:7; Ps. 139:7-12). We will be judged for how we have lived our lives (Rom. 2:5-6). We must not think that, because God has allowed us to live a life of sin and go our own way, He approves or will not eventually bring us into judgment. No matter what we think, as far as God is concerned, we have not *gotten away* with anything.

The Apostle Peter recorded a very powerful warning for all of us: “But they will have to give an accounting to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Peter 4:5 NRSV).

As we witness the society around us degenerating and becoming more godless and humanistic, don’t be led into thinking that somehow God approves of evil or won’t eventually intervene. The delay is simply that God, in His great mercy, love and kindness, is giving both nations and individuals space to repent and seek Him before His end-time judgment is carried out. Let’s use the time God is giving in His mercy. As we’re told in Isaiah 55:6-7, “**seek the LORD while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near... For He will abundantly pardon!**”

ANTICHRIST (continued from page 7)

the Ten Commandments while *fully in the human flesh!*

But the doctrine of antichrist says just the OPPOSITE. And although Satan is clever enough not to directly teach people to SIN—the antichrist doctrine nevertheless opens the door for them to *regularly break* one or more of the commandments of God with impunity and still feel that they are somehow “good Christians.”

This clever reasoning—taught in most seminaries all over the world—goes like this: Since God’s law is spiritual and we are only physical, we CANNOT keep the holy, righteous law of God. So Christ had to keep it *for* us. Now we just “accept Christ” and His righteousness is somehow “imputed” to us—without any requirement for righteous works.

The above reasoning then relies on a *whole series* of misunderstandings and perversions of the writings of the Apostle Paul. Misguided theologians somehow put a clever “twist” on literally dozens of verses from Paul’s letters to directly CONTRADICT the plain, clear teachings of Jesus Christ, of His closest disciple, John, and of His brother, James. That is one reason for Martin Luther’s famous statement that the book of James was an “epistle of straw.” Luther HATED the fact that James directly taught obedience to the Ten Commandments (cf. James 2:8-12).

The Apostle Peter was even inspired to warn us that “Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Yes, Peter said that

men would “twist” Paul’s writings *to their own destruction!* Peter continues this inspired warning: “Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position” (v. 17 NIV).

A warning not to be carried away by the error of “LAWLESS MEN”? Absolutely. For that is precisely the

way Peter knew that deceived men would “twist” Paul’s writings—into an excuse to DISOBEY the spiritual law of God, the Ten Commandments!

The Crux of the Matter

The clearest passage of all explaining *antichrist* is found in 2 John 6-7: “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. **For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.**” In this passage, we see first of all how John defines love: “that we walk according to His commandments.” In context, the “commandments” being spoken of are clearly the commandments of God the Father (cf. v. 4)—not some “new” commandments of Jesus. Then John reminds his readers that the commandments were those they had heard *from the beginning*. In other words, the clear teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 19:17 and elsewhere.

Then, in verse 7, John warns that the “deceivers” do not teach “Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.” He describes such teaching as “antichrist.” The significance of Jesus Christ “as coming in the

flesh” is that—as in the original Greek—the present continuous tense is here used, denoting something that is *now happening*.

So John teaches that Christ DID come (in His human experience) fully in the human flesh and set us an EXAMPLE by faithfully keeping His Father’s commandments. But there’s more to it. In 2 John 7, God inspired John to reveal that Christ is NOW

coming in the human flesh as well.

How?

As we have already seen, Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23). Through the Holy Spirit, Christ and the Father actually LIVE within the truly converted Christian, guiding him, inspiring him and EMPOWERING him to keep the commandments and live God’s way of life!

The Apostle Paul was also inspired to make this very plain when he 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 the “key.”

Religious opponents challenge the real Christian by saying, “You CAN’T keep the Ten Commandments! They are spiritual and you are only physical.” But one who is led by God’s Holy Spirit may truly reply, “You are right. In my own human strength, I can’t. But to the degree I yield to God’s Holy Spirit, I can and I will keep God’s commandments! Christ within me helps me not to kill, steal, lie, commit adultery, covet, dishonor my parents, break God’s

Sabbath, practice idolatry, take God’s name in vain or have another ‘god’ before the true God. I may slip in some point occasionally, but I will then repent and confess my sin to God and have His forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9). Then I quickly get back on God’s path and, through His Spirit, GROW in grace and knowledge. I am *not perfect*. But, through Christ living His life within me, I am GROWING

toward perfection and walking in God’s law as my basic way of life.”

Christ Lives Within the True Christian

The doctrine of antichrist, then, is that Christ does *not* literally live His life within His people today. It is the false teaching that Christians today can live a *different kind of life* from what Jesus lived and still be His true followers. It often includes the idea that Christ was righteous *in our stead*, and therefore *we* don’t have to be. We just accept Him and His righteousness is imputed to us. Effectively, God “kids Himself” and pretends that we are really righteous when we actually are NOT!

This doctrine is a damnable LIE!

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). He will live the same kind of life in you and me today that He lived nearly 2,000 years ago when He walked this earth in the human flesh. At that time, He continually taught *obedience* to all of God’s commandments (Matt. 5:19). We have seen His answer to the young man asking Him how to inherit eternal life: “Keep the commandments” (19:17). And near the end of His physical life, He instructed His disciples, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My

Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10).

There are many, many false ministers today who are teaching the doctrine of antichrist, a doctrine that sanctions *disobedience* to God’s commandments—a doctrine of “no works.” The Apostle Paul said of these ministers, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no

wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be *according to their works*” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). You will notice here that Satan has ministers who *appear* to be righteous. Ironically, their end—their final reward—will be according to their *works*, the very thing they seek to deny.

God intends for us to *obey* His commandments, *do* good works and *live* by His every word. Once you get this principle straight, you can clearly understand the spirit of antichrist and how to test whether any idea or doctrine is of God. Then, by diligent study of God’s Word and by constant prayer, you will come to a deeper understanding of the real purpose of your life and experience closer contact with the Living God than you may ever have dreamed possible.

You will come to see who truly *is* of God—His true Church, which has faithfully proclaimed the same Gospel He sent through Jesus Christ. In this end time, that Message of obedience to God’s Kingdom and rule is to be preached by His Church as a witness to all nations (Matt. 24:14). You are reading that Message this very instant!


In Revelation 12:17, the true Church of God is described as a

woman persecuted by the devil. This Church is a remnant. Its members are those “*who keep the commandments of God*, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The true saints of God are described in like manner in Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those *who keep the commandments of God* and the faith of Jesus.”

Yes, Jesus Christ is to live and dwell within His people today through the Holy Spirit. To the degree they yield to Him, their lives will be ones of *full and complete obedience*, just as Jesus’ life was in the flesh. Their *customs*, their *traditions*, their *way of life* will be the same as His in every respect, because *He does not change*. And He will be LIVING within them! Then Christ and the Father can be absolutely sure that Their people are *fully surrendered* to Them. And They can continually impart to true Christians Their very divine nature and CHARACTER—and so prepare them to be KINGS and PRIESTS in the literal Kingdom of God soon to be set up on this earth.

The true Christian, then, can say with the Apostle Paul, “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).

Examine yourself honestly. Have you really understood Christianity before? Is Christ really living *His life* in you? Do you have the spiritual “backbone” to *act* on the knowledge you have just received?

If you sincerely wish to understand more, be sure to write for two very powerful and revealing booklets. They are titled, *What Is a True Christian?* and *The Ten Commandments*. These booklets will be sent absolutely FREE upon your request. Write to our address nearest you listed on page three of this magazine. 

THEIR OWN HAND... (continued from page 15)

does not impart instant health and remove all trace of illness. But it does give us the *very faith of Jesus Christ* to help us lead a Christian life (cf. Gal. 2:20 KJV). And if we have that faith, we can boldly come before God and ask that He heal us of our physical afflictions (cf. James 5:13-15; 1 Peter 2:24).

Nor does God's Holy Spirit automatically banish depression. Some Spirit-begotten Christians *are* depressed at certain times in their lives. This depression may even last for quite a while. Jeremiah is sometimes referred to as the "Weeping Prophet." His sadness is evident in the book of Lamentations, which God inspired him to write. Joseph, as well, probably had many dark days during the seemingly endless years he spent in Pharaoh's prison. So as Christians, we may be depressed. But God gives us the means to *manage* depression. "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).

God gives the spiritual help needed to overcome—or at least control—the very underlying *causes* of suicidal thoughts and feelings.

A Course of Action

Does it sometimes seem like living just isn't worth the bother? Have you ever had thoughts of ending your own life? Do you suffer from severe, perhaps even debilitating, depression?

If so, you need to take some positive steps. Make sure your depressed state of mind does not have a *physical* cause. Although most mental and emotional problems have a spiritual component, some are caused by physiological

defects or imbalances. These can sometimes be treated successfully.

It is also crucial that you seek competent help with the problem. Talk about your feelings with others, preferably someone with some training in counseling. Some excellent choices would be your minister, your school counselor or a suicide-prevention hotline, which can be found in your phone book or with the help of directory assistance. Sharing your feelings can raise your spirits. It may seem as if a burden

Advance Warning

People who take their own lives usually signal their intentions in the weeks and months before their deaths. Here

- 1) Withdrawal from friends and family.
- 2) Neglect of personal appearance.
- 3) Change in eating and sleeping patterns.
- 4) Giving away personal belongings.
- 5) Loss of interest in normally enjoyable activities.
- 6) Substance abuse.
- 7) Poorer quality of schoolwork.
- 8) Personality changes.

(Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, quoted by Teen magazine.)

has been lifted from your shoulders. More importantly, you will have access to the wisdom and perspective of someone else—someone who's been trained to help you.

The last point in this list is actually the *first* in importance. SEEK GOD! Ask Him to intervene in your life, to intercede in your problems and to straighten out your very thought processes. **And learn about the awesome future He has in store for you!**

If you have thoughts of ending your own life, you need to learn that there is a God who cares for you in a very personal way. He wants you to repent and become His son or daughter (2 Cor. 6:18)—a member of the

very Family of God! This is, in fact, the grand PURPOSE for which mankind was created—the purpose for which YOU were created! To this end, He bestows gifts and blessings. God often removes obstacles for His children—He heals our diseases and comforts our troubled minds. But He doesn't remove *all* of our problems in this life. Not because He doesn't care, but because He uses our various trials to test our faith and patience, and to help us learn valuable *spiritual* lessons (James 1:2-4).

Realize also that suicide is no solution—nor an escape. It is self-murder and a sin against God. There IS a life beyond this one. Why enter into it with a murder charge when you could *choose life* (Deut. 30:19) and reap blessings both now and forevermore?

If the trials in your life seem too great to endure, pray to God that He intervene in them. His Word tells you to cast all your care upon Him, because "He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). God *wants* us to be freed from heavy burdens that rob us of the joy of living. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest.*"

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light**" (Matt. 11:28-30). In asking forgiveness for whatever sins you may have committed, pray as King David did that God would restore to you the joy of His salvation (Ps. 51:12).

And be comforted that you are so precious and of such great value to God that He gave His only Son so that you might be saved. God realizes just how valuable you are. You need to come to that same realization. You can't just throw something away that's worth so very much! 