

THE WORLD AHEAD



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

January-February 1998

ANSWERS to *UNANSWERED* PRAYER

And on page 14— *Why Can't We Solve Our Problems?*

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EDITORIAL

A Key to Eternity

Our lead article in this issue is about a topic that is truly a “key” to eternity. None of us is perfect—God knows that. But despite our weaknesses and imperfections, learning to contact the true God of creation in a way that brings genuine *answers* is something that everyone needs and nearly everyone wants.

The March 31, 1997, issue of *Newsweek* magazine ran an important feature article on *prayer*. Titled “Is God Listening?,” it printed the surprising results of a poll conducted by the magazine. This poll found that fully 54% of

American adults report praying on a daily basis. And that’s good. But unfortunately, the examples and interviews in the article made it quite clear that there are wildly divergent views out there about *what kind* of God people think they are praying to. *What kind* of prayer they may offer to their concept of God. And *what kind* of “answer” they expect to receive.

The *Newsweek* article quoted Gordon Kaufman, a professor emeritus at Harvard Divinity School, as saying, “I prefer to think of God as creativity, rather than as creator.” Kaufman went on to explain that he feels the only kind of prayer that works is “meditation—trying to understand faults, mistakes where I’ve gone wrong.”

But although personal meditation and “thinking about things” often helps people feel better about themselves, is *this* how Jesus Christ prayed? Is *this* the kind of prayer that brings *genuine answers*?

If you believe the Bible to be God’s revelation to mankind, and if you believe that God is a *personal* Being as the Bible attests, then our lead article will help you immeasurably in your prayer life. For you will be shown specific biblical “keys” that can help you *contact* the Governor of the universe and thereby receive powerful *answers*. Please take TIME to read and *study* this thorough article. It can provide a really powerful “lift” to your contact with the Creator.

And, on a personal note, let us hear from you! Let us know how our articles are affecting you—one way or the other. We want to help, to serve and to inspire. So please give us your suggestions and comments.



Roderick C. Meredith
Editor in Chief

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ANSWERS to UNANSWERED PRAYER

by Roderick C. Meredith

**Why doesn't God really answer most people's prayers?
Do you know how to pray in a way that will get real results?**



I know that what I'm about to say is not "politically correct." But let me put it this way: Why should you expect the God of the Bible to answer the prayers of people who pray to some other god? Who pray in a wrong manner? Who regularly disobey the true God? Who ask for the wrong things?

The answer is simple—you shouldn't! Make no mistake. You have no reason to expect *real answers* to your prayers unless you pray to the *true* God in the *right* way. This may seem outrageous to those who take Christianity for granted—just another of the many religions in the world. But the truth is that literally *millions* of people in our Western, supposedly Christian, world have NO IDEA who the true God is or *how* they should pray to Him.

Oh, I'm quite aware that many

people repeat some kind of "mumbo jumbo" or "mantra" to themselves, and end up "feeling better." And since problems oftentimes work themselves out, many people feel that they've had an "answer" to their prayers when they really haven't. This often goes hand in hand with the practices of "mind science" or the "power of positive thinking."

But that's NOT the kind of "answer" I'm talking about in this article. What I mean is direct, divine INTERVENTION by the personal God of the Bible—the *Creator* of the heavens and the earth and active *Ruler* of the entire universe! How can you and your loved ones get *this kind* of answer to your prayers? Although other points could be offered, I want to set forth a number of basic "keys" to answered prayer. I am *positive* that if you follow these points literally, sincerely and wholeheartedly, you will begin to receive genuine ANSWERS to your prayers. And they may be so real

and so forceful that it will *surprise* many who have never experienced this kind of power before.

Key #1—Pray Sincerely to the True God

It is absolutely vital that you pray to the very *real* God of the Bible if you expect genuine answers to your prayers. He reveals Himself to mankind in many ways—in creation, in the Bible, in divine intervention in world affairs that He has specifically foretold and in direct ANSWERS to those who seek and obey Him.

The Apostle Paul was inspired to describe the true God in this way: "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live" (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

In our modern, ecumenical approach to religion, we may *think* that praying to some vague "blob" off in the sky or to an idol of Buddha is just the same as praying to the CREATOR—the God of Abraham, Isaac, Israel and Jesus Christ. **But it isn't the same at all!**

The true God was revealed by Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:27). He told one of His disciples, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me...? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (John 14:9-11).

We read of Jesus Christ acknowledging that God was a loving, divine Person—a "Father." And we see the Father acting *through* Christ to heal the sick, to comfort the downcast and to teach those whom He calls to keep the Ten Commandments as a *way of life* (Matt. 19:17). This should certainly help us to better understand God's character and His desire for us.

Christ also set an example for us in praying to the Father: "Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: '*Father*, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You'" (John 17:1). Again, when He taught His disciples the outline—the proper approach to prayer—He said, "In this manner, therefore, pray: *Our Father in heaven*, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we

forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matt. 6:9-13).

So once again, Jesus revealed that the God to whom we should pray is a Father. And what does Christ reveal about Him? He is "in heaven." He has a Kingdom or Government that will be set up *on this earth*. He—as our Father—is One who can give us daily bread, forgive our sins, deliver us from Satan and bring us into that everlasting Kingdom.

In describing this true God, whom so very few even today are acquainted with, the Apostle Paul stated, "Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 'God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their habitations'" (Acts 17:23-26).

We learn more about the true God from the Old Testament. The great Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, was told that he would be driven from his kingdom "until you know that the Most High *rules* in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (Dan. 4:32). And this God will not share preeminence with any other. He inspired Isaiah to write, "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For **I am God, and there is no other**. I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath" (Is. 45:22-23).

This is an *awesome* God, with limitless power and glory! When you get down on both knees and lift up your hands in prayer to the great CREATOR of the universe, you should think about *whom* you are praying to and "hallow" or praise His name, as Jesus instructed. Remember that He is not only the Creator, but the active GOVERNOR of the entire universe—guiding the rise and fall of nations according to His will. He is the One in charge of the weather—sending "rain in due season" (cf. Deut. 28:12)—or at times drought and destruction upon those nations that must be punished (vv. 24-25).

Yet, if you *surrender* to Him, *obey* Him and *serve* Him, God will become your loving Father, your Protector, your Healer, the Giver of "every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17) and the One who has abounding love and mercy. "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:11-14).

Be sure you always pray specifically to *this* God—the *true* God—**and to no other**. As you begin your prayer, think about whom you are praying to and consciously worship this Great God who gives you life and breath.

Key #2—Study the Bible

It naturally follows that praying to the true God involves *believing what He says*. And we find His words—instructing human beings how they should live—in the Holy Bible. It reveals essential knowledge that we could not acquire in any other way. It is God's "Instruction Manual"

for humanity. It tells us who God is, what He is like and how we ought to serve Him. In its pages we find God's own instructions as to how we ought to pray to Him.

But you will not receive this full instruction by just "going to church" or by carelessly reading bits and pieces of the Bible for comfort or inspiration. God commands us in His Word, "**Earnestly STUDY to show yourself approved to God, a workman unashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth**" (2 Tim. 2:15 J.P. Green's *Literal Translation*).

To know God, to understand His will and to BELIEVE in His promises, you need to regularly STUDY His inspired Word in an orderly way—just as you might study a science textbook or a volume on history. A good place to start is the book of Matthew—the first book in the New Testament. Read this through slowly and carefully—noting *what Jesus actually said*, paying particular attention to the many examples of answered prayer.

It is beyond the scope of this article to thoroughly prove the divine inspiration of the Bible. But if you really want to, you can prove that the prophecies given ONLY in the Bible have either already been fulfilled in *literal detail* in the past, or are now *beginning* to be fulfilled in this excit-

thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

So when you read specific promises in the Bible, *ask* for the Almighty to fulfill them in your life. When you see that Jesus and others asked for certain things, realize that this is an *example* for you to follow. In *all* your prayers, follow the *example* of Christ and the apostles. Let your prayers be the same as theirs when you face similar trials and difficulties.

What about King David of Israel and the other great prophets of the distant past? Their heartfelt prayers and the awesome *deliverance* God granted them likewise instructs us and bolsters our faith: "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11).

One of the reasons King David was *a man after God's own heart* (1 Sam. 13:14) is not only that he *obeyed* God, but that he walked and talked with Him and constantly worshiped and **ADORED** Him. You will clearly see this attitude *all through the Psalms*: "Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch

promises you find in this holy book.

Key #3—Deeply Repent of Your Sins

Although from time to time God hears the prayers of *anyone* who sincerely cries out to Him in time of need, He is not *bound by His Word* to do this. That is why men and women sickened by the horrors of war have demanded, "Where was GOD at the Battle of Leningrad, when *hundreds of thousands* perished?" They have asked, "Where was GOD when the Jews, Poles, Czechs, Danes and Dutch were being herded into gas chambers in World War II?"

God's Word answers, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. **But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear**" (Is. 59:1-2).

The same principle is found in the New Testament. A man Jesus healed of blindness stated, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him" (John 9:31).

Now it's not our job to psychoanalyze or "spiritually dissect" those who have not had their prayers

do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22). This New Testament scripture clearly shows us that we receive ANSWERS to our prayers when we KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS!

Please be *honest* with yourself. It's easy to rationalize or to "reason around" this very clear scriptural teaching about obeying God's law. But if you want *real* answers to your prayers, you need to REPENT of breaking the Ten Commandments—which is defined as SIN (1 John 3:4 KJV). And you need to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior (Acts 2:38). Then—through the help of the promised Holy Spirit—you'll need to SURRENDER more and more each day to let Jesus Christ LIVE His obedient life in you. Keep in mind what the Apostle Paul declared: "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).

If you would like more information about the need to keep the Ten Commandments and *how to do so*, please write for our vital and informative booklet titled *The Ten Commandments*. It will be sent absolutely free upon request.

this manner, you can be ASSURED of having more *powerful* answers to your prayers than ever before!

Key #4—Forgive Others

Another vital key to answered prayer is our willingness to truly FORGIVE others. Frankly, our loving Father in heaven simply does not hear those who come to Him in a spirit of revenge, bitterness or hatred. Immediately after giving us the "Lord's Prayer"—the *outline* prayer describing the right general approach to talking with God—Jesus went on to instruct His followers, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14-15).

The Prophet Isaiah was inspired to warn us NOT to come into God's presence while *oppressing* others, *accusing* others or being wrapped up in serving only the *self*. Isaiah wrote, "If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness" (Is. 58:9-10).

Jesus gives us the same admonition: "Therefore if you bring your

in whether or not God will hear us as we pray. His inspired Word tells us, "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Is. 66:2).

Key #5—Seek God's Will

Another key to successful prayer is to be absolutely sure that—as far as possible—you align *your* will and *your* requests with GOD'S will. As you zealously *study* the Bible and yield to let Christ live within you, His will increasingly replaces your own. It affects *how* you pray. You come to realize that God has made *all* men and women in His image—that He will "call" ALL mankind to understanding and repentance *in His time*. With this in mind, you will not be praying just for your *own* good, but for the good of others as well. Then you can sincerely say to God, as Jesus did, "not *My* will, but *Yours*, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Remember this key phrase from the outline prayer in Matthew 6: "YOUR WILL be done on earth as it is in heaven" (v. 10). *We all* need to focus on this as we pray. What is really best for us and everyone concerned *in the long run*? Only GOD knows for sure.

On the other hand, the Bible contains literally dozens of promises and/or direct indications of what God has done or will do in regard to answered prayer. If we pray *in faith* that God will hear us—and *in accordance with His will*—we may be sure that He is listening. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us**. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

(continued on page 27)

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

ing end-time age in which we live. When you understand the detail and the breadth of these prophecies, you can see that God practically *signed His name* to the Bible—clearly showing that this book is of DIVINE inspiration! The Apostle Paul wrote, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete,

out the heavens like a curtain.... I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being" (104:1-2, 33).

Leaving behind the memorized, often meaningless, prayers of mainstream religion, begin to really STUDY the teachings and examples relating to prayer *in your own Bible*. Let the inspired Word of God teach you *how* to pray and *what* to ask for. And BELIEVE the teachings and the

answered in the past. But we all have a DUTY to *ask ourselves*, "Do I worship the true God? Do I do His will?"

Jesus said, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). Do *you* keep the Ten Commandments? Or do you make excuses? The Apostle John was inspired to write, "**And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and**

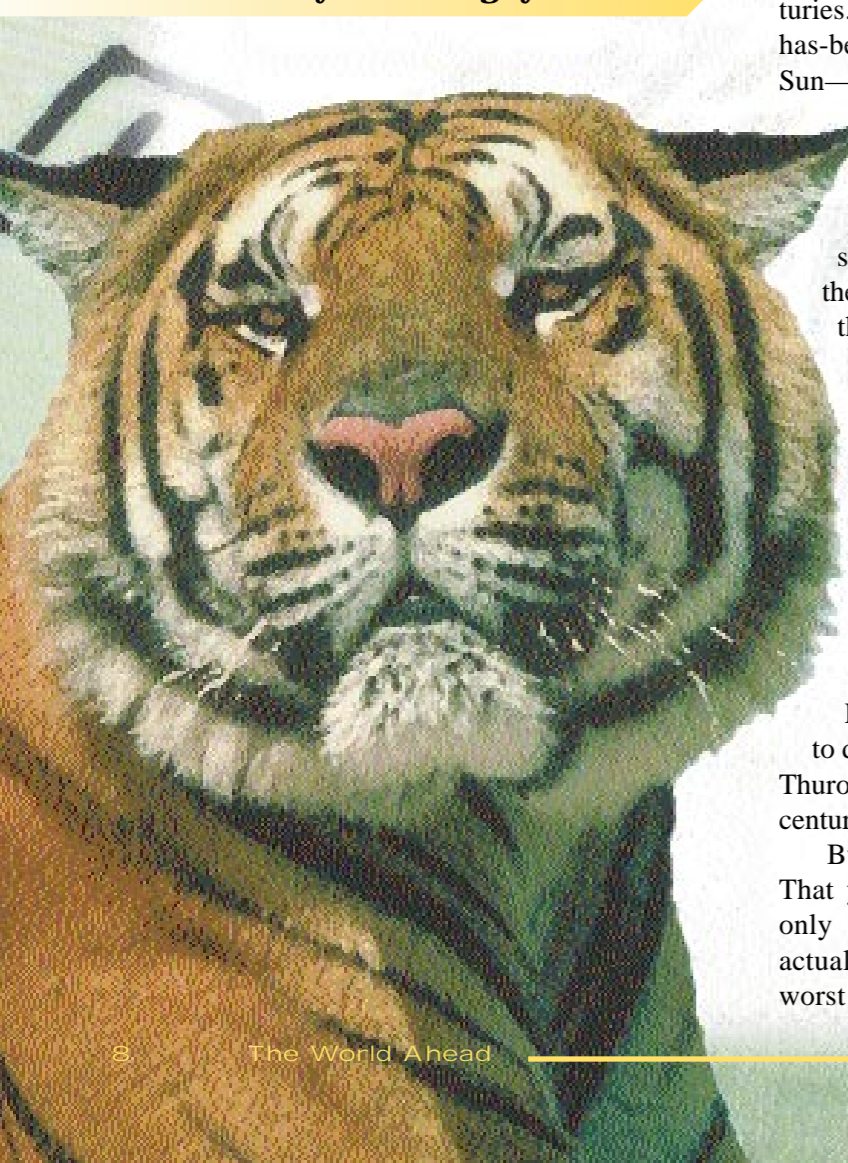
As you GROW in *grace* and in the *knowledge* of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18), He will live His life in you more and more fully over the course of your Christian life. Certainly, you won't be "perfect" all at once! NO human being has ever been perfect except Jesus Christ Himself. But you WILL be walking in the "way" of the Ten Commandments by surrendering to Him. By "walking with Christ" in

gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

So we need to come to God in a humble, repentant and *forgiving* attitude. Otherwise, as Jesus said, *God will not forgive us!* A spirit of humility and mercy is a key element

Japan and the AILING ASIAN TIGERS

by John H. Ogwyn



The “Black Monday” crash of October 1987 saw the Dow Jones Industrial Average lose nearly 25% of its value, its largest one-day decline in history. So as the tenth anniversary of that fateful event approached this past autumn, all eyes turned to the stock market.

Eerily, almost to the day, the Dow Jones once again plunged dramatically—experiencing its steepest daily decline since Black Monday. But this time for a different reason. It seems that the Pacific nations sometimes called the “Asian Tigers” had the economic “flu” and the whole world became *infected!*

Ten years before, *Newsweek* magazine had run a special report titled “The Pacific Century.” The article declared, “As the year 2000 approaches, Japan and the other trading powers of Asia are moving into position to dominate the world economy” (Feb. 22, 1988, p. 43). And indeed, the conventional wisdom of recent years has held that the future belongs to Japan and smaller Asian economic powers like Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. After all, decline was strikingly evident in the Anglo-Saxon powers—Britain and the United States—that had so dominated the global economy for the past two centuries. And Europe was simply dismissed as some tired has-been. Japan, however—the Land of the Rising Sun—seemed itself to be on the rise.

But that’s not the case anymore. In the space of a single decade, these economic powerhouses of the Far East have suffered a severe reversal of fortune. Can they recover? In only two short years from now, we will enter the final year of the 20th century, the semi-mystical year 2000. Will the new century be dominated by rebounding and rejuvenated powers of Asia? Or will we see some unexpected newcomer on the block?

Asia’s Boom Goes Bust

As recently as 1991, Japan could look back on three decades of remarkable economic achievement. Its economy had grown by an average of 6.5% annually. And with Japan as the economic engine, smaller Asian nations such as Hong Kong and South Korea hitched on for their own ride to dizzying economic heights. Noted economist Lester Thurow was even so bold as to assert that the 21st century “belongs to Japan.”

But by 1992, Japan’s economy began to head south. That year its gross domestic product (GDP) grew by only slightly more than 1%. And in 1993 the GDP actually *declined*. The ensuing recession has been the worst Japan has experienced since World War II. It has

also had a noticeable effect on the economies of the surrounding Asian Tigers.

Japan’s economic boom in the 80s had, to a great extent, been fueled by a bubble of ever-increasing real estate prices. But in 1992, the Japanese real estate market began a precipitous slide, with real property ultimately losing about 50% of its value. This, in turn, left a burden of bad debt in the neighborhood of \$1 trillion! Production of manufactured goods began to decline as well. The automobile industry, for example, manufactured 20% fewer vehicles. And for the first time, Japan, the “home of lifetime employment,” began to experience layoffs. As *Time* magazine stated it, “rarely has a country fallen so far so fast as Japan has in the past five years” (“The Failed Miracle,” April 22, 1996, p. 60).

Tokyo has aspired, and still does, to be one of the major players in the global financial system, which is still largely centered in New York and London. Toward that end, while Japan has nearly half of the world’s investable savings, much of it is funneled into financial markets abroad.

But in order for the Japanese to bring their own financial institutions up to world-class standards, they have some major “housecleaning” to do. *Newsweek* magazine pointed out in an article titled, “Big Bang or Bust,” that *gangsters* “have long enjoyed a central if shadowy role in business in Japan—far more than the Mafia does in Italy” (Sept. 1, 1997). In the 1980s it wasn’t uncommon for developers to use *yakuza*, or gangsters, who “specialized” in evicting tenants to clear the way for new construction.

Consider the problems Japan is now facing in dealing with the debt left over from the bursting of its credit bubble. What amounts to billions of dollars was loaned by bankers to *yakuza*-connected speculators. *Newsweek*’s article explains, “As a result, they’re literally *terrified* to collect much of the \$300 billion to \$600 billion in bad debt that still ensnares the banking system, or to foreclose on the collateral. Why? Two and a half years ago, when Sumitomo Bank got a little aggressive collecting loans in Nagoya, its branch manager was *killed*. More than half of Japan’s bad real-estate debt is somehow gang-linked, estimates Teikoku Databank, a leading compiler of financial stats” (Sept. 1, 1997, p. 45).

Global Implications

We all know that today’s global transportation network can quickly spread contagious disease from one corner of the earth to another. In like manner, today’s rapid global *economic* network spreads *financial* illness. Politicians and economists had hoped that Asia’s stock market meltdown would have been limited to that region. But the sell-off in stocks was too powerful to

Japanese investors and businessmen watch tumbling stock prices at a Tokyo securities company on October 28. The Tokyo stock market’s key index tumbled more than 4% in its third-steepest point loss of 1997—bruised by a plunge on Wall Street and turmoil in Asian markets, recording its lowest close since July 25, 1995—Reuters.

contain. Markets were impacted in Europe, Latin America and the United States. And while the American stock market regained the lost ground within several weeks, some other nations’ markets did not fare so well.

Just what triggered this worldwide economic “sneezing”? As China was becoming more competitive in the world export market, many Southeast Asian nations saw their share of that market dwindling. In July 1997, Thailand decided to take action. The Thai government felt that the only way to successfully compete with the Chinese was to devalue its currency—effectively reducing the price of Thai-manufactured goods for foreign consumers.

What began in Thailand set in motion a wave of speculation regarding other currencies in the region. Speculators were betting that Thailand’s neighbors would have to follow suit with devaluations of their own. When Taiwan made a decision in October to let its currency value slide, Hong Kong’s was left as the only major Asian currency that hadn’t been devalued. But instead of “following the leader,” Hong Kong chose on October 23 to raise interest rates to 300% as an alternative. The next day, Hong Kong’s stock market plummeted, losing 10% of its value overnight as investors raced to sell stock. Apparently, this current crisis has pushed Japan even *deeper* into recession.

For more than two decades, the nations of the Far East have had some of the most rapidly growing economies in the world. But *U.S. News & World Report*, quoting John Markin, a principal in a leading

New York investment firm, states that “excess Asian capacity will, in effect, let those countries ‘export deflation,’ with lower prices around the world. That will lead to competitive devaluations and rising protectionism of a sort not seen since the Depression of the 1930s” (Nov. 10, 1997, p. 43).

In the United States there has already been increasing protectionist sentiment—directed particularly at Japan and some of the Asian Tigers. In fact, a number of senators and congressmen have called for punitive tariffs against Japan. What worries many analysts is the parallel of these actions to those that helped precipitate the Great Depression, and which ultimately contributed to World War II. And the global economy *today* is far more inter-linked than it was in those days. So leaders in Europe know that what happens in Asia and the United States will most likely affect *them*. They are concerned about what lies ahead for their future prosperity and security.

Japan in the Bible

Can we know for sure which nations will dominate the opening years of the 21st century and beyond? In the Holy Bible, the Creator God states that He has declared the end from the beginning (Is. 46:10). And throughout Scripture, He shows that He has a great plan and purpose being worked out on this earth. Even the rise and fall of nations and empires has been determined beforehand by the Great God. The Apostle Paul declared to a crowd of men in the city of Athens that the Almighty “has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

That’s right. God sketches the broad outline of the future in the pages of your Bible. Even though the real meaning of much of Bible prophecy was hidden from the original human authors (cf. Dan. 12:8-9), we are told that at the time of the end the wise would understand (v. 10). And who *are* the wise? They are identified in Psalm 111 as those true servants of God who keep His commandments (v. 10).

But one key to understanding Bible prophecy is to realize that when today’s nations are referred to, they are not usually called by their modern names. Most often, the name used is derived from some ancient ancestor. The American and British people, for example, are often referred to by the name of our ancient progenitor Israel (please write for our free brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*).

But what about other nations? What about Japan? To search for the biblical identity of modern nations, it’s often best to begin with the genealogical listing in

Genesis 10. This is commonly referred to as the “Table of Nations.” Here we read of the three sons of Noah and of their descendants. In verse 32 we are told that those individuals listed were the ancestors of all the nations of the earth after the Flood.

The first of Noah’s sons mentioned is Japheth, followed by a list of *his* sons and certain grandsons. History demonstrates that there was clearly an eastern and western branch of Japheth’s family. His son Magog, for example, is identified by virtually all Bible commentators as the ancestor of the yellow-skinned *Mongols*. Yet many white and olive-skinned peoples of southern Europe, such as the Greeks, Italians and Spanish, have traditionally been traced back to Elishah, Kittim and Tarshish—all sons of Javan.

But how could such divergence exist among the descendants of one man? If Japheth himself were Caucasian and his wife Oriental, genetic principles would allow their union to give rise to descendants who took after either side of the family. As a result of the marriages of his sons and grandsons, then, clearly identifiable Western and Oriental branches of his family would soon develop and establish their own cultural identities.

So who specifically are the Japanese people and their Southeast Asian neighbors? Under what name are they mentioned in Bible prophecy? And what does their future hold? The historical record tells us who the ancient ancestors of these modern peoples really are.

The modern Japanese trace their lineage primarily through two peoples—the *Yamato* and the *Kumaso*. The *Kumaso* are considered by most historians to be of Malay or Indonesian origin. This explains why many of the customs of modern Japan can be linked with Malaysian culture. Many of the peasant class in Japan are descendants of the *Kumaso*.

Descendants of the *Yamato*, on the other hand, have constituted the ruling class that has controlled Japan for more than two millennia. The emperor and all of the upper classes trace their lineage through this group. But where did the *Yamato* come from? A.L. Sadler, a professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Sydney, wrote about this people in his book, *A Short History of Japan*:

Judging from the Caucasian and often Semitic physiognomy seen in the aristocratic type of Japanese, the Yamato were mainly of Caucasic, perhaps Iranian, origin. These were the warriors, the conquerors of Japan, and afterwards the aristocracy, modified to some extent by mingling with the Mongoloid rank and file.... The colour of the Japanese does not differ at all from that of South European races like Spain and Italy [p. xi].

Dr. Sadler goes on to state, “The Alpine or Central European race... is of much the same type as the ordinary Japanese.... Some Japanese ethnologists favour the theory that the *Yamato* came from Central Asia” (p. xii). The earliest written records of Japan, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, record the tradition that the *Yamato* people came from the West under the leadership of Jimmo Tenno, the first emperor, in the seventh century B.C. According to their legends they were led to the “rising sun” following the sign of a three-legged “sun crow.”

The insignia of a crow associated with three legs as a symbol of the sun god is only connected with two areas of the world. One is Japan and the other is in the ancient region of Asia Minor near Tarsus (derived from Tarshish).

The Bible identifies Tarshish as a son of Javan and a grandson of Japheth. From him sprang two distinct family branches. As numerous Bible helps attest, the western branch settled in

Spain, the well-known site of the ancient *city* of Tarshish—the location to which the ancient prophet Jonah tried to flee—also known as Tartessus. Those from the eastern branch of Tarshish originally settled in Asia Minor, founding the aforementioned city of Tarsus in Cilicia and allying themselves with the ancient Assyrians. But after the fall of the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 B.C., these descendants of Javan migrated across Central Asia—**evidently all the way to the islands of Japan.**

Thus, Tarshish in the Bible can refer either to Spain, the western branch of the family, or to Japan, descended from the eastern branch.

End-Time Prophecy

In prophecies relating to the time shortly before Christ’s return, Tarshish is identified as a major maritime trading nation—clearly far more descriptive of Japan than of modern Spain.

We are given a description in Ezekiel 27 of a powerful end-time economic common market. The great city of Tyre, an ancient center of commerce, is used here as a symbol of the future “Beast” power that heads up a

world-dominating global trading bloc designed to guarantee universal prosperity. This same system is described in Revelation 18 under the name “Babylon the Great.” For a more in-depth explanation of this subject, please write for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*.

Through Ezekiel we learn that Tarshish (modern Japan) is merely the *merchant* for this much greater system (v. 12). The next few verses show that other


Asian nations are connected with Japan and are also part of this global economic power bloc.

Thus subordinated, the Land of the Rising Sun will *not* dominate the world in the 21st century. Instead, Bible prophecy shows that there is soon to arise a political and military superpower in Europe held together by the glue of false religion—a final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire that will seek to totally dominate the world economy. This oppressive system, motivated by greed, will ultimately collapse and

finally be destroyed by Christ at His Second Coming.

Japan’s “rising sun,” then, has almost set. She and her economic allies are increasingly finding their future growth and prosperity threatened. They’re becoming frightened and unsettled about what the future may hold. So when a power structure rises in Europe that appears to offer a way out of this impending danger, it seems they will readily gravitate toward it—and, sadly, eventually be taken to the very brink of annihilation (cf. Matt. 24:21-22).

Along with all other nations of the earth, Japan and the Asian Tigers will have to learn that “the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). The only prosperity that will endure is that which is based upon God’s blessing and favor. And God’s favor is predicated upon obedience and will ultimately be available to all mankind in the wonderful World Ahead.

During the coming reign of Jesus Christ, war will be banished and economic prosperity will abound when all peoples learn to worship and obey the true God (Micah 4:1-4). That will be a time, the Eternal declares in Malachi 1:11, when “from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles.” 

A dealer holds his head as he looks at share prices during the afternoon session at the Tokyo Stock Exchange on December 22. Japanese prices dropped 3.4% or 515.49 points, amid growing pessimism about the country’s economy—AFP.

Honor Your Parents—At Any Age!

by Colin Adair

Most of us, when we were growing up, loved and obeyed our parents, generally speaking. Depending on our background and upbringing we did what we were told most times, though of course we no doubt bristled from time to time when asked to do something we didn't like, such as household chores. So if we're honest with ourselves, we'll realize that we didn't always obey our parents with the right attitude. In some cases we may have looked forward to the day when we could "hit the road" and fend for ourselves. As children we did not always appreciate why God commanded us to honor our parents.

It's usually only after reaching adulthood that we come to fully appreciate what our parents have done for us by caring, protecting and nourishing us physically, emotionally and spiritually. Unfortunately, though, many grown children feel that honoring one's parents—the fifth of God's Ten Commandments—stops once they reach adulthood. But nowhere does God tell us to honor our father and mother until we reach 18 or 21 years of age. Rather, the commandment is there *for life!*

It's a sad commentary on society that many elderly parents are put in nursing homes when there is no medical need to do so—forgotten and neglected by their grown children. Day after day, elderly parents wait for a phone call, card or visit from their adult children, hoping that perhaps tomorrow they will hear from them. But for many, tomorrow never comes.

Even elderly parents who are fortunate enough to live in their own home are often forgotten by their children. Days, weeks and months go by without contact. And in some cases, their children are even living in the same town or city—acting as if their parents were already dead. Others take advantage of parents by "robbing" them of their meager pension or savings with stories of financial needs. After all, they rationalize, won't we inherit their money anyhow? But they should know that God calls this stealing! Notice Proverbs 28:24: "Whoever robs his father or his mother, and says, 'It is no transgression,' the same is companion to a destroyer."

Worse yet, from time to time the news media informs us of elderly parents living at home with their married children, but treated badly and in some cases even physically abused. Oftentimes, impatience with a forgetful or physically impaired parent leads to violence. Again God reveals this to be a violation of the fifth commandment as we read in Proverbs 19:26: "He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother is a son who causes shame and brings reproach."

Jesus Christ shows clearly that we are obligated to honor our parents and if necessary help look after them in their old age. There is no excuse not to do so if we are in a position to help them. When approached by the Pharisees as to why His disciples didn't wash their hands before eating,

Christ told them they were more concerned with their traditions than with obeying God. They even went to the point of using religious commitments as an excuse to not keep the fifth commandment.

Notice Matthew 15:3-6: "He answered and said to them,

'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." But you say, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'—then he need not honor his father or mother." Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.'"

Some were saying, in effect, that they could not afford to physically care for their parents because money that *should* have been used for that purpose had instead been set aside as an offering to God. But Jesus pointed out to them that their thinking was wrong. This does not mean, of course, that we can avoid giving God our offerings. It means rather that we have to properly budget to be able to both give God offerings *and* help our parents if they are in need.

If you have elderly parents living alone or in a nursing home, what can you do to fulfill the fifth commandment and make their final years memorable? Here are some pointers:

Be aware of their needs, especially emotional ones. If you live within reasonable distance be sure to visit on a regular basis. And don't forget to take *your* children. Grandparents like nothing better than to see their grandchildren regularly. When the weather's fine, take your mother or father for a drive. Many elderly parents sit at home most of the time. Getting out for a few hours can really make their day! Arranging a picnic at a local park is an inexpensive way of eating out. Or if you can afford it, a meal in a family restaurant is a nice treat.

If you live far from your parents and you are not able to visit regularly, then be sure to phone at least once a week. Phone rates today are very reasonable in most countries and spending some time chatting with your father or mother helps make up for not being able to visit personally. If you live in a country with few phones and neither you nor your parents have ready access to one, then writing to them on a regular basis, perhaps weekly, is a good way to keep in touch. And if they become ill, a get-well card is sure to be appreciated.

Having your parents visit *you* for a few days once in a while also helps maintain con-

tact and lets them know you love them. Every family is different, but as the old saying goes, where there's a will there's a way. Simply put, don't allow time or distance to erode your relationship.

Realize that as they grow older, parents need more consideration and appreciation. Life can become lonely for our aged parents and it costs nothing to show our appreciation for them. We should consider their circumstances, remembering that we would want the same concern to be shown to us by *our* children. After all, one day we may be in the same situation.

So just what *are* their circumstances? Can you do something to improve their living conditions or environment? The patriarch Joseph, even while serving as "prime minister" of ancient Egypt and directly ruling this nation under Pharaoh, did not forget the needs of his father. After revealing himself to his brothers, he told them to bring their father Jacob to Egypt. "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him... 'God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine'" (Gen. 45:9-11).

Now even though you're probably not in the same position as Joseph, can you help take care of your elderly parents if they are in need? Can you do everything to make sure they are being properly looked after if they have to live far away? This could mean financial help, or simply investing your time and your love. The point is that you have their welfare at heart and make sure they are living as comfortably and prosperously as possible.

The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 6:1-3, mentions the blessings that come to children who honor their parents. He says this is the first commandment with promise. This promise is, generally speaking, that our own lives will go well and we will live long on the earth. Let's actively and enthusiastically obey the fifth commandment and make our elderly parents' last years as worthwhile and meaningful as possible!

WHY

Can't We Solve Our Problems?

The biblical story of the Two Trees holds the answer!

by Douglas S. Winnail

Have you ever wondered why the problems facing our modern world seem so difficult to resolve? Why, in a society choking on information, can't we find answers to the big questions of life? Did we "get off the right track" somewhere along the way?

Consider that we can send astronauts into space and link every part of the world with telephones, fax machines and, of course, the Internet. Yet so many of us can't seem to get along with the neighbor—or nation—next door. We build incredible weapons systems to keep the peace, yet peace remains elusive. We possess more material goods today than at any time in history, yet for many, life is painfully empty. More people than ever before are educated, yet most have no idea why we even exist!

Is there a reason that physical knowledge has increased exponentially during this 20th century without uncovering the real purpose of life or the real solutions to our problems? Is there any source for this crucial information? Believe it or not, the Holy Bible reveals vital information that is essentially lacking in our secular world. The first few chapters in the book of Genesis relate the pivotal account that explains why we face seemingly intractable problems and why fundamental information

remains out of reach. This article will examine that biblical account—the story of the Two Trees in the Garden of Eden—which is so much more than a "nice little Bible story" for children. In fact, it explains why our world is the way it is, and why we are unable to solve our biggest problems!

The Two Trees

Modern secular education suggests that human beings somehow evolved from more primitive life forms, and that there's no real purpose for human existence. Yet there is no solid proof for these suggestions. And they certainly don't give us anything to live for. The Bible, however, refutes such nonsense. It reveals that God created human beings in His own image to rule over—that is, develop and manage—the earth! God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness: let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds" and other creatures (Gen. 1:26). Human beings, then, were created by God to rule and manage. This involves learning how to make good decisions and wise choices. Sound instruction and experience are also required. The Bible reveals that God planned for all of these things.

The beginning of human history sees God placing Adam and Eve, the original parents of us all, in a garden called Eden. The very name "Eden" means delightful, restful or idyllic. In this garden was a river and many trees, including "the tree of life... and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (2:9). God then instructed Adam and Eve, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (vv. 2:16-17). Many are familiar with the rest of the story. Adam and Eve had to make a conscious decision whether or not to follow God's instructions. Notice, too, that this decision was not a choice between something clearly discernible as right or wrong, but rather

to judge between a right choice and a wrong choice that appeared to be right! Human beings were required not only to obey, but to exercise discernment. They would need to think before making decisions.

The challenge of decision-making was not limited to the first human beings. God has issued this same challenge to all of their descendants throughout the ages. Moses was instructed to tell the Israelites just before they entered the Promised Land, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deut. 30:19). Upon entering the Promised Land, they were going to face choices—whether to obey the commandments of God or to adopt the pagan practices of the Canaanites who then occupied that place. Unfortunately, the Israelites often made wrong choices and suffered as a result.

Jesus Christ outlined what Christians would face when He described the "narrow" way that leads to life and the "wide" path that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). He said that many would choose this latter road and experience the problems of living apart from God. But a few choose the more challenging, yet far more rewarding, path that leads to eternal life. That certainly is a fitting description of our modern world—as well as mankind's historical past. Few understand the purpose of life or the decisions that lead to a full, abundant and rewarding existence. The Apostle Paul warned the Church at Galatia, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). The Bible clearly explains that we must learn to make decisions, and that we must be prepared to face the consequences of those decisions. These are essential lessons for anyone who is preparing to rule.

Enter Satan

If you've ever tried to develop muscles you know the value of using weights—trying to lift against resistance. God knows this principle too. And He uses it to develop His own righteous character in human beings. For character building involves choices that require discernment, consciously obeying God's inspired instructions and resisting the temptation to "go with the flow."

Satan's influence is the "resisting force" we must work against in this process.

In Genesis 3, we see Satan offering Adam and Eve an alternative choice—in a very crafty and cunning manner. He tells Eve that they won't die if they eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, but rather will actually become like God—"knowing good and evil" (vv. 1-5). But Satan had lied. He twisted what God had said. He planted doubts in Eve's mind as to what the truth really was. Appealing to her curiosity and vanity, he offered himself as the real benefactor of mankind. Satan deliberately complicated the decision-making process. Offering an alternate path to the good life, he suggested that our first parents ignore God's instructions. His method is the same today!

It is instructive to examine how Eve was misled once she began to consider Satan's reasoning. In spite of being instructed by God not to eat the fruit of a certain tree, it appeared to her to be good for food (v. 6). Perhaps she noticed birds that did not die when eating the fruit! And although we can only speculate as to what they were, it is apparent that Eve saw reasons for her actions.

The same verse tells us that the forbidden fruit was also pleasant to the eyes. It appealed to her senses. And, of course, we face the same situations today. With standards of morality seemingly at an all-time low, tens of millions of people in modern Western society have thought nothing of indulging in casual "one-night stands" since the sexual revolution of the 60s. It's easy, it's fun, it entices the senses—but it also breaks up families, causes the heartache of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmissible diseases, and ultimately leaves its participants feeling frustrated and unfulfilled. For, you see, all that glitters is not gold!

Similar sinful appeals to the flesh include substance abuse, gluttony and an obsession with materialism.

However, the most subtle aspect of Satan's argument was that the forbidden fruit appeared desirable to make one wise. Satan was offering an alternative way to attain knowledge—it seemed logical and reasonable. He appealed to the human desire to decide for ourselves what is good—disregarding God's instructions. This somehow makes us feel more mature and independent. We don't have to depend on God or anyone else. It is this attitude,

beginning with Adam and Eve and continuing forward to our day, that has cut us off from our Creator.

Surprising Results!

Regrettably, the alternative path to the good life that Satan offered *did not* produce the desired utopian results. One of the first reactions of Adam and Eve was to experience a sense of *shame* at their nakedness (v. 7; cf. 2:25). The Hebrew term used here also conveys the sense of being “under God’s judgment” (cf. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, 1990, p. 49). The trusting Parent-child, Teacher-student relationship they had experienced with God changed quite dramatically to an adversarial one coupled with fear.

God’s reaction is also interesting. He does not come after Adam and Eve to condemn them, but rather asks questions—probing how and why they made the decision they did. God inquires, “Who told you that you were naked?” (3:11). Adam and Eve apparently never questioned the validity of their information. They naively assumed that Satan was setting them straight. They found out too late that they’d made a wrong decision. Eve admitted that “the serpent *deceived* me” (v. 13).

And the negative consequences of this horrendous error have been with us ever since. The Bible reveals that mankind’s future, “doing it our own way,” would be one of trial and trouble, instead of the delightful and idyllic life that God had provided in Eden (vv. 16-19). As a result of choosing to *reject* God’s instruction, mankind was *driven* from the Garden and *cut off* from access to God’s revealed Truth—the Tree of Life (v. 24). This, too, is an accurate picture of our modern society. We may claim to believe in God and profess to be Christian nations, yet we are largely ignorant of, or choose to explain away, much of what the Bible actually says. Sadly, we fail to see the consequence of this reckless disregard—the inability to solve our problems!

The Way of Cain

In Genesis 4, we read the story of Cain, firstborn son of Adam and Eve. In this chapter we get a glimpse of “life outside the garden of Eden” and the fruits of trying to live outside of God’s instructions (*Expositor’s*, p. 60). Cain appears to take liberties in giving an offering to God, kills his brother in a fit of jealous rage, lapses into self-pity over his punishment and apparently decides to “do his own thing” apart from God’s instructions (cf. v. 16).

Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first-century A.D., tells us that Cain was “very wicked... wholly intent upon *getting*”—that he oppressed his neighbors. The city

Cain built (v. 17) was *fortified with walls* and people were *compelled* to live in it. Cain’s descendant, Tubal-Cain, is described as a strongman who was “very expert and famous in martial performances”—promoting *military* activities (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 1, chap. 2, sec. 1).

Cain’s whole approach to life, apparently, was built on the *rejection* of God’s teachings. The Scriptures refer to it as the “way of Cain” (Jude 11). It’s not hard to see that the greed, oppression, exploitation and militarism that so characterize our modern world simply constitute a *continuation* of the approach to life practiced by Cain and his offspring. He was deceived—as are almost all human beings on earth today!

In Genesis 6, we discover the result of many generations having followed this way of life. The Bible records that “the earth also was *corrupt* before God, and the earth was *filled with violence*.... For all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (vv. 11-12). God then sent a flood in the days of Noah to put an end to a human civilization that had totally corrupted itself by pursuing a way of life contrary to God’s revealed instructions (v. 13). Here, then, was the tragic outcome of generations of deception and bad decisions!

This sad lesson of history is apparently being lost on our society today. We, too, seem intent on following the way of Cain—choosing to rely on our own reasoning rather than following what God tells us. In fact, Jesus Christ prophesied that the days just prior to His Second Coming would be “as the days of Noah were” (Matt. 24:37-39). The Apostle Paul similarly tells us that “in the last days *perilous times* will come,” characterized by the same attitudes and behavior that were first modeled by Cain and his descendants (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-4). God will once again have to drastically intervene in the affairs of mankind to stop the misguided and self-destructive activities that are the fruits of the way of life symbolized by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (cf. Matt. 24:21-22). This tree represents the “way that seems right to a man”—but is really the “way of *death*”! (Prov. 16:25).

The Other Tree

Fortunately for us all, there is a better way. The *other* tree in the Garden of Eden was called the Tree of *Life* (Gen. 2:9). That tree symbolizes *God’s* way—embodied in His instructions and commandments—and the gift of eternal life that He will give to those who *follow* that way! (Rev. 22:14). The Bible *reveals* the true purpose of human existence and provides *practical instructions* that deal with the core issues of life for all mankind. These

(continued on page 21)

What Is

PREDESTINATION

by Raymond F. McNeil

Has your ultimate fate been sealed since before you were even born? Has God foreordained some to be saved and others to be lost? Just what does “predestination” really entail?

Is there a supreme Being who has a *great Master Plan* for mankind that He worked out long before He put man on this earth? Or does blind “fate” rule throughout the universe?

Britain’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill realized that the Creator is working out some kind of a great plan: “He must indeed have a blind soul who cannot see that **some great PURPOSE and design is being worked out here below**” (Address to the U.S. Congress, Dec. 26, 1941). What Churchill said during World War II regarding the Almighty working out His plan here on earth is equally true when applied to God’s great Master Plan of salvation that He is working out *here below*!

Does the Bible Teach Predestination?

Few who have diligently studied God’s Word doubt that it teaches

“predestination.” Fewer still seem to understand *what* predestination entails. Predestination has absolutely nothing to do with the *supposition* that some humans are predestined to be *annihilated* in a “burning hell,” while others are supposedly foreordained to receive *eternal life*. PREDESTINATION merely concerns *when* and *how* God will call various ones to an understanding of His *Truth*—thereby granting them their *chance* to receive their Creator’s free gift of eternal life!

The Apostle Peter assures us, “**The Lord is... not willing that any should perish** but that *all* should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9; cf. Matt. 18:14). He also says that “God shows *no partiality*” (Acts 10:34). And the Apostle Paul says that “**God our Savior... desires ALL men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**” (1 Tim. 2:3-4; cf. John 3:16). Since it is “impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18), “and the

Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35), **God WILL offer salvation to every human!** Clearly, however, the preceding Scriptures do *not* say it is God’s will that all would be brought to the knowledge of the Truth—and therefore be given the opportunity for salvation—in *this life*! How, then, will the Creator carry out His express will that “all men... [will] be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth”?

Today, there are only *two billion Christians* out of a world population of about *six billion!* Are those four billion *non-Christians* doomed because they do not believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and because they don’t follow the Christian Bible? Would a loving, merciful God condemn all these people to oblivion simply because *He* had not seen to it that they had been given a chance to understand and follow His way? Absolutely not!

Would a loving God create

untold billions of humans—permit Satan to deceive them (Rev. 12:9), allow them to DIE in ignorance of Him and His ways—and yet NOT provide some means by which He would LATER offer them His free gift of salvation?

God PREDESTINED—that is, FOREORDAINED—certain individuals to accomplish a certain work! Many prophecies reveal that Christ would come to this earth (Gen. 3:15; 49:10) and would die for mankind (Dan. 9:25-26; Is. 7:14; 53:1-12). Others whom God predestined include: *Isaac* (Gen. 17:21); *Jacob* and *Esau* (Gen. 25:20-26); *Samuel* (1 Sam. 1:1-20); *King Josiah* of Judah (1 Kings 13:1-2; 2 Kings 23:15-16); *Jeremiah* (Jer. 1:4-10); *Cyrus*, king of Persia (Is. 44:28; 45:1); *John the Baptist* (Luke 1:5-57); and the *Apostle Paul* (Gal. 1:15).

But in no case has God ever predestined anyone to *annihilation*. In some cases He foreordained that certain individuals—such as *Pharaoh*, or *Judas Iscariot*—would fulfill unenviable roles in this life (Rom. 9:14-18; John 6:70; Acts 1:16-20). Though not predestined to receive salvation in *this life*, they will receive their chance to be saved later!

God the Father foreordained a great Master Plan of salvation that He is now carrying out. That “plan” concerns *when* and *how* (in *which* of God’s preordained judgment periods) each person will be “called” to understand and follow the Truth of God—thereby receiving his one and *only chance* to be saved! Shocking as this may seem, the Creator has foreordained that ALL will be called to understand His Truth—sooner or later! Yet God has made every human being a “free moral agent,” having a free will so each can make his own choices (cf. Deut. 30:15-20; Josh. 24:15; Prov. 1:29). But God determines both *when* and *how* He will call each human being, and

reveal His Truth to him or her (cf. Matt. 13:1-23).

Christ Isn’t Judging the World Now!

Since the Bible clearly reveals that it is not possible to receive salvation *except* through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; John 10:1-9), and since God clearly says it is *not* His will that *anyone perish*, and since two-thirds (about four billion!) of earth’s six billion inhabitants don’t *believe in Christ*, and don’t even have a *Bible* by which to learn of God’s way—then this plainly proves that man’s Creator is *not now* trying to save the whole world!

Jesus plainly said, “If anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not [now] judge him; **for I did not come to JUDGE the world but to SAVE the world**” (John 12:47). God, being very merciful, *excuses* humanity’s blindness and *overlooks* their sins (Rom. 11:31-32), realizing Satan has “deceived the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). The overwhelming majority don’t know about Christ being God’s true Son, neither do they understand the Bible is His Word!

At Jesus’ First Coming, He came to: 1) preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14); 2) to set man “an example” of the way he ought to live (1 Peter 2:21; John 13:15) and; 3) Jesus also came to offer up Himself as mankind’s Savior—the “Lamb of God who [would take] away the sin of the world” (John 1:29; cf. 3:16).

Since the vast majority of all those who have ever lived have died without “saving knowledge,” and since “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18; cf. Titus 1:2), therefore the Great God is duty bound to *resurrect* those *untold billions* who died in ignorance of His will. The Bible says God will then grant them salvation.

Clearly, *all are predestined*, ultimately, to be given their *chance* to be saved, thereby receiving God’s free gift of *immortality*. It would be totally contrary to God’s *perfect character*, and also contrary to His revealed *will*, for any human to have been predestined to *failure*—i.e. to eternal death!

Therefore, the Great God has ordained three different times—i.e. judgment periods—when all humanity will be offered His free gift of salvation. What are those three judgment periods? 1) The New Testament Church Age, 2) The Millennial Age, and 3) The “Last Judgment” Age.

The Church Age

The *first group* to be offered salvation (subsequent to Christ’s death) were to be the members of His true Church—His spiritual Body (Rom. 12:4-5; cf. Eph. 1:12; 3:15-21). Those whom God calls into His Church during this Church Age are *now* being judged by God and His Word: **“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the HOUSE OF GOD!”** (1 Peter 4:17).

God *foreordained* that certain ones were to be called into His Church now, during this New Testament Church Age. Paul says, “He [God] chose us in Him *before the foundation of the world*... having *predestined* us to adoption [*sonship*] as sons of Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:4-5; cf. Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

Paul then adds, “For we are His workmanship, created... for good works, which *God prepared beforehand* [“before ordained” KJV] that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). He also says God “has saved us and called us with a holy calling... according to His own purpose and grace **which was given to us in**

Christ Jesus BEFORE time began” (2 Tim. 1:9).

God predestined that He would *call* certain ones into His Church during this Church Age (Rom. 8:28-30; cf. 11:25-26). However, nothing in the Bible says or *implies* that our Creator ever predestines anyone to be *lost*! Neither will God *force* anyone to be “saved” against his will (John 3:16; Rom. 10:13-15; Rev. 22:17).

Paul says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the *called* according to His purpose. For whom He *foreknew*, He also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He *predestined*, these He also called [and] justified” (Rom. 8:28-30).

The Old Testament *patriarchs, prophets* and other servants of God were called by Him and filled with His Spirit (1 Peter 1:11; Gen. 41:38; Dan. 4:8-9). According to Jesus, not only those called in this Church Age (including the New Testament *apostles*), but also the Old Testament *patriarchs* and *prophets* will be in the “Kingdom of God” (Luke 13:28; Matt. 17:3; 19:28; Rev. 11:18).

Though God is not now judging the *world* (John 12:47), He holds His people—those filled and “led by the Spirit of God” (Rom. 8:14)—strictly accountable. True Christians know God and realize what He requires of us. We must make good. *If* we turn away after receiving God’s Truth, then there will be no more opportunity for us to be granted eternal life (cf. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-39).

The Millennial Age

The Scriptures reveal that the *second group* of humans whom God has predestined to receive salvation will be the *many billions* who will live (as flesh-and-blood mortals)

during the Millennium, when Christ and His saints will teach and judge all nations.

All who *survive* the terrible calamities which will befall the earth during the “day of the LORD”—will live on this earth as flesh-and-blood *mortals* in the Millennial Age, and will be JUDGED during that *1,000-year* period called “the Millennium” (Rev. 20:4-6 NRSV; Ps. 67:4; Matt. 25:31-46).

That same millennial Sabbath “day” is alluded to in Acts 17:31, and is also pictured, prophetically, as a “Sabbath rest” (Gk. *sabbatismos*) in Hebrews 4:9 (NASB). Jesus spoke of this same time: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory... then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him [cf. Is. 2:2-3; 9:6-7; 66:23], and He will separate [JUDGE] them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” (Matt. 25:31-32). Clearly this scripture, when coupled with scores of Old Testament prophecies, reveals that during the Millennium Jesus will “judge” the peoples of all nations, by separating the *goats* (i.e. the *rebels*) from the *sheep*—the obedient *children of God*!

John says that Utopian Age will last “a thousand years” (Rev. 20:2-7 NRSV). Paul also refers to this time of earthly bliss: “Because He had appointed A DAY on which He will judge the WORLD in righteousness by the Man [Christ] whom He has ordained” (Acts 17:31). This “day” during which Christ and His saints will rule (judge) all nations is clearly to be understood as a “millennial day” (cf. 2 Peter 3:8; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6). Why is Jesus coming back to this earth? “He is coming to JUDGE the earth... [and] the world with righteousness” (Ps. 96:13; cf. 9:8).

Christ’s “gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14) foreshadows a

time when His Kingdom will govern *all nations* (Dan. 2:44; 7:27; Zech. 14:9; Rev. 19:15). Any “gospel” teaching that, at death, Christians go immediately to *heaven*—perhaps to play on a harp—is missing the point. God’s Word reveals that Christ and His saints will rule all nations *on this earth* (Dan. 2:44; 7:21-22, 26-27; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10). The Millennium will be the most wonderful time this earth has ever seen—an indescribably beautiful Utopia of peace, abundance and great joy (Is. 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 14:7; Jer. 31). During that 1,000-year period, all people and nations will have their minds opened to the TRUTH about the real purpose of life and a correct understanding of God and His will: “For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). They will be taught and trained and finally judged by Christ and His immortal saints (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 20:6 NRSV).

The Last Judgment Age

We have seen that the *first judgment* is now. God’s Church is now being judged. The *second judgment* will be the 1,000-year rule of Christ on earth. The *third and final group* that God has predestined to receive salvation will be the *largest* of all of the three groups that He has foreordained to receive saving knowledge of Him and His Truth. One of the greatest “mysteries” of the Bible is the all-important truth about the “Last Judgment.” Many erroneously believe the “Last Judgment” is a time when the *dead* will be raised up to have God pronounce either their *reward* (if they were *good!*), or their *punishment* (if *evil!*). But the truth is that during that “Last Judgment” the dead will be resurrected to *mortal*

(continued on page 25)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PRINCESS DI

How thankful I am for the article by Gary Foster titled "Goodbye England's Rose" in the November–December issue (p. 4). I'm glad to see that you spoke highly of the good that Princess Diana sought to bring to the world, and of the love and compassion she had for those who are suffering and afflicted by societal ills. This is certainly better than ragging on her for her faults. It is good that you looked at the "big picture" and showed how the press and society as a whole is at fault for mindlessly exploiting and invading the privacy of others, and voraciously feeding on their secret sins and weaknesses like blood-thirsty hounds. If they're not trying to build people up to be idols, then they're trying to tear them down! I sure wish society would wake up and quit being so cruel, heartless and thoughtless.

Paul Hord
Hutchinson, Kansas

wishes to correct an error in editing. It was stated that 2 Samuel 7:13 shows that David's line would continue through Solomon "forever." But the original Hebrew word *olam* does not always carry this meaning. Occasionally it means unending as long as certain conditions apply (cf. Ex. 21:6).

Now God DID unconditionally promise that David's throne would continue in "all generations" (Ps. 89:3-4). But for Solomon, the promise was strictly conditional (cf. 2 Chron. 7:17).

Solomon began worshiping other gods. So even though the present Royal Family of Great Britain IS descended from him, his own dynasty will NOT continue forever. Jesus Christ is of the line of one of David's other sons, Nathan (Luke 3:31). Thus, when Christ returns and takes over the throne, the Solomonic line will cease to reign—but the unconditional promise to David will still be fulfilled—ed.

CHRISTMAS TRADITION

I have enjoyed your publication for quite some time now, and I usually find myself agreeing with your well-researched articles. But in reading the November–December issue, I found myself simply horrified by the article "Glory to the Newborn King?" by Thomas E. Robinson.

Now I'm no scholar or biblical expert, but I'm a Christian and I think that I have the right to glorify my God any way it pleases me. I don't care if the tradition of celebrating Christmas came from a long-forgotten pagan ritual, and I don't think that my God cares either. What He really cares is

that in this violent world, where hatred and sinful hearts outnumber the God-fearing ones, He can find love, faith and adoration in a celebration that glorifies His most wonderful gift to us—the arrival of His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

Claudia De Paula
Rochester, New York

This sounds reasonable on the surface. But consider that if a person has the right to "glorify" God in any way that pleases him, does that mean he can do anything he wants—anything at all? Taking this to an absurd extreme, what if someone decided he could "glorify" God by sleeping with a prostitute? Though some did this in ancient times, most today would agree that this does not honor God—for it is clearly against His will as revealed in His Word. The obvious conclusion is that whatever we do to glorify God must be within the boundaries of His law. And, as the article pointed out, God's law explicitly states that we are not to use pagan traditions to worship Him—ed.

Thank you so much for your article regarding Christmas. This must continue to be emphasized to people again and again. However, since you are not Trinitarians, why do you say on page 18 about Christ, "...rather than the Living GOD that He now is"? I believe Jesus is God's Son, not God Himself.

Joanne H. Robinson
Keene, California

To better understand what the Bible reveals about God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, please write for our free brochure, *The God You Can Know!*—ed.

OTHER ARTICLES

With greatest joy I write you this letter after reading "The Real Solution" by Roderick C. Meredith (Jan.–Feb. 1997, p. 4). It gives me great peace to realize that someone else truly feels the way that I have for many years now. And a true grasp of what has entangled this generation has been presented here for all to see.

Lelybeth Cam
Bukidnon, Philippines

I read your July–August issue of *The World Ahead* concerning "The Truth About Antichrist." The Holy Spirit works in mysterious and marvelous ways. I have never read your magazine before, but the cover just "jumped out at me." The message told me a lot about myself. It points out things that I have to change.

Alexis Thomas
Trenton, South Carolina

I have enjoyed your many articles over the years. But the one that really stands out for me is "The Coming War for the City of Peace" written by Raymond F. McNair (Sept.–Oct. 1997, p. 18). Thank you for keeping the faith and publishing such good articles based on God's Word.

Lloyd Locke
Arma, Kansas

I have been receiving your magazine, *The World Ahead*, for about four months. I must say your articles are most provocative! The one titled "Twilight of Democracy" (Sept.–Oct. 1997, p. 12) is particularly interesting. I work at the Chicago Board of Trade and have been trading commodities for four years, yet I still learn a great deal from your articles concerning economics—things that are frightening yet true! I also get up early on Sundays to watch Roderick Meredith and Richard Ames on the *World Ahead* television program. They're great! All evangelists should be like them.

John Onesti
Highland Park, Illinois

The *World Ahead* telecasts can be seen throughout most of the United States on superstation WGN Sundays at 6:00 a.m., as well as on numerous local stations. For complete U.S. and international viewing times, please refer to the inside back cover of this issue—ed.

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.


WHY CAN'T WE SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS? (continued from page 16)

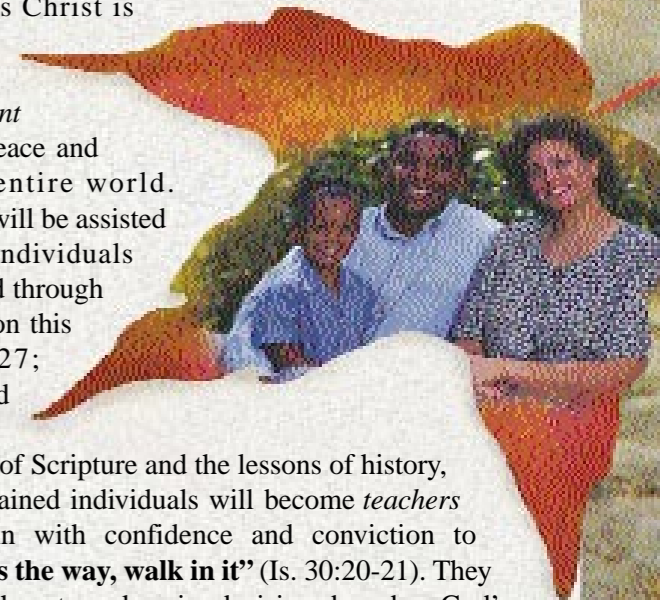
instructions are designed to prevent or solve our problems. The Scriptures further tell us that when Jesus Christ returns there will be a "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:18-19). All of mankind will at last have free access to God's way of life as pictured by the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:1-3).

This restoration of the right approach to knowledge will bring healing and relief to individuals and nations that have suffered so long from Satan's deception. Jesus Christ is returning to establish a *global Government* that will bring peace and justice to the entire world. The Son of God will be assisted by the *saints*—individuals called and trained through the ages to rule on this earth (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 5:10). Armed with experience, knowledge of Scripture and the lessons of history, these specially trained individuals will become *teachers* who will explain with confidence and conviction to mankind, "**This is the way, walk in it**" (Is. 30:20-21). They will teach people how to make wise decisions based on God's Word. As a result of this concerted effort led by Jesus Christ, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (11:9).

But you don't have to wait until then to partake of the Tree of Life. For God tells those whom He calls in this *present* age, "Repent, and... be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And if we have God's Spirit and continue in His way, we will someday be resurrected to everlasting life! (Rom. 8:11).

The story of the Two Trees contains a powerful message. It explains why our world is the way it is and how it came to be that way. Satan deceived our first parents, as well as their offspring, into rejecting God's revealed instructions on how to live and make wise decisions. Jesus Christ is soon to return to put an end to this deception and restore the knowledge of God's true way to achieve peace, justice and real fulfillment.

Human problems *will be* solved. And proclaiming that message is the mission of the Church that Jesus Christ founded (Mark 16:15). That exciting message of hope is the *Gospel* of the coming Kingdom of God. To learn more about that *message* and your potential role in that *Kingdom*, please request our free booklet titled *Your Ultimate Destiny*. 




THRONE OF ENGLAND

This is to congratulate Raymond F. McNair on his fine article titled "The Throne of England." This is truly a marvelous article, which gives a concise summary of the history of the throne of David from prophecy to present day and future fulfillment. I shall cherish this as a reference.

Lloyd C. Brannon
Birmingham, Alabama

Despite the overall accuracy of the information presented, the author



King David— A Man After God's Own Heart

by Martin Fannin

“**T**he LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people” (1 Sam. 13:14). These words, spoken by God through the Prophet Samuel, referred to David, the son of Jesse. It was a defining moment for ancient Israel. The God who had centuries earlier delivered this nation from bondage in Egypt was officially rejecting Saul, its first human king, and giving that title to David to assume at a yet-future date. This event had great significance both in David's time and in times to come.

But what of David himself? Why was he a man after God's own heart? What qualities or attributes of character did he have? Was he a one-of-a-kind, unique individual, or can we too be people after God's own heart? The answer to these questions is found in God's written Word—the Bible. It reveals the reasons for God's statement concerning David and His exciting purpose and plan for mankind.

God rejected King Saul, David's predecessor, for disobedience. Like many today, Saul preferred to do things his own way. He relied too much on his own human reasoning—apparently not realizing that the way that seems right to man ends in death (Prov. 16:25). He desired, pursued and trusted in *physical* things—the trappings of power and the desires of the flesh. David, on the other hand, looked to the Creator God and trusted in Him.

Worship the True God

But just who or what is God anyhow? Is He a personal Being, a Family or just some ethereal, cosmic essence? Is He even real or just some “fairy-tale character”? Throughout the ages, there has been a myriad of ideas about who or what is God—or even *if* He exists. Most are just ideas based solely on human philosophy, or human attempts to reason around the clear revelation of Scripture.

But this wasn't David's approach. He sought and believed in the *true* God. He discerned that the earth and the heavens, in all the varied forms and faces they present, were concrete evidence of a great Creator God. He saw life, beauty and design with functioning laws that govern and control both the animate and the inanimate. When he compared mankind to animals—the human mind to animal instinct—he was amazed. The astounding difference could never have been the result of blind chance or happenstance, but rather bore the stamp of a well-planned creation. He saw the vast sweep of the universe with its planets, solar systems and galaxies all moving in perfect conjunction and understood that these were the work of God's own hands (Ps. 102:25). No wonder he could say of God, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works”! (139:14).

Moreover, David worshiped a real, living God, not

the things *made by* Him! He realized the difference between the Creator and the created. He wrote, “For He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which shall not pass away” (148:5-6). David sought God, believed in His reality and so could boldly say, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (14:1). For more information about the true nature of God, please write for our free brochure, *The God You Can Know!*

God's Plan for Mankind

“What is man that You are mindful of him...?” (8:4). David asked this question as he pondered the Almighty and His plan for mankind. Although this ancient king didn't have the complete Bible as we do today, he certainly understood God's plan. And we can understand it too!

King David believed God's Word regarding the creation of man. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

He understood that man was created in the very image and likeness of God. Though now made of flesh, all mankind has the potential to be born into the spirit-composed, ever-living Family of God. The book of Hebrews quotes David making this very point: “‘You crowned him [man] with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’ For in that he put all in subjection under him, **He left nothing that is not put under him.** But now we do *not yet* see all things put under him” (2:7-8).

David realized that this human life is just a training ground—an opportunity to build godly character and prepare for eternal life in the Family and Kingdom of God. Like David, we too can believe God's Word. For God's promises are for *all mankind*. Therefore, we should focus on building godly character and preparing for the reality of God's soon-coming Kingdom—a time when the firstfruits of God's plan will experience the awesome potential for which man was created.

Having Concern for Others

We live today in a “me” generation, a time of focus on self. For most people, *getting* is more important than *giving*. Concern for others is a disappearing trait in our hectic, modern society. Now to some degree, this has

been true for every generation. But that's not how it ought to be!

King David, though not perfect, practiced the way of give, the way of outgoing concern for others. He practiced fairness, esteeming others “better than himself” (Phil. 2:3). A prime example of this outgoing concern is recorded in 1 Samuel 30. While David and his small army of 600 men were absent, the Amalekites overran his camp. All his men's worldly goods and possessions, along with their wives and children, were taken. David and his men pursued the Amalekites, but about a third of them became so fatigued they couldn't go on. David's decision was to leave them behind to guard the baggage. God then gave the victory to David and the 400-some fighting men who still accompanied him—and all was recovered.

However, many of the victors resented the 200 who stayed behind, and determined to return to them only their wives and children—keeping their physical possessions for themselves. But David would have none of this. He declared, “‘As his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.’ And so it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel” (vv. 24-25).

King David showed the same concern for those who opposed him. After ascending the throne, he actively sought to help the family of Saul. Although this former king had tried to kill him many times, David did not blame his family. And he showed great kindness to Saul's grandson, Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9).

On another occasion, when God was chastening the nation for disobedience, David accepted the blame for his major part in it. “Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, ‘Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house’” (2 Sam. 24:17).

David understood that not all are blessed with the same degree of physical strength, talent or ability. When he judged a situation, he took this into account. Also, as king he knew he was responsible for the welfare of the people. His actions proved he had a genuine concern for others. How about you? Do you esteem others? Do you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself?

Being Humble

In today's modern world, humility seems to be a character trait in rather short supply. Whether in politics, business, sports or most other endeavors, running others “down” is a much more common practice. Many

try to promote themselves in this way. Truly, as a popular song tells us, “it’s hard to be humble.”

But David did not hold to this popular practice. He knew that he was *nothing* apart from God, so he said, “My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear of it and be glad” (Ps. 34:2). He knew that compared to God all nations were nothing—in fact, *less* than nothing (Is. 40:17)—that man in his *best* state is still vain (Ps. 39:5 KJV).

David showed this attitude of humility when he was offered King Saul’s daughter in marriage. “So David said to Saul, ‘*Who am I*, and what is my life or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?’” (1 Sam. 18:18). When the leaders of any nation have this attitude, the people are truly blessed!

Proverbs 15:33 states, “Before honor is humility.” This principle is reflected in the life of King David.

Keeping God’s Commandments

Perhaps the greatest reason of all that David was a man after God’s own heart involved the Ten Commandments. This king of Israel meditated on them, marveled at their inherent wisdom and balance, and proclaimed, “Oh, how love I Your law! It is my meditation all

Perhaps the greatest reason of all that David was a man after God’s own heart involved the Ten Commandments. This king of Israel meditated on them, marveled at their inherent wisdom and balance, and proclaimed, “Oh, how love I Your law!”

the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me” (Ps. 119:97-98). He said, “I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love” (vv. 46-47).

David recognized God’s commandments as the perfect laws for building a balanced, peaceful and prosperous society. He understood that the real focus of God’s law was life and happiness. We know from His Word that this is the very attitude God wants us to have: “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (Deut. 5:29).

Do you love God? If so, you will be keeping His commandments! (1 John 5:3). Do you desire eternal life? If you do, you will keep the commandments! (Matt. 19:17). Do you, too, want to be a person after

God’s own heart? You *can* be, if, like David, you sincerely believe that “blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and **in His law he meditates day and night**” (Ps. 1:1-2). If you would like more information on how to live your life so as to receive the fullest blessings of the Living God, please write for our free booklet, *The Ten Commandments*.

Turning from Sin

Our modern society might also be called the “excuse” generation. Have you noticed how it’s never “our fault”? Many engage in an endless *blame game*, accepting no responsibility for their own shortcomings. Sadly, we find this attitude in every walk of life. For it’s much easier to blame someone, or something, else than to repent and change *yourself*.

Once again, the man after God’s own heart has shown us a better way. He *accepted responsibility*—regardless of the consequences. He sinned greatly, committing adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. Worse yet, David had Uriah killed in battle to cover his crime! But when confronted with these horrible sins, he made no excuses.

Faced with the reality of transgressing God’s law (cf. 1 John 3:4 KJV), David said, “I have sinned against the LORD” (2 Sam. 12:13).

This might seem like a curious thing to say. After all, hadn’t he sinned against Uriah? The answer, of course, is that he had. But ultimately

all sin is against God! Why? Because God is mankind’s Creator. He and He alone determines what is right and what is wrong. And the way that is eternally right and best for man is defined by God’s commandments. They are summed up in the two great principles of love toward God and love toward neighbor. Grasping the enormity of his sin against God, David deeply repented.

Now understand that repentance means more than just being sorry. It means *turning from* the wrong way and *actively pursuing* what is right. So with deep repentance and real sorrow, David turned to God. His prayer is recorded in Psalm 51: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me” (vv. 1-3).

Knowing that all sin is ultimately against God, David sought His help in turning from sin to the way of righteousness. This is yet another reason that David was a man after God’s own heart! And the good news is that you can have this same attitude if you so desire. The blame game involves *accusing others* while *excusing the self*. This is the opposite of true repentance. Forgiveness is granted only when you can sincerely say to God, “I have sinned! But I want to *change*.”


The Right Perspective

Yes, *all* have sinned and the penalty is death (Rom. 6:23). However, God’s mercy rejoices against, or triumphs over, judgment (James 2:13). David fully believed in God’s mercy and forgiveness. He said, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps. 51:7). “For Your mercy is great above the heavens, and Your truth reaches to the clouds” (108:4). He knew that true repentance brings complete forgiveness and mercy. Why? Because David correctly perceived that of the many and varied aspects of God’s righteous character, He was first and foremost a God of mercy and love! (1 John 4:8).

In Psalm 136, David said, “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (v. 1). The phrase, “His mercy endures forever” is repeated 26 times in this psalm. When he turned to God with all his heart, David knew God’s mercy was forever sure. This attitude was wonderfully expressed by him when faced with some very difficult choices. He said, “I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man” (2 Sam. 24:14).

The Kingdom of God will soon be established on this earth—when Jesus Christ returns in power and glory. A resurrected King David will have a position of rulership in this Kingdom. In fact, he will rule over the Twelve Tribes of Israel forever (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 37:15-25).

Would *you* like to help govern in this soon-coming Kingdom? You can—if you turn to God with all your heart as King David did. Jesus Christ says in the book of Revelation, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My father on His throne” (3:21; cf. 5:10).

Is your heart like David’s? Do you love God’s law? Do you deeply repent when you break God’s commandments? If so, Christ will give you a part in His Government—a wonderful office of responsibility and service in the World Ahead. **Yes, you too can be a man or woman after God’s own heart!** 

WHAT IS PREDESTINATION? (continued from page 19)


life, taught God’s Truth, and given a *real chance* to receive eternal life.

Many realize that the vast majority of all the billions who ever lived never really had a chance to be saved. Their *ignorance* of God and His way was not *their* fault. The unbiblical doctrines of “limbo” and “purgatory” are mere human inventions, devised by those who did not know the biblical truth concerning what the Bible really says concerning the “Last Judgment”!

The Bible reveals that the overwhelming *majority* of those who have lived and died in past ages (from Adam up to Christ’s “Second Coming”—all those who *never really knew the Truth*)—will, someday, be raised up from the *dead!* What then? They will then be *judged* by God during a future time of indefinite duration, *after* Christ’s 1,000-year rule on earth (Rev. 20:11-12; John 5:28-29). Some call that period the “Last Judgment.” Others call it the “Great White Throne Judgment.” According to Revelation 20:11-15, this judgment period, when the “dead... *stand* before God” (v. 12), will occur *after* the Millennium has expired (vv. 5-7).

Christ also referred to this same time of “judgment” when *all* the *unsaved* peoples who lived in past ages (including those of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, *Tyre and Sidon*, *Nineveh*, and the *Queen of Sheba*, etc.) will “rise in the judgment,” along with many of the “unsaved” Jews of Christ’s day (Matt. 10:15, 11:21-24; 12:41-42). Ezekiel says that resurrection (during the Great White Throne Judgment period) will be a resurrection to *mortality* (Ezek. 37:1-10; cf. John 5:25-29).

What wonderful good news this should be to a world that has been deceived by Satan—a world that has been held *captive* in total ignorance of God’s great Master Plan of salvation! We don’t need to worry about those who die “unsaved.” For the Great God, who has power over *death* (1 Cor. 15:22-26), will yet give them a chance to learn of Him and His way of salvation!

Is a rather feeble God *desperately* trying to save the entirety of the earth’s *six billion* inhabitants? No! He has a great Master Plan of salvation that He is working out on this earth here below. All is going precisely according to His plan—a plan by which the Great God has *predestined* that every human who has ever lived will eventually be given a *chance* to understand and follow God’s way of salvation. He has predestined no one to *fail*—to pass into oblivion! Instead, He has willed that, sooner or later, all are to receive their chance to know God and live according to His way of joy and happiness (Rev. 22:14-17). 

Questions & Answers

Proverbs 26:4 makes a statement about answering a fool that seems to be completely contradicted by verse 5. How are these scriptures to be understood?

Let's look at verse 4: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him." Verse 5, however, says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." Indeed, the two proverbs appear to be mutually exclusive—meaning the Bible contradicts itself. But since that cannot be (John 17:17; 10:35), what is the explanation?

Quite simply, these two verses complement one another. Both are valid, depending on the circumstances—as related at the end of each. Let's see how.

Verse 4 instructs us not to answer a fool according to his folly lest we be like him. In this case, answering the fool's particular question or assertion would lower us to his level—either in the eyes of the fool or those of others observing. For example, a simple correct answer might make us look foolish to onlookers who don't have the full picture or don't know the entire story. Or, as often happens, the whole discussion might just turn into a pointless argument—in which case we are indeed foolish for letting the fool waste our time. The solution is to either deflect the fool's remarks or to say nothing at all.

Christ handled such a situation remarkably well. In Luke 20:1-8, the Pharisees asked Him by whose authority He did certain things. This wasn't to learn anything from Him, but to trip Him up. So, to avoid being or appearing like the fools they were, Jesus didn't answer their question. Instead, He outwitted them, asking them a question they couldn't answer without condemning themselves. And since they couldn't answer, the discussion was dropped.

Verse 5 gives us another set of circumstances in which we should answer a fool "according to his folly"—"lest he be wise in his own conceit" (KJV). In this case, we would answer in a foolish way that exposes how ridiculous his

statement, claim or question is.

A perfect example can be found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. False apostles in Corinth claimed to be Christ's apostles and continually bragged about their qualifications (11:13). For Paul to have remained silent in the face of their claims would have given tacit approval of men who were misleading the Church. They would have appeared wise in their own conceit. So Paul answered by "bragging" in return, repeatedly referring to it as foolishness on his own part: "Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often" (v. 23). Paul, in this situation, had to answer the foolish claims of these men in kind so they wouldn't appear to be in the right.

Thus, the two proverbs don't contradict. Rather, taken together, they explain two methods of dealing with the questions and statements of fools. All of us need wisdom to know exactly when and how to apply these principles. We should pray to God to grant us this wisdom (James 1:5).

Is there anything wrong with exchanging valentine cards on February 14? Isn't St. Valentine's Day a Christian holiday?

Most people take for granted the idea of Valentine's Day as the "lover's holiday." It is quite common for young children in school to exchange cards on this occasion and for lovers to exchange gifts such as candy or flowers. But what's the real origin of this popular holiday and why is it officially known as "Saint" Valentine's Day?

Most reference works trace the name of the holiday to a third-century Catholic martyr by the name of Valentine. Note, however, what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says on the subject: "St. Valentine's Day as a lovers' festival and the modern tradition of sending valentine cards have no relation to the saints but, rather, seem to be connected either with the Roman [sexual] fertility festival of the Lupercalia

(February 15) or with the mating season of birds" (15th ed., vol. 10, p. 336).

In this "Lupercalia... the names of young women were put into a box and drawn out by men as chance directed" (*Encyclopedia Americana*, "St. Valentine's Day"). This pairing off was, of course, linked with sexual immorality. That's where the phrase "Be my valentine" originates!

But where did the Lupercalia itself come from? It was celebrated in honor of the god Pan. In fact, "the name seems to be borrowed from the Greek name of Pan, *Lycaeus*, from *lukos*, a wolf... because Pan, as god of shepherds, protected sheep from the rapacity of wolves" (*Lempriere's Classical Dictionary*, p. 339).

Who was Pan? "The worship, and the different functions of Pan, are derived from the mythology of the ancient Egyptians.... He was worshipped with the greatest solemnity over all Egypt.... He was the emblem of [fertility]" (*Lempriere's*, p. 439). The legend of Pan as the hunter of wolves and protector of the flocks originates in the ancient biblical account of Nimrod, the "mighty hunter" (Gen. 10:9) and builder of the Tower of Babel (cf. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, 1917). This wicked ruler was the original *lupercus* ("wolf hunter") and *valentine* ("strong man").

Here, then, is the real origin of the Roman Lupercalia. The early Catholic Church, seeking the allegiance of the Roman populace, attempted to "Christianize" this festival along with other popular pagan celebrations. Purged of their most heinous elements and given new Christian names, celebrations popular from pagan antiquity continued among the people. To learn more about the use of "counterfeit" Christian celebrations, please write for our free booklet, *Christianity's Greatest Deception*.

God's instruction to His people is that we take a far different approach: "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2 KJV). Instead of involving ourselves in commercialized holidays that are simply sanitized versions of ancient pagan sexual rites, let's learn the ways of our Creator.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER (continued from page 7)

Key #6—Have Faith in God

The more you drink in of the Bible, the more deeply you will realize the importance of FAITH. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

So you cannot please God without real FAITH. And, generally speaking, the Bible makes it clear that God will not hear and answer your prayers unless you come to Him in faith: "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:6-7).

Like the other keys we've examined, building faith is accomplished by truly SURRENDERING to let Jesus Christ live His life in you through the Holy Spirit! "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). So all of us need to constantly read the Bible, and drink in of the examples of faith and obedience of the great men and women of God. In this way, we "feed" on Jesus Christ (John 6:57). We come to think like He thinks, want what He wants. And, through the Holy Spirit, He increasingly LIVES within us as we grow spiritually. Thus united with Christ, we can have TOTAL CONFIDENCE that God the Father will hear our prayers. And this absolute, unwavering confidence in God is what faith IS!

Note carefully this vital teaching of Jesus Christ with respect to prayer and faith: "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does

not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, BELIEVE that you receive them, and you WILL have them" (Mark 11:22-24).

By continually drinking in of the Bible and praying for faith, you will find that your faith will increase more and more. Understand that *living faith* is produced by God's Holy Spirit within us (Gal. 5:22-23). And Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13).

God wants to give you these things if you humbly ask for them. So pray to Him continually to give you the FAITH you need. Learn to BELIEVE in the promises of God. Learn to believe that God is real—that He has perfect wisdom, perfect love and perfect POWER. Realize that He will KEEP all His promises! Learn to imitate Abraham, the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:16), for he "did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also ABLE to perform" (vv. 20-21). This is REAL FAITH. This is the attitude you must have to receive genuine answers to your prayers.

Key #7—Be Persistent

If your son asks you just once for a bicycle and then seemingly forgets about it and never brings the subject up again, how deep is his desire for it? How much do you think he would appreciate it if he did get one? And so it is when we ask for something from our heavenly Father. Before He supernaturally intervenes, God wants to know that we deeply

desire whatever we ask for, and that we will respect and worship Him for answering our prayer.

In other words, God uses our need or desire as a "vehicle" to draw us closer to Him spiritually—to cause us to focus on His will and on what is really best for us and for any others who might be involved. If we carelessly ask for something and then virtually forget that we ever did, what would that indicate? It might tell God that we aren't all that interested in the first place for Him to do what we're asking! Or it could be that all our desires are shallow, perhaps constantly changing, and that we would not feel a deep sense of appreciation and worship even IF He constantly answered such shallow prayers!

Perhaps you're familiar with Jesus' parable of the "unjust judge" (Luke 18:1-8). This is the story of a certain widow who kept coming and kept coming to the "unjust" judge until he finally said, "Because this woman troubles me I will avenge her [thus honoring her request], lest by her continual coming she weary me" (v. 5). Then Jesus said, "Here what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?" (vv. 6-7). When you have a really deep desire for something, you should cry out to God day and night—NEVER giving up.

God wants us to be persistent. He wants us to walk with Him, talk with Him and commune with Him continually—day after day in this age, and ultimately throughout eternity! The Apostle Paul instructs us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

When I was courting my wife to be, I "just couldn't get enough of her." We talked in person, we talked on the phone, and I thought and prayed about her until we finally married! The true Church is pictured

as the affianced bride of Christ. We NEED to spend *a lot of time* with Him and with the Father to become *deeply acquainted*. Remember, what we do in this life prepares us to spend ETERNITY together with these two divine Personalities. This is a REAL relationship and, as with any other, it must be developed over time.

So learn to *pray regularly* to God—spending *enough time* in prayer to become genuinely “acquainted” with Him. For He is the One in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). According to the Scriptures, Jesus often rose *early in the morning* and spent long, uninterrupted TIME praying to His Father (cf. Mark 1:35).

The Prophet Daniel rose to be one of the highest rulers of the greatest empire of his time—the Babylonian Empire. Nevertheless, he constantly *took time* to pray to God *on his knees*—three times each day (Dan. 6:10). This relationship with the Eternal God was *so important* to Daniel that He finally risked DEATH in order to continue this vital part of His spiritual life! (vv. 5-10).

King David also customarily prayed three times each day to his Creator: “As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. **Evening and morning and at noon I will pray**, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice” (Ps. 55:16-17).

So *pray regularly*. Spend plenty of TIME communing with Jesus Christ and your Heavenly Father. And never—EVER!—stop praying to God. For, in more ways than one, *your very life depends upon this contact!*

Key #8—Pray Fervently

I once knew an extremely dedicated and zealous servant of God who often said, “Brethren, one of the reasons we in our modern society don’t receive more answers to prayer

is that **we don’t put our HEARTS into our prayers!**” One of the key scriptures he would then cite is Hosea 7:14. It describes one reason that God *did not hear* the prayers of the ancient Israelites. The Moffatt translation perhaps renders this verse the most clearly: “They never put their HEART into their prayers.”

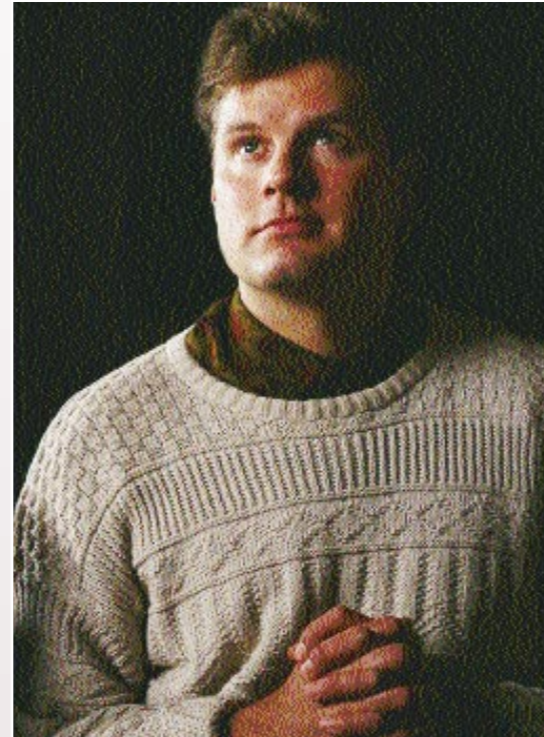
What about us? Do you and I pray with our *entire being*? Or do we just rattle off a memorized prayer like some pagan chant? Or perhaps sleepily mumble a few half-hearted requests to God just before drifting off to sleep?

Again, remember Jesus’ example of getting up EARLY to pray to the Father! For prayer was vitally important to Christ. That’s why He apparently put it *first* on His schedule—before anything else could interfere. And He probably came back to God repeatedly as the day progressed. The book of Hebrews tells us about Christ’s passionate, heartfelt prayers: “Who, 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... was heard because of His godly fear” (5:7).

It is good to go to a “private place” to pray as Jesus instructed in Matthew 6. For alone, we can occasionally CRY OUT to our Creator to *help* us, to *chasten* us, to DELIVER us from temptations or difficulties where only the help of God Himself can fully take care of the situation. The last night of Jesus’ human life, when He *knew* He was about to be arrested and crucified, He *poured out His being* to the Father in fervent prayer for help and deliverance: “And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

Jesus was CRYING OUT to His Father in such an intense and passionate manner that some of His

capillaries may have literally BURST—filling certain sweat ducts with blood! In our modern, secular, hedonistic, “laid-back” society, we need to grasp that the truly *vital* issues of life are not *material!* Rather, they are *spiritual*—having to do with our Creator and with ALL ETERNITY. They are certainly worthy of *getting excited about!*



So let us put our hearts into our prayers. Let us be FERVENT. Let us be PASSIONATE as we pour out our hearts to the awesome Personality who wants to be our *real* Father, “the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity” (Is. 57:15).

Key #9—Ask God to Fashion and Mold You

A genuine man or woman of God is one who has *totally surrendered* to the will of the Creator. Through the Prophet Isaiah, God tells us, “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, **and who trembles at My word**” (66:2).

This attitude of seeking *God’s* will rather than our own—of *total*

submission to our Heavenly Father—is VITAL to our prayer life if we are to receive constant and POWERFUL answers. Note again Jesus’ attitude in one of His final prayers to God while He was still in this human flesh: “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not MY will, but YOURS, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Do *you* want to truly GROW spiritually—“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”? (Eph. 4:13). If so, you—and all of us—need to spiritually “wrestle with God” in our prayers as Jacob *literally* wrestled with Him and prevailed (cf. Gen. 32:24-32). We need to engage Him in long, thoughtful conversation about how we can more fully yield to Him, walk with Him and honor Him in our lives. We need to constantly ask God to help us fulfill the great PURPOSE for which we were born (please write for our free booklet on this subject titled *Your Ultimate Destiny*).

Now it’s fine—within limits—to pray for “physical things.” But the ultimate purpose of prayer is to help us focus on GOD, yield to *Him* and surrender our will to *His* as we cultivate a vital, interactive relationship. In this way, He becomes increasingly REAL to us. Through constant and heartfelt *Bible study* and *prayer*, we must SEEK God’s will. We must grasp that our past ideas and attitudes about God and religion in general need *much improvement*. God tells us through Isaiah, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Is. 55:8-9). And the Apostle Paul instructed, “Let this MIND be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

Learn to walk with Him, talk with Him, quietly “commune” with Him off and on *all day long*. Sincerely ask Him to MOLD you into His own image. The Prophet Isaiah was inspired to write, “But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand” (Is. 64:8). The approach of *yielding* to God as you pray, of *asking* Him to rebuke and chasten and fashion you, is one of the vital keys to really powerful prayer.

Key #10—Give Praise and Thanks to Almighty God

Another of the qualities that made King David a man after “God’s own heart” was the sincere love, worship and ADORATION that he continually expressed toward the great CREATOR who blessed him, sustained him and guided him. The entire book of Psalms is literally FILLED with David’s prayers of worship and adoration. Notice Psalm 18: “I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, **who is worthy to be praised**; so shall I be saved from my enemies” (vv. 1-3).

Clearly, God—in the person of Jesus Christ, who was the “Rock” of Israel (1 Cor. 10:4)—was David’s personal “Hero,” his Champion, his Protector and personal Friend. David rejoiced and EXULTED in the wisdom, power and MAJESTY of the Great God! Today, when tens of millions in our “civilized” Western World tend to virtually WORSHIP rock stars, rap stars, movie or TV “idols” (aptly named!) and sports celebrities, it has become unfashionable to worship and adore our Creator as David did. But rather than

worshiping these vain, often-misguided, human “stars,” why not give praise to the Great God, who gives us life and breath—the “Father of lights,” who, as we’ve seen, is the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift”? (James 1:17).

Why not truly worship Jesus Christ—through whom God the Father created EVERYTHING that is? (cf. John 1:1-3; Eph. 3:9). Why not worship the One who “emptied” Himself of His divine GLORY in order to set us a perfect example? (cf. Phil. 2:7-9 NRSV). Why not worship our merciful and faithful High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18), who willingly DIED for us on the cross? Why not worship HIM?

It is true that human beings want someone to “look up to.” But when we PERVERT this desire to worship and use it to idolize or sometimes even to shout and scream and stand in awe of degenerate, God-rejecting men and women, we are guilty of IDOLATRY.

Rather, we *all* need to redirect this hero worship, including the *awe* and sense of EXCITEMENT it sometimes engenders, and rather worship the most truly “exciting” Personality in the entire universe—Almighty God! We need to picture how God “flung out the stars” across the blackness of space, how He made this earth, put man upon it and made us in His image to be His full sons—*literal brothers* of Jesus Christ forever! (Rom. 8:29). We need to appreciate every beautiful sunrise and sunset, every moving work of music, art or literature, every beautiful human being and the talents and love they possess—and realize that they *all* came from GOD! *And He has a lot more in store for us!*

We need to constantly thank and praise God for *every* good gift and for His help and blessing in *every* situation (1 Thess. 5:18). Instead of *losing control* in our enthusiasm for sports

figures, rock stars or any other human “idols,” let us unashamedly pour out our WHOLE BEING in thanking, praising and WORSHIPING the God who made us and who gives us life and breath. This is the God who FORGIVES us time and time and time again, who guides and blesses us, and who—in the end—plans to share His ETERNAL GLORY with us if we will only respond and learn to love Him as He loves us!

Key #11—Pray in the Name of Jesus Christ

In ancient Israel, the high priest ALONE was allowed to go into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle or temple—which act pictured entering into the direct presence of God. And even he was commanded to go there ONLY once a year—on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16). With this sole exception on but one single day, anyone entering this sacred room would be immediately put to death by God Himself! Likewise, mankind, as a whole, has been *cut off* from direct contact with God.

But today, because Jesus of Nazareth *died for our sins*, true Christians have direct access to the Father. Instead of fearing DEATH in coming before God, we are rather instructed, **“Let us therefore come BOLDLY to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”!** (Heb. 4:16).

Through the “name”—the office and authority of Jesus Christ—we can directly approach God in prayer and worship. We do not need any *human* priest as a kind of intercessor. For we already have the *greatest* High Priest—Jesus Christ (v. 14). And He taught His true followers, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father *in My name* He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and

you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23-24).

Of course, many *misuse* the name of Christ. For, citing Isaiah, Jesus described the religious leaders of His day: “IN VAIN they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Again Jesus said, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

To truly and correctly use Jesus’ name, we must OBEY Him and ask according to His will. Remember that in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ warned, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, **but he who does the will of My Father in heaven**. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:21-23).

Frankly, those who teach or practice LAWLESSNESS—preaching that obedience to the Ten Commandments is not necessary—are not AUTHORIZED to use the name of Jesus Christ. For they are teaching and practicing a *false* Christianity that is completely contrary to EVERYTHING that Jesus lived and died for!

The Apostle John explained, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). One does not genuinely “know” God—is not *acquainted* with God—unless he truly *surrenders* to let Christ live in him, practicing the Ten Commandments as a WAY OF LIFE. Likewise, you can’t know God unless you are growing, overcoming and *experiencing* within your own life the very CHARACTER of God that is expressed in these commandments! Those who do not really know the

true God or His way are simply not *capable* of properly coming in the name of Jesus Christ.

So as you approach God in heartfelt, regular prayer, be sure you are OBEYING your Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Though He does not expect instant spiritual maturity, He does want us to walk *in this way* through the help of the Holy Spirit. Then come to the Father through Christ ALONE to make the direct contact of effective prayer. And remember that coming through Christ’s name—that is, through His office or authority—*includes* most of the other keys to prayer given in this article. For coming fully and perfectly in Christ’s name would certainly include praying to the *true* God, being *filled* with the Scriptures, *obeying* God, *forgiving* others, having deep *faith* in God, being *persistent* and *fervent*, learning to *yield* as malleable clay in God’s hands and heartily worshiping and *adoring* your Creator.

Finally, for your own good, please *study* and *review* ALL of these vital keys! Learn to constantly pray to God—communing and walking with Him. Then, as the end of this age approaches and the awesome *trials* and *tests* of the full Christian life come upon you—as *they surely will*—you will know *exactly* what to do and *how* to do it. In fact, you will be able to follow Christ’s own footsteps. When His time to die had fully come, He did not cry out in panic. He was not afraid. He simply did what He had always done. Jesus departed from His disciples, “fell on His face, and PRAYED, saying, ‘O My Father...’” (Matt. 26:39).

God grant that you will learn to pray as Jesus did! For you should now understand how to use one of the most powerful tools in the entire universe. You have now been given *real answers* to unanswered prayer! 