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EDITORIAL



Roderick C. Meredith
Editor in Chief

The Way of Give

There are two fundamental ways of life—the way of *get* and the way of *give*. Although putting it this way may sound too simplified, the outcome of each of these two ways of life is profoundly different.

We have all been encouraged by people who are “givers.” They have a genuinely caring attitude—a mindset to help those around them. Yet while enjoying their human warmth, many of us “tune out” the message in their example, often considering them impractical or even naive because they don’t seem to be “looking out for number one.”

However, isn’t it interesting that the vast majority of these “givers” are *happy* people? Indeed, they often have a smile on their face. Most of them don’t seem to feel the need to see a “shrink,” to “find themselves” or to always “beat out the other guy.” They find quiet satisfaction in *giving* to their fellow human beings with whom they joyfully share this planet. They are at peace with themselves and their surroundings.

We all need to think deeply about this. Around 2,000 years ago, God sent a great “Light” into the world (John 1:4). He came to build up, to help and to serve others. Years after His human life was extinguished, one of His faithful servants was inspired to write, “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Are the givers *really* more blessed than others? Absolutely! I think my grandmother’s funeral may help illustrate the point. The church was packed for her funeral. Folks remarked that they had never seen such a turnout for someone who had outlived nearly all her friends. But Grandma had lived a happy and eventful life nearly all the way to her death at age 91. She gave and *gave* and *GAVE!*

After Grandma’s sister and brother-in-law were killed in an auto accident, long before I was born, she reared two of their children in addition to her *own* two sons—my dad and my uncle. So Grandma did a lot of “giving” in her own family. But it didn’t stop there.

As a young boy, I can remember helping Grandma carry baskets and boxes of food and clothing out to the “miner’s shanties”—an area outside of town where out-of-work mining families lived in tin shacks. I was

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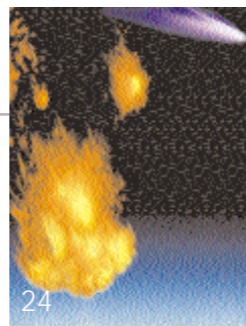
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Marriage and Family— Relics of a Bygone Age?



by Raymond F. McNair

In the face of more and more broken homes in our society, we should ask: Are marriage and family old-fashioned concepts whose time is past?

At the end of World War II in 1945, there was a widely accepted ideal of what the American family should be. This ideal family was headed by a father who financially supported, protected and nurtured it. He, in turn, would be assisted by a loving and supportive wife—the nurturing mother of their children. And children were looked upon as a God-given

faced with difficult times, family members would rally and find a way to overcome their problems. The family provided a very *solid foundation* for a stable, prosperous American society that came to be the envy of the world!

Just what has gone wrong, then, to produce our current bumper crop of juvenile delinquency, crime, violence and murder—including frequent instances of children killing

blessing. It's important to note that many American families lived up to this ideal as best they could.

But times have certainly changed. The sexual revolution, modern feminism and a general movement away from biblically based values have heavily impacted the traditional family. And now many are questioning whether or not it will long survive in Western culture. So we ask ourselves: Just what place do marriage and family have in an "advanced" society?

Crumbling Family Life

It is high time that we take a good, hard look at the topsy-turvy family life in America and in much of the Western World today. We need to see what is happening in this fundamental part of the very fabric of our society.

Unlike past generations, many now consider children to be a *burden*. Today's attitude of looking upon the lives of *unborn* children as having little or no value results in more than 1.5 million of them being *aborted* every year in the United States alone. So what was once considered MURDER (cf. Ex. 20:30) has, since the Supreme Court permitted it in 1972, been "legally executed" more than 30 million times!

As already mentioned, during the first half of this century *both parents* normally helped rear their children—nurturing and guiding them through life. Children raised in such an environment usually looked to their parents as *role models*. When

their own parents? What has happened to family structure in the United States and other Western nations in recent decades?

It is generally agreed that a *high divorce rate* is one of the biggest factors destabilizing American youth. For the last few decades, this country's divorce rate has hovered at about **one divorce for every two marriages**. In 1995, there were more than 2.3 million marriages and nearly 1.2 million divorces and annulments.

A *Time* magazine article on dating, marriage and divorce discussed this trend: "In 1992 Vice President Dan Quayle made his infamous Murphy Brown speech railing against single motherhood and was ridiculed by almost every social observer to the left of Pat Robertson. [But] less than a year later, social historian Barbara Dafoe Whitehead published an essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* titled 'Dan Quayle Was Right.' Citing studies that tracked the development of children raised by single parents, **she identified broken families as Public Enemy No. 1, responsible for a generation of sad and angry, underachieving youngsters....**

"It seemed that 1990s America was growing as disillusioned with *divorce* as 1960s America had grown with *marriage*. As [a] backlash against divorce, state legislatures [were attempting] to reduce what was still the *world's highest divorce rate....* As more ordinary Americans had actual experience of what happens with a 50% divorce rate, they too became concerned" ("The Ties that Bind," Aug. 18, 1997, pp. 48-49).

Newsweek magazine asks, "Can Generation Xers—many of them the children of divorce—make their own marriages last?" ("Down the Aisle," July 20, 1998, p. 54). Quoting Greg Owens—28 and newly married—"if you flip on the TV you don't see families anymore. Family life is not

part of the canon.... It takes a lot of faith to reinstate marriage into your vision of life" (p. 54).

Newsweek continues, "And never has more faith been required. 'Generation X' is a term often used loosely to denote the post-baby-boom generation.... It covers people born between 1965 and 1976. That span of years corresponds precisely to a *doubling* of the annual American divorce rate from 2.5 to 5.0 per 1,000 population.... More Gen-Xers are the product of divorced parents than any previous generation, leaving many of them emotionally conflicted about marriage—and at greater statistical risk of divorce themselves. Since many children of divorce have never seen a successful marriage up close, **they're bereft of role models**. And some measures that Gen-Xers are counting on to protect themselves from divorce—marrying later and living together before marriage, for instance—are of dubious value" (pp. 54, 56).

While there is certainly nothing wrong with waiting to get married in and of itself, for many it is simply an excuse to freely move from one sexual partner to another. And, of course, the more people who choose this course, the more people there are living alone—and the fewer families there are. This bears little resemblance to the traditional view based on the Bible, which states that "it is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Nevertheless, living alone has become a societal trend. There were only around 7 million Americans living alone in 1970. But by 1995 that figure had *doubled*.

Then there's the other alternative. Since so many now view marriage as a very risky arrangement, "more couples than ever before are *living together... whether as a prelude to marriage or a substitute for it*. In the early 80s, *39 percent* of women under 44 said they had lived with someone

before marriage. A decade later that figure had hit *53 percent*, and it's still on the rise. Ask Gen-Xers about *cohabitation*, and you'll hear, over and over again, that it's a key stage on the road to marriage" (p. 57).

But, explains psychologist Howard Markman of the University of Denver, "the bad news is, they don't have a clue how to make [these] relationships work" (p. 56). Indeed, many of today's young people have learned the hard way that living together before marriage is not all it's cracked up to be.

Newsweek continues, "Unfortunately, there's ample research to sug-



gest that **couples who cohabit are more—not less—apt to split eventually**. 'People like to call it a *trial marriage*,' says Michael McManus, president of Marriage Savers... in Bethesda, Md. 'It would be a better idea to call it a *trial divorce*'" (p. 57).

But Gen-Xers can't understand why this is so. Sociologist Larry Bumpass of the University of Wis-

consin says, "We would have expected the divorce rate to *go down* under those circumstances. [But statistics seem to show] that people marrying at later ages are divorcing at *higher* rates than they used to" (p. 57). Bumpass, however, tries to *justify* this trend of living together: "It's quite possible that cohabitation, is, in a sense, pruning off divorces that would otherwise have occurred. You have what a colleague of mine calls *premarital divorces*" (*Time*, pp. 49-50). Of course, even if true, this would only speak to the terrible state of committed relationships in

to 32.4% by 1996! (p. 711). Other Western nations are experiencing comparable rates of illegitimacy: Canada, 27%; Britain and France, 31%; Denmark, 46%; and Sweden, a whopping 50%! (1992 statistics).

Does all of this bode well for Western civilization? The avant-garde social engineers out there who want to see children raised by the state would say so. But history writes a different lesson. In his monumental work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, British historian Edward Gibbon mentions five major causes that led to the downfall of the ancient world's most powerful empire—one of the most important being a widespread weakening of the fabric of Roman families. Are the United States and other nations of the Western World going the way of ancient Rome? Many think we are.

Even Generation X seems to think that

modern society—that it's even worse than previously thought!

Sadly, it should also be noted that the result of couples living together before marriage includes countless premarital pregnancies. And many babies born into such "uncommitted," living-together arrangements will later be separated from one of their parents. In 1950 there were only around 140,000 births out of wedlock in the United States. But by 1993 that figure had risen to almost 1.2 million! (*Information Please Almanac*, 1997, p. 841). *The Wall Street Journal Almanac* shows a similar trend, noting that while only 3.8% of American children were born to unmarried women in 1940, this figure had skyrocketed

things have gotten out of hand. Faced with so many sad statistics, according to a 1997 survey by market-research firm Yankelovich Partners, "73 percent of Gen-Xers said they'd favor a return to more *traditional standards* in family life" (*Newsweek*, p. 56).

Just what is it about "traditional standards" that make them "work" so well? Did people "discover" them through trial and error? And again, do they really fit today's world?

The Real Author of Marriage

Did marriage and family merely *evolve* over many millions of years? Evolutionary biologists say yes, the-

orizing that man—*homo sapiens*—evolved from a common ancestor shared with today's primates by a process of "natural selection" or "survival of the fittest," and that the institution of marriage is a product of this same force.

But the facts of science, mathematical probabilities and simple reason demand that this marvelous physical universe must have had an intelligent Creator to bring it into existence. Indeed, creation *demand*s a Creator. Life *necessitates* a Life-giver. The immutable natural laws of science *require* a Lawgiver. The intricate design found in the universe—especially in the flora and fauna—*demand*s a Designer. Furthermore, evolution is an unproven and *unprovable* theory—insofar as science is concerned. But we *can* know all the same! For the Holy Bible REVEALS that Almighty God *created* all that exists (Rev. 4:11; Eph. 3:9).

But wait a minute! How can we know that the Bible's claims of divine inspiration are true? The proofs are actually too numerous to expound in this article. But Scripture's amazing track record of fulfilled prophecy, as regularly detailed in our publications, should be proof alone.

So as the Bible assures us, God created the universe, including this beautiful earth and its millions of life forms. And man is the very *pinnacle* of His creation. Man alone was made in God's image, and only he was given *dominion* over all other physical life on earth. "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish... the birds... and over every living thing....' Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen. 1:27-31).

What does the Bible itself say concerning the institution of marriage and family life? First, God made man: "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground... and man became a living being" (2:7). But God realized that the man was incomplete. He needed a suitable *helper*—someone on his own level with whom to share his life. "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'... And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man he made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.... Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (2:18-24). Thus, **God Himself ordained marriage** (cf. Matt. 19:2-9). Jesus confirmed this by saying, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (v. 6).

But why marriage? First off, it gives men and women one of the best opportunities to build character. Furthermore, this is the best environment for instilling godly moral values in children (Mal. 2:15). But there's an even bigger reason.

Few people are aware that the Hebrew word for God—*Elohim*, which is plural—does not imply a one-person God, but refers to a divine *Family* (cf. Eph. 3:15). Long before either the angels or the physical earth were created, God Most High and His "Son" (who was later born in the flesh as Jesus Christ) constituted the entire God Family (cf. Gen. 1:26; John. 17:24). But They had plans for "expansion"!

A thorough study of the Bible reveals that God's Family today consists not only of the Father and Son, but also includes those *human beings* who, through spiritual conversion,

have been begotten as God's spiritual "sons and daughters" (2 Cor. 6:18; cf. Rev. 21:7). All Spirit-filled Christians are in actual fact "children of God" (Rom. 8:16; 9:26).

But what *constitutes* a family? A *human* family is "a group of individuals [normally] living under one roof and usually under *one head*... *household*... a group of persons of common ancestry" (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed.). As Paul assured the Ephesians, "now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God**" (Eph. 2:19). God's Family includes all those who, as His children, share a "common *spiritual* ancestry" and look to the Father as the Supreme Head. The *human* family was patterned after the *divine* Family. Even marriage typifies the relationship between Christ and the Church (5:21-22; cf. Rev. 19:7-9).

Blessings or Curses

As our Creator, God is within all rights to tell us how to live our lives—including our *sexual* conduct. Remember, God *made* sex, He *made* love, He *made* marriage. He knows better than anyone how it all best operates. And the laws and principles He's given are to *help* us. So it behooves us to heed what He has to say in such matters—as, indeed, in *all* matters.

In earlier days, more respect was paid to God's Word. But today's hectic, modern world shows utter disregard for the customs and morals of yesteryear. This impatient generation is constantly in a hurry, and demands that its wants be satis-

fied right now! Thus, the soaring expectations of immediate gratification (especially in the form of *premarital sex*), rushed marriages and quickie divorces. Why are so many unwilling to wait until they tie the knot before sharing their bed with a lover? God refers to sex before marriage as "immorality" (cf. Gal. 5:19; Matt. 15:19). He says it is *sin*—a violation of His law (cf. 1 John 3:4). And so would most Americans have said—50 years ago!

But again, this liberal generation tends to thumb its nose at the taboos of the past, caring little or nothing for the *divine moral restraints* held sacred by previous generations.

Sadly, multitudes have learned through experience that there are many *pitfalls* in casual or even living-together sexual liaisons. Those who start living together out of wed-



lock are missing out on important aspects of what the Author of marriage had in mind when He ordained the sacred institutions of marriage and family! All too often, there is a high price to pay for casual living-together arrangements, bereft of the emotional and financial *security* that can only come from a valid, committed marriage, in which both spouses make a solemn, deep *covenant* with each other—and with

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How & Where Should You Worship God?

by Roderick C. Meredith

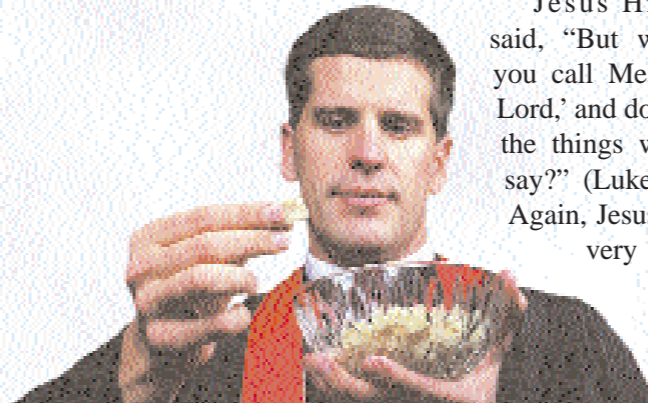
Because of the religious confusion in the world right now, millions of people are not sure *how* they should worship their Creator. They're not even sure of *where* and *with whom* they should worship.

Which raises some interesting questions: Does God have a true Church on earth today? A Church that actually teaches what Jesus taught? One that attempts to practice the *way of life* that Jesus and the early apostles taught and practiced? Or is the Church simply a conglomeration of the more than 400 sects and denominations in the Western World all professing some form of Christianity?

There is a genuine *answer* to these questions. But to truly *understand*, you will have to open your heart and mind to what the Bible says. You will have to look beyond human traditions and ideas—being willing to forsake what is “convenient” if it contradicts God’s very Word. You will need more dedication and courage than most of

James was inspired to write, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that *faith without works is dead?*” (James 2:19-20). Yes, even the DEMONS know that Christ exists. They *know* that He died for the sins of mankind and that He was resurrected. After all, as invisible spirit beings, many of the demons were probably there when it happened! They *saw* Jesus rise from the dead! But merely having this knowledge or belief is not enough.

Jesus Himself said, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Again, Jesus stated very clearly,



Holy Spirit. Again, the Apostle Paul declares, “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).

Through the supreme power of the Holy Spirit, Christ can and will live His life within us if we *actively surrender* ourselves and *yield* to His will. This is what *constitutes* true Christianity! **It is so simple.** It is so fully supported by literally dozens and scores of scriptures. And yet this clear definition of Christianity is practically NEVER agreed with or practiced by most professing Christian churches of this world!

Professor Rufus Jones explains in his landmark book, *The Church’s Debt to Heretics*, “If by any chance Christ Himself had been taken by His later followers as the model and pattern of the new way, and a serious attempt had been made to set up His life and teaching as the standard and norm for the Church, Christianity would have been something vastly different from what it became. Then ‘heresy’ would have been, as it is not now, deviation from His way, His teaching, His spirit, His kingdom” (pp. 15-16).

the religious leaders of Jesus’ day who “did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; **for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God**” (John 12:42-43).

Frankly, you will need to have a deep awe, respect and godly FEAR of your Creator in order to be willing to *do what He says*. For although most people want to *be* right, they don’t naturally want to *do* what is right! It’s far more convenient, for example, to simply “go along with the crowd”—following the customs and traditions of men—than to step out in faith and OBEY the clear instructions of the God of the Bible.

But if God is calling *you*, personally, to genuine understanding—if you sincerely desire to *do* what the God of creation commands—then read on.

The True Definition

It is amazing how modern theologians can confuse the issue of what true Christianity is all about. Many say that all one needs to do is “accept Christ”—*believe* that Jesus existed, *believe* that He died for our sins and was resurrected. Yet when confronted with this type of reasoning, the Apostle

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does the will* of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

So God is not interested in us merely having an empty *belief* or “dead faith.” For the true God of the Bible wants to make us *full* Spirit-born sons in His Kingdom. He wants to place within us *His* very nature and character. The inspired Peter wrote, “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16). To this end, we are told to *imitate* Christ—to *follow His example*: “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an EXAMPLE, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth’” (2:21-22).

Through the Holy Spirit within us, we are to imitate Christ’s perfect example of OBEDIENCE to God the Father. Jesus said, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10). The Apostle Paul also instructs us, saying, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

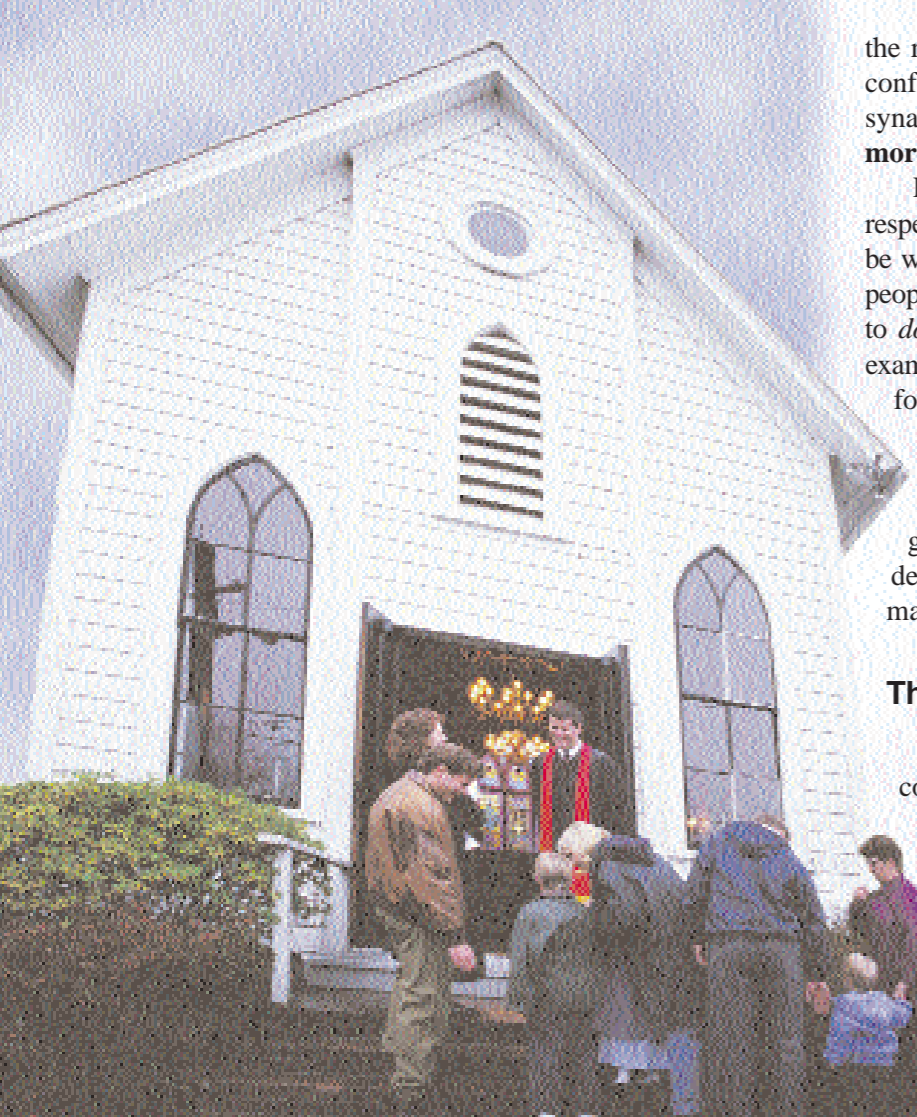
It should be clear that *true* Christianity involves *following the example* of Jesus Christ—living the *same kind* of life He lived, keeping *holy* the days He kept holy and letting Him LIVE HIS LIFE within us through the

What Jesus Taught

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His disciples, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:17-19). So it is clear that true Christians are to abide by *everything* that God commands.

Then Jesus went on to “magnify” the Ten Commandments just as Isaiah had prophesied (cf. Is. 42:21). Christ showed that we are not only to *refrain* from murder, but that even the “spirit” or *attitude* of murder in our hearts is *breaking God’s law* (Matt. 5:21-22). He then magnified the meaning of the seventh commandment, which prohibits adultery, by stating, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (v. 28). Therefore, in *magnifying* the Ten Commandments, Jesus actually made them *far more binding!*

Later, Jesus Christ declared, “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into



it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery” (Luke 16:16-18). Now the “law and the prophets” were *all the Holy Scriptures they had* until John the Baptist. It’s clear to see, then, that Christ’s *New Testament* message—a message that *not even the smallest part* of God’s law was to fail—applies to the whole Bible!

We see the identical message when a young man came to ask Jesus how to gain eternal life. Jesus Christ answered, “If you want to enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS” (Matt. 19:17). He then proceeded to name some of the Ten Commandments—clearly

and there are many who go in by it. [But] narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are FEW who find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

This true Church—this little flock—is described in Revelation 12. In the early verses, the inspired Apostle John describes how Israel gave birth to the Messiah: “She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne” (v. 5). Then John describes how the true Church had to flee the bounds of the Roman Empire and stay in “wilderness” areas for 1,260 “days” (v. 6). In biblical prophecy, a year is often referred to as a day (cf. Ezek. 4:6; Num. 14:34)—thus, the Church was to remain in the wilderness for 1,260 *years!* Note carefully how the events in this prophecy move forward some-

If you are genuinely willing to follow Christ and His teachings, you can find a Church that teaches Christ’s real Gospel.

indicating *which law* He was talking about (vv. 18-19).

Finally, after His death and resurrection, after everything had been nailed to the cross that was to have been nailed there, Jesus commanded His apostles, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (28:19-20). Notice that Jesus Christ *in no way* repudiated His very clear teaching to obey every one of God’s commandments. He *in no way* indicated that His apostles should now go out and preach a gospel of “cheap grace”—emphasizing belief in the *person* of Christ but **neglecting to preach His consistent message of obedience to the Ten Commandments as a WAY OF LIFE.**

Rather, Jesus told His apostles to go to *all* nations and teach them the *same* message He had been teaching the apostles for the past 3 1/2 years! So why aren’t professing Christian churches *doing* this? Is there a Church somewhere that is?

The Little Flock

If you are not afraid of leaving the “mainstream” of professing Christianity, *if* you are genuinely willing to follow Christ and *His teachings*, you can find a Church that teaches Christ’s *real* Gospel. It is a small Church. And, as prophesied, it is a persecuted Church.

Speaking of His true disciples, Jesus said, “Do not fear, *little flock*, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). And Jesus had already explained, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction,

times scores and even hundreds of years.

Verse 7 brings us clearly to the END-time “war in heaven,” when Satan makes one final assault against God, is defeated and is cast down to earth. Then, ENRAGED against God and His true saints, Satan “persecuted the woman [that is, *spiritual* Israel, the true Church] who gave birth to the male Child” (v. 13). Once again, the true Church is guided by God to flee to the “wilderness” where she is supernaturally protected.

Notice God’s description of His faithful saints: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who KEEP the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). Thus, those who constitute this “woman”—the *true Church*—obey God’s commandments. God’s *own* description of His true Church is of a small, persecuted flock that **KEEPS** His law! It does NOT resort to all manner of clever theological arguments such as stating that the Ten Commandments were “nailed to the cross” or that the Apostle Paul “did away” with them, making them now a mere “general guideline” to Christian living, etc.

Finally here, look at Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” True Christians, then, **KEEP** God’s commandments—and have throughout the centuries.

To learn more about the history of God’s true Church, write or call for a copy of our booklet titled *God’s Church Through the Ages*. It will be sent to you free upon your request.

Finding God’s Church Today

Besides the fact that God’s Church would teach *obedience* to the Ten Commandments and follow the **EXAMPLE** of Christ and the early apostles, there are a number of other keys that clearly identify it. One of the most obvious of these is the *name* of the Church.

Curiously, most churches seem to have little concern with the *biblical* example. But they should. For Jesus commanded, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). Christ also stated in His heartfelt prayer before He was crucified, “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, **keep through Your name** those whom You have given Me, that they

may be one as We are” (John 17:11).

So *is* there a special name given in the Bible for God’s true Church? Yes there is! And it is clearly listed **TWELVE TIMES** in the New Testament! The book of Acts quotes Paul’s instructions to the Ephesian elders, saying, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the **church of God** which He purchased with His own blood” (20:28). *Which* Church were the elders to shepherd? “The **CHURCH OF GOD.**”

Paul also wrote to the “Church of God” at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). There he commands, “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the *church of God*” (10:32). Later, Paul admonishes the Corinthians about those who might disagree with His instruction: “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the *churches of God*” (11:16). Still later in this same chapter, Paul warns the brethren that they must always take the Passover in a faithful manner: “What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the *church of God* and shame those who have nothing?” (v. 22).

As Paul introduces his second epistle to the Corinthians, he again states the official and *biblical* name of the true Church: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the **CHURCH OF GOD** which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia” (1:1).

Whether in the singular or the plural form, there are *six other places* where this official name of the Church—i.e. Church of God—is used (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9;

Gal. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15).

Additionally, the true Church of God today will be doing the *Work* of God. It will be preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God just as Jesus did (Mark 1:14-15) to the entire world. In fact, Christ prophesied that “this *gospel of the kingdom* will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). To really understand that message, please send for our free booklet, *Do You Believe the True Gospel?*

So *where* is the true Church that is teaching full obedience to the Ten Commandments and that *really does* follow the example of Christ and His apostles? The Church that preaches the Gospel of the Kingdom—the proclamation of Christ’s coming **RULE** on this earth as King of kings? (Rev. 11:15). The Church to which the Holy Spirit gives *understanding* of end-time prophecies and that is truly **WARNING** the whole world about the coming Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, as explained elsewhere in this magazine? And *where* is the Church that has the very **NAME** of God—the *biblical* name for the true Church?

IS there such a Church on earth today?

What Should You Do?

If God is opening your mind to real understanding through the *World Ahead* television program, our magazine or our booklets, you should **ACT** on the Truth that He is revealing to you. For “to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Again, God tells us through James, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (1:22). Remember Jesus Christ’s own warning, which we looked at earlier: “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

So what *should* you do? God inspired this message found in the book of Hebrews: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (10:24-25). We *do* need other dedicated Christians to help us grow, and to “stir up” one another to love and to good works.

Most scholars acknowledge that the original Apostolic Church met regularly on God’s Sabbath Day—the day on which Jesus and the apostles *always* worshiped. And in one of the earliest instructions regarding the

(continued on page 29)

When Tempers Flare

by Douglas S. Winnail

We live in a world increasingly characterized by thoughtless acts and senseless violence. People attack—even kill—other human beings over perceived slights, arguments or for no apparent reason at all. News reports chronicle incidents of road rage, shocking accounts of domestic violence and ugly hate crimes. Most of these horrible acts are perpetrated by individuals venting pent-up anger and frustration. Some later admit that they simply weren't thinking or that they lost control of their emotions and went crazy—*temporary insanity*, as it's called.

The Bible reveals that a major contributing factor to thoughtless and violent actions is people being “without self-control” (2 Tim. 3:1-3). Out-of-control individuals hurt others and eventually destroy themselves. Societies that foster uncontrolled behavior are heading for destruction.

But how do we develop self-control? How do we get a handle on our emotions? Why is our modern society *so deficient* in this important quality? Why are *secular* programs in violence prevention, rage management and anger control so seemingly *ineffective*? The answers are found in the Bible—a source often ignored for solutions to modern societal problems. Yet the Scriptures provide valuable and vital guidelines for managing emotions. One of every true Christian's basic goals is “bringing *every thought* into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). The challenge is: *How* do we do this?

To begin with, we need to understand that anger is an emotion God made us capable of expressing. The Bible reveals that God Himself gets angry—but only at sin! We are told in Ephesians 4:26, “When angry, do not sin” (*Amplified Bible*). It is not necessarily wrong to get angry. But it *is* wrong to *sin* when angry. We might be quite justifiably angered when our sense of right and wrong is violated, when we see evil being done to someone, lies being told, innocent people being hurt. But that is no reason to do something evil in return. For such retribution would be sin—breaking God's law (cf. 1 John 3:4 KJV). Reacting thoughtlessly and violently when our feelings get hurt or when we don't get our own way can, moreover, lead to other sins and even worse consequences! The critical factor is how we *handle* anger. And that is a matter of *learning self-control*.

One key to controlling our emotions involves coming to understand ourselves—*why* we act like we do. Most human behavior is *learned*—at least in part. If we are prone to impulsive action and emotional outbursts, chances are we *learned* such behavior from our parents, relatives, neighbors, school peers or coworkers. We may have observed such behavior portrayed on television or in movies. And the message we may have internalized from the public displays of thoughtless, violent emotion we've witnessed is that it's okay—that it's socially acceptable because “everyone does it.” Furthermore, venting emotions and telling people off can make us feel good because we've “said our piece.” Or sometimes we find that we can “explode” and then get our own way. Unfortunately, many today grew up in the 60s, exposed to philosophies that said, “If it feels good, do it” or “Just let it all hang out”—which promote the idea that anything goes and encourage the shedding of limits or inhibitions. It's no wonder that so many today lack emotional control.

Now to be fair, it's widely recognized and accepted that there is also a *genetic* component to many, if not most, types of human behavior. It has been proven that certain individuals have a genetic *predisposition* to engage in any number of destructive behaviors or lifestyle choices. Substance abuse, criminal behavior and, yes, even violence are all examples. But awareness of human genetic makeup playing

some role in certain destructive and sinful behavior patterns has become a pitfall for modern “armchair psychology.” For, aside from some rare, debilitating neurological disorders, none of us are held hostage to our chromosomes. Even if we are *predisposed* toward alcoholism, for example, it's still our choice whether or not to walk that path. And for those who do, there is a “learned component” to the process. They weren't “fated”!

The good news is that harmful and destructive behavior we have learned somewhere along the line can be *unlearned* and *replaced* by more constructive behavior. This involves *growing* and *changing*. In biblical terms this is called *repentance*. The Greek word for repentance in the New Testament is *metanoeo*, which means to change direction, to turn with sorrow from a past course of action, to begin to think and act differently. In order to get a handle on our emotions we must make changing in this way a major goal in our life. We must begin to live by a new set of priorities. The world we live in conveys the message that it's macho and cool to fire from the hip, tell people off and blow them away—or that if you are a victim of something, you are not responsible for your actions or reactions. However, the Bible states quite plainly that a quick-tempered person is a *fool* and that a *wise* person will control his emotions. If our goal is to become wise and thereby avoid acting like a fool, we will be rewarded with honor instead of shame (Prov. 3:35). This *new goal* can be a powerful motivation for behavioral change.

To achieve this new goal of emotional control we will need to *find and follow sound principles*. We will need specific guidelines for developing new behavior. The book of Proverbs is filled with practical information on this subject. We are told that “in the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who refrains his lips is wise” (10:19). We learn that “a fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame [overlooks an insult]” (12:16). We are advised that “he who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction” (13:3). We are taught that “he who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive [displays] folly” (14:29). We are also told that “soft” words dispel anger, whereas harsh replies do just the opposite (15:1).

The Bible emphasizes that we can learn how to control our behavior and that, with sound principles in our *mind*, we can then “teach our lips” to respond appropriately (16:21-24). When we come to understand sound principles, that knowledge can then influence our actions. The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to help us grow in wisdom, understanding, judgment and discretion (1:1-5). As we develop wisdom and discretion we will be less inclined to exhibit angry, impulsive reactions (19:11). We will turn our focus away from revenge and retaliation

(20:22; Rom. 12:19-21). We will realize that hastily spoken words are the actions of a fool—not a wise person—and that the consequences will be negative (Prov. 29:20; Eccl. 5:1-7).

The teachings of New Testament Christianity are clearly based on these *Old Testament* principles. Jesus taught that our thoughts determine our actions—that the principles we hold in our mind govern what we say and do (Matt. 12:33-35). He also explained that we would be judged by our words and deeds and rewarded accordingly (vv. 36-37). The Apostle Paul instructed Christians to “walk in wisdom.... Let your speech always be with *grace* [i.e. be pleasant and kind], seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer each one” (Col. 4:5-6). James advises, “Let every man be *swift* to hear, *slow* to speak, *slow* to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20).

But *knowing* and *doing* are two different things. The Bible—as does common experience—clearly indicates that only the *doers* will be rewarded! So how do we go about actually controlling our emotions?

First, we need to *study these principles regularly* (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs. Reading and thinking about a chapter a day for a month—several times a year—will help implant these principles deeply into our minds. We will then develop more of the mind of Jesus Christ—and of God the Father (Phil. 2:5). As we learn to think like God, our actions will begin to change.

Second, we need to *pray* about emotional control (Matt. 7:7-11). *Ask God for help* in this matter on a regular basis. David, a man sometimes known for impulsive actions, prayed, “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing” (Ps. 141:3-4). He asked God to help him change (51:7-10).

Finally, we need to *stir up and use God's Holy Spirit* (2 Tim. 1:6-7). We do that by praying, studying and meditating on the Scriptures and then striving to live God's way of life. James reveals that learning to use, and being led by, God's Spirit is the real key to emotional control and that the results will be evident in our conversation and our conduct (James 3:13-18).

The fabric of modern society—and many of our lives—is being damaged and torn apart by human emotions surging out of control. Our world has been deceived and has lost sight of sound principles for guiding human conduct (cf. Rev. 12:9). In the Bible, God provides us with a divinely inspired “Handbook” that contains keys to success for developing emotional self-control. Our challenge is to learn to effectively use these timeless principles.

The Sermon on the Mount— Part 1

by John H. Ogwyn

How important is happiness? It's a quest that millions pursue. Nevertheless, very few ever truly achieve it. Why is that?

The Western World is awash in material goods. In a number of ways, the average person in our society lives in greater comfort than the richest rulers of previous centuries. For all of this prosperity, however, it seems that countless numbers of people are frustrated and feel empty inside. *Why* should this be? Could it be that there is far more to happiness than prosperity and physical comfort?

The quest for happiness has proven to be not only elusive, but also *expensive*. Billions of dollars are spent each year in gambling. From state-run lotteries to riverboat casinos, money comes pouring in from people in pursuit of happiness. The very existence of a megabillion-dollar entertainment industry is further evidence of the seemingly endless pursuit of pleasure.

Along with happiness, people are increasingly seeking inner peace in this age of anxiety and turbulence. The self-help movement has become another billion-dollar industry in modern America. And if you won't help yourself, there are always drugs. Both legal and illegal, they promise to make all our problems go away.

But despite all our searching, the suicide rate is near an all-time high. It is the second-leading cause of death among young people. So once again, why, in the midst of so much abundance, is there such frustration and emptiness?

Could it be that there is a *spiritual* component to happiness that's been overlooked? The Creator of mankind sent along an instruction book with His "product." That instruction book is the Holy Bible, which contains the missing dimension in human knowledge—the *spiritual* dimension.

It's true that, throughout history, people have tried to fill the spiritual void that lies at the core of their feelings of frustration and emptiness. Their approaches have fallen into one of two categories—*emotion-centered* religion or *rule-centered* religion.

Those whose religion has been emotion-centered have placed an emphasis on producing ecstatic feelings, often with the aid of music. In various cultures throughout the centuries, mystics and charismatics have sought to attain an emotional high through the medium of religion.

Others have emphasized the meticulous following of rules and rituals. The Pharisees of Christ's day, for instance, had deduced 613 laws from the first five books of the Old Testament and had amplified each of them with numerous oral traditions. Their scrupulous observance of rigid and minute regulations produced in them a feeling of superiority to the common people.

A Religious Revolution

The true religious teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth were and are nothing less than revolutionary! True Christianity certainly evokes emotion—love, joy, concern for others. And true Christianity is structured upon rules—the law of God, as magnified by Christ Himself. And yet the ultimate end of Christianity is neither emotions nor rules. It's something far greater!

The very goal of following God's revealed way of life and living by His rules is to effect an *inner transformation* of the mind and character. In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ laid out the very *essence* of Christianity. At the beginning of this discourse, He explained seven distinct traits of character that produce ultimate happiness—happiness that persists even in the midst of persecution, outward pressure and turmoil.

With this article, *The World Ahead* begins a three-part series to examine in-depth what is undoubtedly the most important section of the entire Bible. **For in the Sermon on the Mount, our Savior Jesus Christ teaches us not only what God's way of life is, but also how to internalize it!** Nowhere can we better learn just how to become true sons and daughters of Almighty God.

First off, let's look at the meaning of happiness. The Sermon on the Mount is recorded in chapters 5–7 of the book of Matthew. It begins with what

are generally termed the *Beatitudes*, nine verses that start with the word "blessed" in most English translations. "Blessed" is a translation of the Greek *makarios*, a word some other Bible versions render as "happy." The *Interpreter's Bible* states in its commentary on this section, "The Greek word rendered blessed is used in pagan literature to denote the highest stage of happiness and well-being..." It is the equivalent of the Hebrew word *'ashre*, which means "how happy." Indeed, the very word "beatitude" comes from a derivation of the Latin word *beatus*, also meaning "happy."

True happiness isn't something generated from the outside. The kind of happiness that Christ describes in the Sermon on the Mount isn't dependent on external events or situations. In fact, **Jesus teaches us that real happiness endures even in the face of persecution and martyrdom** (5:10-12).

The entire message of Jesus Christ centered on the coming Kingdom of God (4:17). At the beginning of His ministry, in the Sermon on the Mount, He explained what is expected of those who will inherit this Kingdom. Near the very end of His ministry, recorded in Matthew 23, Christ explained to those who *assumed* they were the Kingdom's heirs—the Pharisees among

them—why they were not (cf. 21:43-45). Rather than deep inner happiness and contentment, they were destined to receive grief, sorrow and woe. Why? Because their attitudes and actions demonstrated a hollow, superficial approach to religion. Christ called them hypocrites and "blind guides" (cf. 23:23-24).

Most would assume that a sense of personal adequacy and strong self-worth is a necessary part of true happiness. Jesus Christ, however, revealed that the very opposite is true. He began His sermon with these words: **"Blessed [how happy] are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"** (5:3). Who are the "poor in spirit" and what do they have that leads to happiness?

The Greek term here translated as "poor" literally means "beggar." The poor in spirit, then, are those who harbor no illusions of their own spiritual self-sufficiency. They are deeply aware of how inadequate their own humanly generated spirituality and righteousness really are.

Perhaps the place in Scripture that best illustrates this point is the parable of Christ recorded in Luke 18:9-14. We are told in
verse 9



Seven Keys to True Happiness

that “He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” The story that Jesus Christ recounted was of two men who went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican—that is, a tax collector.

The Pharisees prided themselves on their meticulous observance of the entire law according to an elaborate, but quite unnecessary, oral tradition that they had developed on their own. The publicans, on the other hand, were despised as employees of the hated Roman government—and, indeed, many of them were actual thieves.

The Pharisee made an elaborate prayer in which he thanked God for his supposed superiority to other men. He recounted to God a list of his religious accomplishments to buttress this claim. But the publican, we’re told, wouldn’t so much as raise his eyes to heaven. Instead he confessed his own unworthiness and asked God for mercy.

And it was the publican, according to Jesus Christ, who went away justified (v. 14)—that is, restored to a right relationship with God.

The starting point for true happiness and inner peace is to realize that none of us can meet our own spiritual needs. We can’t generate *real* spiritual power within ourselves. What we *can* do, however, is to be profoundly aware of our need for a Savior and to beseech the Creator of the universe for His help and

mercy. As the Apostle James explained, “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). Those who truly confess their inherent spiritual bankruptcy and look to God to supply that need will be the real heirs of the

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.**

**Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be filled.**

**Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.**

**Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons of God.**

—Matthew 5:3-9

Kingdom. They are on their way to happiness and contentment that will last forever.

Next, Jesus said something in His sermon that on the surface appears to be self-contradictory: **“Blessed [how happy] are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”** (Matt. 5:4). Mourning or grief would appear to be the very antithesis of happiness. Why, then, would Christ list this as one of

the seven aspects of character that would lead to inner happiness and contentment?

The Prophet Ezekiel recorded a vision in which he saw a group of people set apart by God to be spared the prophetic judgments that were to come upon Israel. They are described as those who “sigh and cry” for the abominations of their people (Exek. 9:4). In other words, they are deeply moved and troubled by the sin they see around them and the painful consequences it produces. And hating the sin they see in themselves, they are able to genuinely repent. The grief they experience in struggling to overcome sin and in observing the corruption of the outside world, however, is only temporary. Like a righteous man of Christ’s day named Simeon, they are awaiting the “consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25).

Christ’s promise to such people is one of comfort. Those who have come to truly hate sin and who are deeply grieved by it are the heirs of a Kingdom that will be built upon righteousness. They can look forward to the time when the pain and sorrow that constitute sin’s legacy will be forever banished. They will be the heirs of an age in which God Himself will provide comfort (Rev. 21:4).

The third character trait Christ emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount is listed in Matthew 5:5: **“Blessed [how happy] are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”** The Prophet Daniel recorded that in the end time, the God of Heaven will abolish the governments of this world and set up a Kingdom that shall never be removed (Dan. 2:44). The true saints of God are destined to literally rule as kings and priests with Jesus Christ on this very earth (Rev. 5:10).

While promising His apostles the future responsibility of sitting on thrones and ruling the various tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29-30), Christ emphasized that they must be prepared to administer a Government vastly different from any they had ever known. Christ taught them that as rulers they were to exemplify an attitude of humble service rather than one of domineering vanity. Meekness, the very opposite of haughtiness and self-will, is a character trait of inestimable value to God.

Now meekness is in no way to be equated with weakness. Jesus Christ set us the perfect example, “who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). Those who are truly meek let God fight their battles for them. They are not involved in the strife and contention that derive from rampant self-will.

They will be heirs of the Kingdom that is to come.

“Blessed [how happy] are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). This is the fourth vital characteristic that Jesus taught His disciples to build. What is it that we most deeply desire and yearn for? The Apostle Peter paints one of the most vivid word pictures in the Bible in 1 Peter 2:2. He declares that Christians are to desire God’s Truth with the same eagerness and anticipation that a newborn baby desires its mother’s milk. Anyone who has ever seen a nursing infant has an idea of what fervent desire is really all about!

Psalms 42 begins the second section of the book of Psalms, a section the Jews traditionally associated with the festival season of Pentecost. It opens with a description of the deep, insatiable thirst that the psalmist had for God and His ways. “Righteousness” is obeying God’s commandments (119:172). And the thirst for it can only be quenched by God’s Holy Spirit, the rivers of living water that Christ offered (John 4:14).

Physical appetites can never be permanently satisfied. But Christ holds out to those who hunger and thirst after the ways of God the promise of being *truly* filled. Those who have faithfully endured the trials and pressures that are prerequisite to entering God’s Kingdom (Acts 14:22) will never again experience that inner longing that gnaws

away like hunger and thirst (Rev. 7:16-17). They will have access to the waters of life and to the fruit of the tree of life (22:1-2). And they will be like God (1 John 3:2), perfect in character.

“Blessed [how happy] are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). This fifth quality emphasized by Christ is yet another characteristic that goes against the grain of human nature. We naturally respond in retaliation and vengeance. How hard it is to untangle ourselves from hurts and grievances! “It’s not fair!” we say.

In Matthew 18:21-35 we find a parable that Jesus told to illustrate the matter of forgiveness. Simon Peter had come to Christ and asked Him if he should be willing to forgive his brother as many as seven times! Imagine his surprise when Christ told him that the number of times he must forgive his brother was “not seven, but *seventy times seven*.” Peter’s first thought may have been, “But I couldn’t keep track of that many times!” And that, of course, is the whole point. We are not to be “keeping score.” Rather, we must be ready to extend mercy and compassion continually. After all, we need God to extend it to us continually.

Those individuals in whose heart bitterness and resentment are

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MEANINGFUL ARTICLES

This is the first time I've read your magazine, and was inspired by several of your articles and your words of faith. It is so wonderful to have the world's destruction that's going on around us explained to show God's Word at work. All that we are experiencing now was warned of in the Bible. I appreciate how you explain it in layman's terms.

I'm incarcerated right now, but the magazine has been a great source of reading to me and will continue to be when I'm released. No magazine has been so inspiring.

M.M.
Santee, California

I am really enjoying the *World Ahead* magazine. The article on the year 2000 (July-Aug. 1998, p. 4) is indeed frightening, and also true. I have read it several times and will continue to study this serious matter.

Mrs. Frank L. Richards
Gary, Texas

I've just read in the July-August *World Ahead* about the euro vs. the dollar, the violence in schools and on television, and drugs being the *in thing* for this present and perverse generation. The things the prophets foretold are coming to pass—and at an alarming rate. We all should be in prayer more than we have been. I need to be.

Being a father of five children, I'm very concerned about their welfare and salvation. I just recently suffered my aunt being viciously murdered and thrown on a canal bank in Arizona. In

such worsening conditions, I thank you for your informative magazine—and your love.

Berkin Howard
Ione, California

I am writing to you after going through your March-April 1998 *World Ahead* magazine. It was very good and much appreciated. I was fully delighted to read the articles "God and Man—A Universe Apart?" by Thomas E. Robinson and "He Shed His Blood For Us..." by Rex I. Sexton. God bless you.

Chris C. Ejelonu
Lagos, Nigeria

Today I found your May-June 1998 issue of *The World Ahead* and I really enjoy all the different articles, so much so that I told my wife that the magazine staff is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. I am so thankful to see a Christian magazine that is telling the truth about God's holy Word. I was beginning to wonder if I had been misreading the Scriptures, but I feel that this is confirmation from the Holy Spirit regarding my studies. Please send me the booklets mentioned and any other material that may help me in my studies. Thank you.

Daniel Williams
Abilene, Texas

MAGAZINE LIFE-CHANGING

May I convey my gratitude and sincere appreciation to you and your team for the March-April 1998 issue of *The World Ahead* with the cover story, "The

Dark Hole of Alcoholism." May the Lord continue to guide you in your good work for the people of this world.

After reading through the article, "How Can You Be Sure You're Converted," I now realize where my life is heading at the moment. I now know that I must sit down and reassess my whole life. For I understand that the Second Coming of the Lord is not far away.

I am now referring to the Bible more often to better understand the passages cited in *The World Ahead*. I used to read the Bible only once or twice a week.

Geita Doura
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

It has been a very good time in my life from the moment I picked up your magazine, *The World Ahead*, which I have found to be very nourishing spiritually. I have been uplifted and have come to understand some hidden puzzles in the Bible.

Before, I believed I was the worst sinner and that God wouldn't pardon me. But when I picked up your magazine and started reading, I came to realize that there is hope for me yet. Please send me more of your literature because I don't want to return to the things of the world. May God bless you and your families for your good work.

Frank Omondi
Oyogis, Kenya

I found your magazine lying on my desk one day and felt really blessed when I read the cover, which said, "Answers to Unanswered Prayer." The article inside was really good, and my faith was increased as I read it. I would really like to be a subscriber to *The World Ahead*. I must say that I found the magazine very informative, and I am looking forward to reading more of your publications.

Rennita Bentich
Georgetown, Guyana

I have enjoyed your publications for quite some time now and I usually find myself agreeing with your well-researched articles. Your magazine has told me a lot about myself. It points out things that I have to change. I thank God for adding my name to your mailing list. Keep up the good work.

Lola Nin
Port Vila, Vanuatu

BOOKLETS INFORMATIVE

I just finished my first reading of your new booklet, *The Holy Days—God's Master Plan*. I must congratulate you all on having done such fine work! I learned a lot and will certainly read through it again.

Dwayne McDevitt
Monroe, Washington

I received your brochure *America and Britain in Prophecy* and am just overwhelmed by the wealth of information contained within it. The colorful illustrations and easy-to-read typeset are also really well done. I thank you for such a wonderful brochure.

William V. Dunn
New Albany, Indiana

I enjoyed your booklet *Christianity's Greatest Deception*. I am interested in learning more about how to honor our God and follow Jesus.

Tim Donham
Angleton, Texas

Since reading your booklet, *The Beast of Revelation*, I want to read more of God's true Word. What I have read so far has helped me better understand what is to come. I thank you very much for your publications.

Bryon Gross
Manchester, Kentucky

The reason for this letter is that I have just finished reading your free brochure *The God You Can Know!*, and I must say that I'm practically speechless. A neighbor loaned his copy to me this morning and I can't quit thinking about several of the chapters ("The Mind of God," "The Life of God," "Man's Incredible Potential!"). Thank you.

Richard Pegg
Pendleton, Indiana

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

EDITORIAL

(continued from page 3)

embarrassed to be there doing this—but not Grandma. She would go in with a big smile, a hearty greeting and cheerful good humor and laughter. She seemed to genuinely *love* these people and wanted to help them. And she would often go back—bringing *more* food and good cheer. Many of these people got to *know* Grandma and tried to thank her in little ways over the years.

If all that wasn't enough, Grandma also wrote encouraging letters and cards to people she knew *all over the nation*. She prayed for them. She sent them gifts and flowers on appropriate occasions. She would telephone or personally visit the sick or discouraged members of her church—regularly—and sometimes take them food as well.

And despite all that, it still seemed that she always had *lots* of time and love to share with me, her only grandson.

When Grandma finally went to sleep at age 91, there was an *outpouring* of people from all walks of life in attendance at her funeral. There was hardly room for all the flowers and cards. People *felt* her love. They knew that she was a *giver*, and expected nothing back from them.

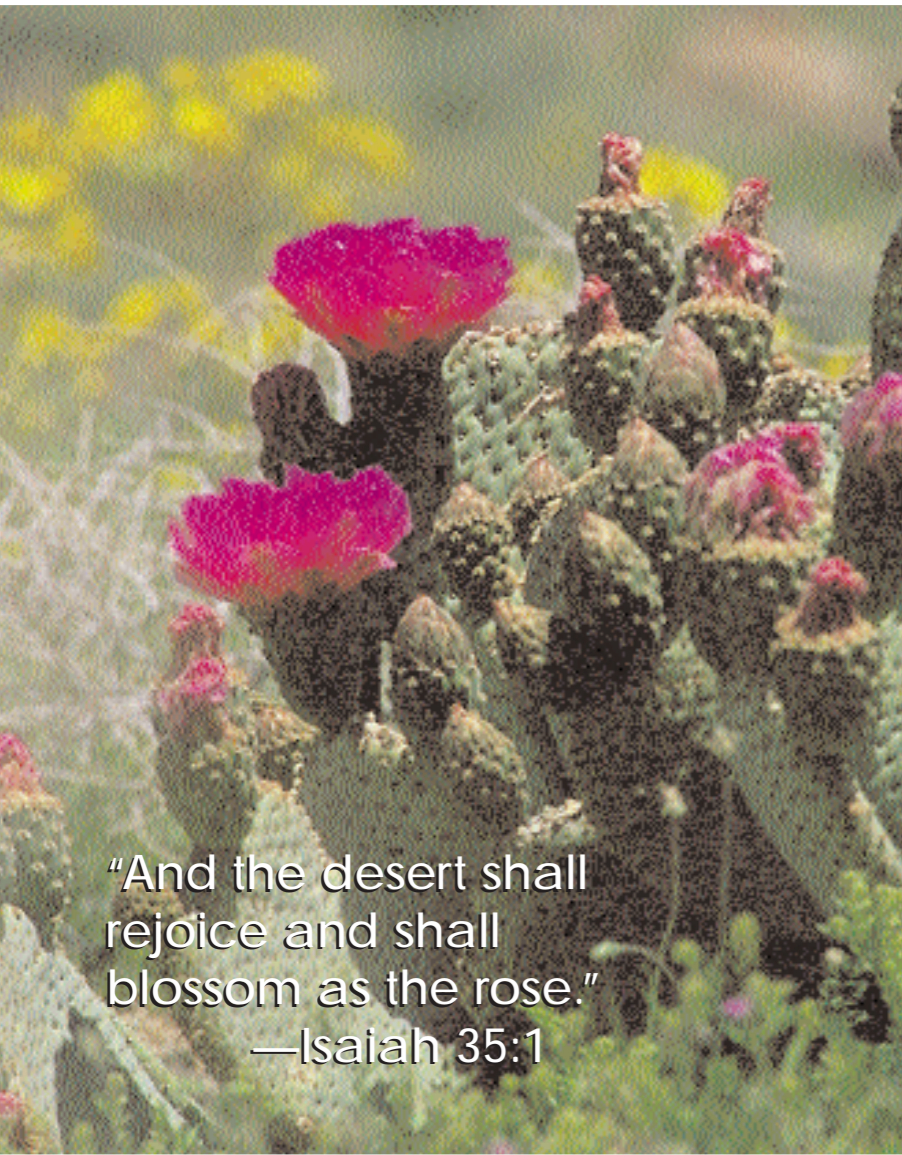
God's inspired Word tells us, "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself" (Prov. 11:25). And again, "There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches" (13:7).

Wise giving will in no way hurt the giver, and will help, serve, and bring happiness to others. Jesus said, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt. 16:25). We who know the Truth can help give one of the greatest gifts of all—the precious knowledge that leads to eternal life. God says, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

Let us *all*, then, try to become *givers* in every phase and facet of our lives. We will never be sorry. And in this vein, let us joyously join in this Crusade to reveal the full Truth of God to a sick and dying world. For as we grow in the way of *give*, we will become more and more like God—the greatest Giver of all! (1 Tim. 6:17; James 1:17). And we will be that much farther down the road to true happiness and ultimate fulfillment.



Millennium — The Reign of Christ



“And the desert shall rejoice and shall blossom as the rose.”
—Isaiah 35:1

by Colin Adair

After all, the Bible had spoken of a thousand years when the saints would rule with Christ over the nations of the earth. Perhaps it was only natural for many to believe that Jesus would establish this 1,000-year reign at the beginning of a new millennium according to their calendar. But He did not. Consequently, there was general disappointment among Christians at that time.

When the year 2000—or more correctly the year 2001—arrives, it is highly possible that much of Christianity will once again be disappointed. But they need not be. For although Scripture does not tell us *when* the Kingdom of God will be established on this earth, it leaves no doubt whatsoever that it nevertheless will be!

What Is the Millennium?

The term “millennium” is actually not found in the Bible. It is of Latin origin, meaning a period of 1,000 years. And as we’ve already seen, a 1,000-year reign of Christ and the resurrected saints *is* mentioned in the Bible. We read in Revelation 20:4-6, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for

the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.... They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

In his book, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, historian Edward Gibbon acknowledged that early New Testament Christians embraced the doctrine of the Millennium as one of the fundamental beliefs of the Christian Church:

“The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of

Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. By the same analogy it was inferred that this long period of labour and contention which was now almost elapsed, would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon the earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection” (chap. 15, sec. 2).

So what happened to this belief? As time passed, it was regarded by many as being only an analogy, and gradually it was almost entirely discounted as part of a mainly symbolic book. The truth of the revelation that Jesus Christ gave to the Apostle John had been cast aside, as were many of the original truths held by the Apostolic Church.

However, through the centuries, a fair number of Christians continued to believe in the Millennium in some fashion. Unfortunately, many of their ideas have involved major departures from Scripture so that there now exist a number of different concepts about the Millennium.

Various Interpretations

There are three main schools of thought concerning the Millennium. The first is called **amillennialism**. Advocates of this interpretation reject the idea of a *literal* Millennium, believing the 1,000 years to be *figurative* usage for a long period of time. They believe that we should not look for any *coming* Millennium because, in their view, the “Millennium” is *right now in progress*—in what they call “this Gospel age.” Amillennialism gives a mystical meaning to the many Kingdom promises in the Old Testament. It claims that when the Old Testament speaks of Zion, it refers only to the Christian Church. It makes no differentiation between the physical nation of Israel and the Church—that is, the spiritual body of Christ. (While it is true that *at times* the words “Zion” and “Israel” in the Old Testament may refer to the Church in a spiritual sense, or even have a dual meaning, these

terms most often refer to the people of ancient Israel or their modern descendants.) Amillennialists contend that Satan is presently bound, a position that is in direct contradiction to Scripture and is clearly at odds with the omnipresent evils that still abound in this present age.

The second view is called **postmillennialism**. Promoted by Daniel Whitby in 17th-century England, this interpretation maintains that the present Christian Church will, with the preaching of the Gospel, root out all evils and thereby bring about the Millennium—with Jesus Christ, from *heaven*, reigning spiritually over the earth for 1,000 years. In this view, the Second Coming of Christ will occur *after* the Millennium, when He will initiate a Judgment and bring an end to the present order. However, throughout history no righteous age brought about by Christians has ever taken place. Nor is it *now* taking place. In fact, the world is becoming more *evil* rather than more *righteous*. So this view has lost a lot of credibility and currently has few adherents.

The third school of thought on the subject is called **premillennialism**. This interpretation, more in line with Scripture as we will see, teaches that the Second Coming of Christ will immediately *precede* the Millennium. At His return, the present age of man ends. Jesus then restores the Kingdom to Israel and reigns for 1,000 years. Adherents of premillennialism claim that during the 1,000-year time frame mentioned in Revelation 20, all the Kingdom promises of the Old Testament will be fulfilled. Premillennialists insist that a Kingdom set up *on earth* is the only possible interpretation of these promises. This wonderful time will feature the binding of Satan and the destruction of sin.

What the Bible Says

While there may be differing views on the subject, the truth is easily discovered if we let the Bible be our guide.

We need to ask if the restoring of the Kingdom to Israel was an integral part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Apostolic Church. Immediately before Christ ascended to heaven, the apostles asked Him a question: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to

Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:6-7). Notice that Jesus *did not* say they were way off base. He *didn't* say, "What are you talking about? There's not going to be any Kingdom!" Nor did He say that the Kingdom was already here in the hearts of men or would later be established in heaven. Indeed the question asked by the apostles was valid. His reply that they would not be told *when* the Kingdom was to be established in no way implied that it *wouldn't* be established.

Earlier, when the Apostle Peter told Christ that he and the other disciples had forsaken all to follow Him, Jesus promised them that they would "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:27-28). Here we see another reference to this Kingdom—the

"And I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

—Revelation 20:4

Kingdom of God—which, in a sense, will be the ultimate fulfillment of the ancient kingdom of Israel.

In Acts 3:21, Peter mentioned that Jesus Christ had ascended to heaven until the times of restitution (or restoration) of all things, which God had spoken through the prophets since the world began. Since Adam and Eve rejected God and His rule, mankind has gone its own way. The result has been a world governed by Satan with all the attendant evils of war, misery and suffering. But through His prophets, God promised time and again in the Old Testament that He would restore the right way of life to a regathered nation of Israel and indeed to the whole world. Of the dozens of scriptures that detail this wonderful promise, let's look at just a few from the book of Isaiah.

Chapter 11 states, "It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time to *recover* the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (vv. 11-12).

And in chapter 27: "It shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD will thresh, from the channel of the River [Euphrates] to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day that the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem" (vv.

12-13). Notice here that Israel will worship God *at Jerusalem*—not in heaven. Clearly these verses are speaking of a literal regathering of the descendants of the Twelve Tribes to their homeland in Israel, where Christ will rule them along with all the nations of the earth.

Perhaps the most well-known of verses pertaining to this literal coming Kingdom on earth is in Isaiah 2: "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people: they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore'" (vv. 2-4).

It is obvious that this verse is speaking about a literal Government established at Jerusalem—also known as Zion. Why? Because *nations* are mentioned, *people* are mentioned, and *peace between them* is spoken of. And it will all happen upon the grand restoration that will occur when Jesus Christ returns to this earth from heaven.

Literally dozens of scriptures attest to a time of Israel's restoration and peace on earth among nations brought on by God's intervention and Christ's return. But is this for 1,000 years—a millennium? Is the doctrine of this time period biblical?

The Millennium Is Literal

Let's once again look at Revelation 20 and see the time order of events that occur after the Second Coming of Christ. Satan is chained, shut up and restrained for 1,000 years (vv. 1-3). Verses 4-5 reveal the reward of the resurrected saints: "And I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished."

So the saints will *rule* and *govern* with Christ for 1,000 years. Where will they reign? On the earth, as we saw earlier, when Israel and all nations are restored, which Christ revealed to the twelve apostles when He foretold their reward of ruling the tribes of Israel. Common sense

(continued on page 28)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Please explain what the Bible means when it talks about "fasting."

Fasting—abstaining from food and drink for longer than one normally would between meals (Ex. 34:28; Esther 4:16)—has been a tool for getting closer to God since at least the time of Moses, when he fasted twice for 40 consecutive days (Deut. 9:18). Elijah and Christ both fasted for the same length of time (1 Kings 19:8; Matt. 4:2). Of course, these particular instances of going so long without food and water were almost certainly made possible by miraculous help. Nevertheless, they—along with examples of much shorter fasts—can teach us valuable lessons.

Spiritual fasting draws us closer to God through *humility* (cf. Ps. 35:13 KJV). In fasting properly we acknowledge that our life is not sustained by our own power but by God. That's humbling.

Fasting can also be a way to FOCUS. The more we fast, the more we should be able to concentrate totally on God, and not on our own pursuits or the pulls of the flesh—since we are not at the time feeding the flesh. Our only sustenance during a fast is *spiritual*. We "eat" the "Bread of Life," and "drink in" of God's Word and Spirit.

When Christ ended His 40-day fast, He was extremely hungry. Satan tried to get Him to put the pursuit of food and physical needs before obedience to the Father (Matt. 4:1-4). And Satan uses the same tactics on God's people today. Our Lord's response, even in extreme hunger, was: "**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God**" (v. 4). It is not ultimately the food we eat that sustains us. Life and the means to fulfill its inherent needs come from God (cf. 6:25-33). Christ answered Satan's temptation with the straight truth—*man lives by the words of God*, not by physical sustenance!

Actually, Christ was quoting here from Moses: "So [God] humbled you [Israel], allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna... that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD" (Deut. 8:3). This is what the hunger of fasting is to help teach us. Our *real* life is not in the flesh. It comes from humbly seeking and obeying God. Notice how God humbled the Israelites by allowing them to experience hunger. He then fed them with manna—bread from heaven. God was both establishing Himself as their heavenly Provider and showing that life comes from Him. Later, Christ expounded on this passage and told us clearly that *He* is the Bread of Life from heaven, and that whoever eats of this Bread would live forever! (John 6:48-51). Fasting, then, helps us to see our own "nothingness" without God. That's why Christ says not to use fasting as a way to "show off" our righteousness to others but to do it privately and humbly (Matt. 6:16-18).

Since fasting is a tool to help us become more humble, so that God can lift us up (James 4:10) and we can draw closer to Him, it is empowering! Indeed, if you are having a strong trial in your life or some evil influence that you just can't seem to overcome, Jesus showed us that sometimes success is found only through prayer *and* fasting! (cf. Matt. 17:14-21).

But fasting must never be done in an attempt to force God to do something. Sadly, this is a common misconception. The purpose of fasting is to seek God and *His* will in our life (cf. Ezra 8:21), NOT to try to force *our* will on God (Is. 58:4; cf. James 4:3). Like Christ's, our attitude toward God should be, "Not *My* will, but *Yours*, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Fasting is a time to humbly learn to be more like God. Our Heavenly Father is kind and gracious. He is a giver and a forgiver. Meditating on what He has done for us should inspire us to stop disobeying Him and to start helping others. God says, "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that

you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him...?" (Is. 58:6-7). We are to emulate God by helping to provide for the needs of others as He does for us. We are also to focus on being forgiving. We are to seek God's way of life. Then He will hear our cries and answer our prayers (v. 9), and heal and protect us (v. 8). If we are willing to do without a little food and water to wholeheartedly seek Him and His way of life, He promises us that bread and water will be sure! (v. 11).

Now, are we *required* to fast? Jesus said that His true servants *would* fast (Matt. 9:15). Moreover, on one of God's Holy Days—the Day of Atonement—we are *commanded* to "afflict our souls," i.e. fast (Lev. 23:27; cf. Is. 58:5). But besides this day, how often and how long should we fast? It is according to one's particular needs and ability. For one person it may be one day every few months or so. For another, it may be for several days at a time. It should be noted that many people are physically unable to fast for more than a few days at any one time. It would be best to check with a physician before going on an extended fast or fasting too frequently. God looks on the heart—not on the number of days our bodies can endure before we collapse. God expects us to exercise wisdom.

Fasting, then, should be done from time to time by true Christians unless health conditions prevent us from doing so. It should be a private matter between us and God and should be done in an attitude of humility, service and forgiveness. It should be to seek His will in our life, not to force our will on Him, and to learn that He is our Provider and Sustainer. When we fast in this way, God will answer our prayers because they will be according to His will (cf. 1 John 5:14). He will then also provide us with the life-sustaining "bread" we need—physical, but more important, spiritual. For man does not live by bread alone. Man lives by every word of God!

Are You Ready for the *Day of the Lord?*

by Rex I. Sexton

"Get ready for the Day of the Lord!" cries the fiery preacher. Those in the audience listen almost in terror as the pulpit-pounder describes horrifying phenomena that he says will soon engulf the entire earth. In graphic detail they hear that the sun and moon will cease to give light, that heavenly bodies will collide with the earth, and that plagues will stalk the land—disease, starvation and war! Great earthquakes will topple whole cities as fierce and relentless storms punish men, women and children. Thus will Almighty God lash out in anger and exact cruel revenge on a sinful mankind! "The time of judgment is at hand, and you had better be ready!" the voice thunders through the loudspeakers.

But, we might ask, is this picture of the Day of the Lord accurate? Does the Bible teach that "gloom and doom" is all there is to this period of time? Is Jesus Christ going to return to the earth merely to destroy it? Just what is the Day of the Lord anyhow?

The Bible refers to this same time in a variety of ways. The expression "Day of the Lord" is synonymous with the "day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12), the "day of the Lord

Jesus" (2 Cor. 1:14), the "day of judgment" (1 John 4:17), the "great and awesome day" (Joel 2:31), the "day of vengeance of our God" (Is. 61:2) and the "great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). Other passages simply refer to this time as "the day," "that day" or the "day of God."

Regardless of how it is referred to, however, it's going to be the most awesome time in all of human history! And it's imperative that you *understand* what will happen during this period and the incredible changes it heralds for this earth!

In its broadest sense, the Day of the Lord simply refers to the era wherein God will take control of the earth. Right now we are living in the "day of man," since God has granted mankind temporary rule over this planet. The Bible also indicates that we could refer to this time as the "day of Satan," since Satan is now the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "deceives the whole world" into following his social and religious systems (Rev. 12:9). But his influence on the earth is only temporary according to God's purpose.

The Bible reveals that Jesus Christ will remain in heaven only "until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). Thus, something that used to be here is going to be put

back in place. But what was removed that needs to be restored? The answer is simple—God's direct rulership over the entire earth! It will be restored during the Day of the Lord.

Now there are actually four different ways of reckoning the Day of the Lord as we will see. First off, it is...

One Day!

More than 2,500 years ago, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a disturbing dream. In it, he saw a vision of a huge statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay (Dan. 2:31-33). As he was admiring the statue, a supernatural stone came out of the sky and smashed the statue's feet and toes! The entire statue then collapsed into dust and was blown away by the wind, with no trace left behind. Then the stone quickly grew into a great mountain that filled the entire earth! (vv. 34-36).

The only one able to explain the vision was the Prophet Daniel, who at that time was a captive serving in Nebuchadnezzar's court. Daniel explained to this king of Babylon that the statue represented a succession of empires that would dominate the known world from that time forth.

The final stage of these governments—represented by the feet and toes of mixed iron and clay—would be an alliance of ten separate nations. During the time of their kingdom, the God of Heaven will come to the earth to destroy every vestige of these nations and their governments and to establish His own Kingdom that will last forever! (vv. 41-45).

The Day of the Lord is referred to in some scriptures as the day of the final battle—when Jesus Christ and His army of angels defeat the army of the final human empire. Not surprisingly, this final empire is referred to as mighty "Babylon," now falling for the second time! (Rev. 18:2). Jesus Christ foretold that on this day He will be visible in the sky like lightning. "For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day" (Luke 17:24).

The final cataclysmic battle takes place at Jerusalem. The Prophet Joel gives some vivid details of the devastation that will take place, beginning with an alarm of war being sounded: "Blow the trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD is coming, for

it is at hand" (Joel 2:1). He then goes on to describe an immense army coming down to Jerusalem—an army including soldiers from virtually every nation on earth!

These armies will be gathered by Satan and his demons in one last desperate attempt to prevent the Kingdom of God from being established on this earth! "For they are the spirits of devils, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). But their efforts will be for nothing as they are defeated before the returning Christ. Indeed, His weapons will be earthquakes, a hail of fiery stones from heaven and a "plague" that virtually melts soldiers away while they are still standing (16:18, 21; Zech. 14:12-13). Modern weapons, destructive as they have become, will nevertheless be no match for the infinite power of Jesus Christ!

Then, after the battle is over, Christ will ascend the throne of rulership over the entire earth and at last establish His Kingdom: "And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—'The LORD is one,' and His name one" (v. 9). So the Day of the Lord can correctly be understood as the day of the final bat-

tle at Jerusalem—the day when all the combined armies of the world are defeated and the Son of God establishes His rulership over the earth.

These momentous events, it should be noted, take place at the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15; 16:17). However, a number of scriptures also include events that precede it, identifying them too as part of the Day of the Lord. So it is also correct to see this "day" as...

The YEAR of Trumpets and Plagues

The Apostle John opens the book of Revelation by telling his readers that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (1:10). According to *Vine's Dictionary of the New Testament*, the Greek word *herera*, translated here as "day," can mean a "period of undefined length marked by certain circumstances.... The Day of the Lord is the Day of His manifested judgment on the world" (pp. 270-271). This understanding is borne out by the message of the book—the visions John saw and recorded for us concerning this awesome march of events that culminates in Jesus Christ's Kingdom being established here on earth! Christ also included what will happen just prior to His

return as part of “the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (cf. Luke 17:28-30).

Leading up to these events is a series of ever more frequent and intensifying calamities, the first manifestations of which occurred shortly after Christ’s *First Coming*. They are represented by the opening of “seals” in Revelation 6. The first four seals are known as the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” They describe false Christianity, war, famine and disease epidemics. The same global problems were also foretold by Jesus Christ directly (Matt. 24:1-12). When the fifth seal is opened, Satan initiates a great persecution of true Christians (Rev. 6:9) This will also be the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7)—when the devil is allowed to vent his wrath on the nations that have been enjoying the blessings of Abraham (for more understanding on this critical topic, please write for our free brochure, *America and Britain in Prophecy*). The “Beast”—the Europe-centered world government foretold in Revelation 13—will no doubt rise to power at this time. As this combination of civil and religious rule enforces its “mark” upon all mankind, true followers of Jesus Christ who refuse to receive this mark will be afflicted, hated of all nations, betrayed and in some cases even martyred for their refusal to disobey God! (v. 16; Matt. 24:9-10). This time is referred to by Jesus as the Great Tribulation (v. 21) and will be Satan’s last attempt to harm the people of God!

These events signal the beginning of the 3 1/2-year countdown to the final battle! According to Revelation 13:5, the Beast will rule the earth for 42 months (3 1/2 years). This same period of time was revealed to the Prophet Daniel as the time when

this powerful church-state union would come like a whirlwind into the “Glorious Land”—i.e. the Holy Land (Dan. 11:40-41)—and would shatter the power of the “holy people” for “a time, times, and half a time” (12:7). In other words, again 3 1/2 years—figuring a “time” as representing one year in prophecy.

This period of the enforcing of the mark of the Beast and of the Great Tribulation will end “*after two days... on the third day*” (Hosea 6:2). And using the prophetic “day-for-a-year principle” (cf. Ezek. 4:6; Num. 14:34), that means after two *years*, during the third *year*. Then, “immediately after the tribulation,” terrifying heavenly signs will be seen (Matt. 24:29). These heavenly signs—visible phenomena in the sky—constitute the *sixth seal* of Revelation (6:12). They occur between the persecution of God’s people and the beginning of His wrath upon the earth. The Prophet Joel tells us that the heavenly signs will occur *before* the Day of the Lord: “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth... The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD” (Joel 2:30-31).

The tumultuous and chaotic events Joel writes about earlier in the same chapter occur after the heavenly signs and during a period leading up to the great Day of Battle. Over the course of this period the “seven trumpets” of the “seventh seal” are sounded (Rev. 8–9). Each trumpet brings a new plague upon the earth as God, in His great mercy, begins the process of leading deceived and defiant human beings to repentance so that Jesus Christ can rule them. This time is heralded as the “great day of His wrath” (6:17)—a “day” that, again follow-

ing the “day-for-a-year principle,” is referred to in Isaiah 34:8 as one *year*: “the DAY of the LORD’s vengeance, the YEAR of recompense for the cause of Zion.” That year will include the most intense part of God’s wrath upon sinful mankind. Thus, 2 1/2 years of the Great Tribulation will be followed by the one-year Day of the Lord—together making up the final 3 1/2 years before Christ’s return.

On the heels of these tremendous events and their culmination in the immense battle at Jerusalem, a new era in history begins! And the Scriptures reveal that the Day of the Lord will then continue throughout...

The Millennium

The wonderful truth that Jesus Christ is going to establish His Throne—*His Kingdom*—upon the earth and rule with His saints for 1,000 years is well-documented in Scripture (Rev. 11:15; 20:4). When Jesus returns as *King of kings*, He will land exactly from where He left—the Mount of Olives, just east of Jerusalem (cf. Acts 1:9-12; Zech. 14:4). From that time forward, He will begin the healing process for the nations and teach people to obey God’s laws—so much so that the knowledge of the true God will cover the earth as water now covers the seabeds! This wonderful time of peace and rebuilding is pictured for us in the book of Isaiah: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (11:9).

Throughout history, many Bible scholars have traditionally believed that God has allotted a time period of 7,000 years to deal with mankind. In

this “7,000-year plan,” each day of the week is understood to represent 1,000 years, with the “seventh-day Sabbath” as the final millennium—when Jesus Christ will rule the earth and give it rest from the influence of Satan the Devil. The Day of the Lord sometimes refers to this 1,000-year period, as it is the “day” when the Lord will rule the earth. The Apostle Peter seems to have been referring to this particular understanding in 2 Peter 3: “But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise.... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night” (vv. 8-10).

The traditional understanding of this seventh thousand-year period being the time of Christ’s rule and therefore the Day of the Lord is documented by a number of historical writers. For instance, there is an account that at creation God revealed that the world exists for a total of seven days of a thousand years each, and has decreed that the seventh constitutes a “Sabbath” (cf. J.H. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, 2 Enoch 32–33, quoted in “Millennium,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Revised*, vol. 3, p. 357).

Also, the author of *The Epistle of Barnabas* (c. A.D. 130) wrote, “The six days of creation mean a period of six thousand years because a thousand years are like one day in the eyes of God. In six days, that is in six thousand years, everything will be completed, after which the present evil time will be destroyed and the Son of God will come again and judge the godless... and he will truly rest on the seventh day. Then will dawn the Sabbath of

the millennial kingdom” (15:1-9, quoted in *ISBE*, p. 358).

The Bible also confirms the identification of the Millennium as a 1,000-year-long Sabbath day in the book of Hebrews—where the author uses the keeping of the Sabbath as an illustration of the “rest” or reward that Christians are to be striving to enter. “For there is a place where it is said, concerning the seventh day, ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all his works’.... For if [Joshua] had given them rest, God would not have spoken later of another ‘day.’ So there remains a [Sabbath]-keeping for God’s people. For the one who has entered God’s rest has also rested from his own works, as God did from his. Therefore, let us do our best to enter that rest” (4:4, 8-11 *Jewish New Testament*).

So the Millennium itself, in some cases, is represented as a “day”—indeed, the Day of the Lord. Isaiah 19 and numerous other references in the Prophets describe the time when Jesus Christ will be ruling over the nations and teaching them His ways. The phrase “in that day” often occurs in these passages and should in this context be understood as meaning the Millennium—the Day when the Lord rules the earth and all its nations!

But the Kingdom of God will not end after the 1,000 years are finished. In fact, God’s Kingdom will continue to increase! (Is. 9:7). Finally, then, the Day of the Lord, meaning the time when the Lord will rule, can also be applied to...

Eternity Beyond!

In the broadest sense, the Day of the Lord begins just before the Millennium and continues through the

endless eons of time afterward—for all eternity! Daniel was told in no uncertain terms just what would happen: “But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (Dan. 7:18).

Adding a dual meaning to a passage we examined earlier in 2 Peter, the apostle seems to also include events *beyond* the Millennium—when the earth’s surface and atmosphere are burned away—as part of the Day of the Lord (3:10).

Revelation 21 gives us a glimpse of the new heaven and earth that will replace what we know today: “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God’” (vv. 1-3).

So God the Father and Jesus Christ will dwell for all eternity with those who have been born into Their Family! God proclaims, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (v. 7).

So, incredible as it may sound, each one of us has an awesome invitation from Almighty God, the great Creator of the universe, to spend *His Day*—ALL ETERNITY—ruling with Him over the vast universe. What a “day” that will be!


Are *you* ready for the coming Day of the Lord? 

MILLENNIUM
(continued from page 22)

would lead us to the same conclusion. For there are *no* nations in heaven, but there are *many* nations here below. But we need not rely solely on common sense. For the Bible explicitly says that the saints “shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10).

We have only scratched the surface regarding the many prophecies given about Christ’s rule on this earth during the wonderful World Ahead. But it should be plain to see that the Bible speaks of the Millennium as fact, not fiction. It definitely shows that the Millennium will begin with the return of Jesus Christ, when He will resurrect to glorified eternal life all the Spirit-begotten Christians who lived and died in the faith. Nowhere in the entire Bible do we read of the Millennium starting *long before* Christ’s return. It should also be evident that mankind cannot bring about the Millennium merely by preaching about Christ and trying to root out evil. For nearly 2,000 years man has tried—yet we still do not have peace on earth.

Jesus Christ has been calling out of this world a people to constitute His Church and to prepare to rule with Him when He returns. The Church’s mission now is to proclaim the Good News of the coming millennial rule of Christ and to preach all the truths of the Bible, including the way of salvation.

Christ, we may safely state, will not return by the first year of the next millennium, since many prophecies are yet to be fulfilled—prophecies that require more time than remains in our current millennium. But when the third 1,000-year period of the Common Era begins on January 1, 2001, we will be that much closer to God’s direct, miraculous intervention in our sin-sick and corrupt world. Let’s pray that the biblical Millennium will come soon. We all need it urgently. 

MARRIAGE
(continued from page 7)

God. Absent this important commitment, when the hard times come, it’s far too easy to just “walk away.”


And as society drifts farther and farther from God, it plunges ever more deeply into the sewer of immorality—accepting more and more perversions as “lifestyle choices.” It’s no longer a surprise that in today’s mixed-up world, rather than confining their natural, God-given sexual urges to a married relationship with someone of the *opposite* sex, many men and women prefer to seek out *unnatural*, dead-end gay or lesbian relationships. Gay and lesbian activists are even demanding that state and federal governments legalize *same-sex marriages*. How times have changed! Those who engage in *unnatural*, same-sex relationships are denied the natural love and care of the opposite sex, and cannot come together—as “co-creators with God”—to produce *children*. And homosexual relations are clearly *condemned* by a loving God, who knows that they are not in the best interests of mankind (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27). If it were otherwise, God would have sanctioned same-sex marriages.

The all-wise God who designed marriage and family intended that each man or woman choose a life partner of the *opposite sex*, and then deeply commit himself or herself to a lifelong marriage! Through marriage, each one would be able to *enjoy* life to the fullest (cf. Ps. 128:1-4; Prov. 5:18-23). And by living in a God-designed marriage, everyone can learn more about the relationship between the Creator and His people—ultimately intended, as mentioned, to culminate in an eternal

spiritual marriage and Family.

The sacred institution of marriage was so important that God protected it with two of His Ten Commandments—the seventh and the tenth: “You shall not commit *adultery*.... You shall not covet your neighbor’s *wife* [or husband]” (Ex. 12:14, 17). God’s Word says that *curses* will fall upon those who commit marital infidelity (cf. Mal. 3:14-16; Heb. 13:4; Prov. 7). And: “Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away” (6:32-33). But sadly, many polls and studies have shown that marital infidelity is rampant in our modern world. And the consequences of infidelity are legion: sexually transmissible disease, guilt, shame, jealousy and broken homes!

Yet the divine Author of marriage describes the fantastic *blessings* to be reaped by those who obey His commands—including being faithful to their mates—in a verse cited previously: “*Blessed* is every one who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be *happy*, and it shall be *well* with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD!” (Ps. 128:1-4).

No, marriage and family are *not* obsolete concepts. They are as central to God’s plan and purpose today as they ever were! May the Great God help us diligently strive to build strong, solid families by obeying His Word. Only then can we experience the profound joy and happiness to be found in marriages blessed by God! 

WORSHIP
(continued from page 11)

Sabbath, we read, “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings” (Lev. 23:3). A “convocation” is a *commanded assembly*. It is NOT a “tea party” at which you may or may not attend at your pleasure. If you are truly interested in obeying the God of the Bible, write or call and request a copy of our *free* booklet, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, the Apostle Paul was inspired to describe the true Church as the “body” of Jesus Christ. He states, “But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary” (vv. 20-22). And in verse 27 we read, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He had a physical body that He used in the service of others. He helped and blessed and healed through His *hands*. His *feet* took Him all over the land of Israel. With His brain and His mouth, He taught, trained, encouraged and inspired His people.


Today, Christ is the living, active HEAD of the true Church of God (Eph. 1:22-23). He uses *our* bodies, *our* minds and *our* mouths to do His Work. And even as the various parts of the human body function as one unit, we likewise should work *together* to finish the Great Commission that Christ has given His Church. *Each* of us has strength, talent and zeal to contribute to the body as a whole. And so God’s people should *worship* together and *work* together to prepare for the coming Government of God to be set up on this earth under Jesus Christ and His saints (Rev. 2:26-27; 5:9-10).


If any of us “just stay at home” to worship God, if we “hide” our light under a bushel (cf. Matt. 5:14-16), *how* can we honor our Creator? *How* can we learn the LESSONS of giving, sharing, forgiving and working together as a team under the leadership of Jesus Christ in preparing for His Kingdom? Our Savior said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

Now what if *Jesus* had just “stayed home,” concerned only with His *own* eternal life? Not a pleasant thought, is it? But it should illustrate to us that if we are to follow Jesus’ example, we will definitely worship *with* others in the true Church of God. We will develop an even deeper and more patient Christian love by working *together* to do the Work of God. And, meeting regularly with other true followers of the Living Christ, we will make many new friends, and we will be *inspired* by one another and by the preaching of the TRUTH each week. Moreover, we will be letting Christ work with us through His Church—His “body”—to better prepare us for *our part* in His soon-coming Kingdom.

Again, if God is opening *your* mind to His precious *Truth*, you need to ACT. You need to begin worshipping with the true Church of God, which is *called by His name*, which is *preaching His Gospel* and which is *doing His Work*. You are now in touch with that true Church, which Christ has protected and guided all these years!

The Global Church of God has offices around the world. Write us or call us if you would like to fellowship with others who *truly* want to follow the example of Christ and the original apostles. Our addresses and phone numbers are listed on page three of this magazine. And we have local Churches or video groups meeting regularly in many parts of the world that are led by trained ministers or dedicated lay representatives. *No one* will show up at your door unless you ask for a visit. Our representatives will always call or write ahead and make an appointment at your convenience.

So “step out in faith.” Give us a call or write us a letter. ACT on the Truth that God has been revealing to you! Then you will soon be among caring, loving people who have real PURPOSE in their lives. They will warmly and enthusiastically welcome you. They will encourage you and pray for you. And then you will—probably for the first time in your life—be in the fellowship of the *true* Church of God on earth today. 



Surprising as it may seem, much that masquerades as Christianity today is actually a continuation of ancient pagan religion. What, then, was the real religion of Jesus Christ and His apostles? And how was it subverted?

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Christianity's Greatest Deception**

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SERMON ON THE MOUNT (continued from page 17)

never allowed to take root are on their way to true happiness and contentment. They are easily moved with compassion and quickly extend mercy and forgiveness to others. God promises that they need not fear, for they in turn will receive mercy from the Creator.

A sixth vital character trait emphasized by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount is purity of heart and motive. **“Blessed [how happy] are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”** (5:8). This attribute is the very opposite of hypocrisy. The word “hypocrite” comes from a Greek word meaning an *actor* on the stage. In the Greek dramas of the first century, actors wore masks while they recited their lines. Christ likened some of the religious leaders of His day to those actors. For many of the Pharisees were simply playing a part. They “wore a mask” that appeared to be very religious and holy. They followed countless rules and rituals. But behind this disguise, their inner lives weren’t permeated with genuineness and purity of motive.

James says that “pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Religion that is purely motivated reflects itself in helping those who are unable to help you in return. A desire to reflect the mind and attitude of Jesus Christ, rather than to impress other people, is what God is after in

each of us. Those who are pure in heart will ultimately see God. Revelation 22:4 anticipates a time when the saved “shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”

The seventh distinct aspect of character to which Christ points is that of being a peacemaker. **“Blessed [how happy] are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”** (Matt. 5:9). Peacemakers aren’t out spreading gossip and rumors, stirring up strife between individuals and among groups. Rather, a peacemaker pours oil on troubled waters and has a calming effect on those around him.

People the world over express a desire for peace, yet there is very little peace to be found. And there’s a reason for that! Humanity simply doesn’t know the *way* to peace (Rom. 3:17). Peace is the *result* of something, but most people have no idea of what. The key is found in Isaiah 32:17: “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.” Peacemakers are practicing *righteousness* as a way of life. When that way fills the earth, peace will result. The peacemakers have God’s nature and attitude, and they are destined to be called His children forever.

In Matthew 5:10-11, Christ explained that those who exemplify the seven traits of character we’ve just examined will possess happiness and inner peace, even when they’re persecuted and reviled by a world that hates the ways of God. Indeed, this very persecution is a sign to them

that they are living a godly life and walking in the footsteps of past martyrs—including Christ Himself. And they can endure it all joyfully, for they have a hope and confidence that stretches beyond the here and now.

The *purpose* of real religion—*true* Christianity—is neither to well up with emotion, nor to mechanically follow a set of rules and regulations. Rather, it is to take on the very nature of Almighty God, the very mind of our Savior Jesus Christ (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). To be sure, the only way to achieve this end is to yield ourselves to God and obey His law. And just as sure, if we are following God’s way of life, we *will* experience and even display powerful positive emotions. Nevertheless, the *purpose* and *end* of Christianity goes *far beyond* emotionalism or rule-keeping. It involves an *inward transformation*—becoming the very sons and daughters of the Living God.

Real happiness and peace of mind aren’t derived from any material things of the world around. As Christ set the tone for His teachings about the Kingdom, He began by describing the character of those who were to be the heirs of that Kingdom. And it is from this character, the inner values of the heart and mind, that eternal happiness springs.

In our next issue, we will examine “letting our light shine” and the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount—how Jesus Christ *magnified* the law of God. 