

# THE WORLD AHEAD

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

May-June 1999



*Europe—*

The  
New

***Babylon?***

*And on page 4— Meltdown of Morality*

# THE WORLD AHEAD®

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## From the Editors

### The Way of Peace They Have Not Known

Unspeakable tragedy has once again rocked the Balkan region. For hundreds of years, this area, the birthplace of World War I, has been a minefield of ethnic tension and hostility. The last explosion happened between the Serbs and Croats over Bosnia. Yet as awful as that was, this time it may end up being worse. Reports from Kosovo—a Yugoslavian province of mainly ethnic Albanians seeking political autonomy—tell the horror story of armed conflict, forced marches, boarding of trains to concentration camps and mass executions of Kosovar Albanian men, ages 16 to 60, by Serbians. Not since World War II has Europe seen such large-scale brutality and genocide.

Yugoslavian, i.e. Serbian, paramilitary troops have gone door to door, telling Kosovar Albanian women, both young and old, they must immediately leave their homes and evacuate the area or be executed themselves. They have, thus, been forced to seek asylum as refugees in neighboring republics. But it's not a matter of just walking to the border. The trek, for many, includes treacherous climbs over mountainous terrain, with young girls trying to carry their grandmothers and just barely making it—or not making it.


Worse still, since NATO airstrikes began, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic has intensified his program of "ethnic cleansing" so that, at the current rate, it is estimated—at the time of this writing—that the entire province of Kosovo would be totally "purged" in less than three weeks!

Jesus Christ prophesied that growing ethnic strife would precede his Second Coming, saying that "nation [Greek *ethnos*, i.e. 'ethnic group'] will rise against nation [*ethnos*]" (Matt. 24:7) as part of the "beginning of sorrows"—i.e. of *birth pangs* (v. 8; cf. Gk. Strong's No. 5604). And just as birth pangs come with ever-increasing frequency and intensity, so will ethnic conflicts.

Perhaps situations like Kosovo will be a driving force in bringing about the European superstate that is the subject of our cover story. But that will by no means put an end to the waging of war. The UN has not. NATO has not. And neither will the "new Europe"—though they may succeed for a time. Indeed, the world is going to get a whole lot worse before it gets better.

Why? Because man does not know the way to peace: "The act of violence is in their hands.... Wasting and destruction are in their paths. **The way of peace they have not known...** they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace" (Is. 59:7-8).

The only answer is the message proclaimed by this magazine—the Gospel of God's Kingdom. Christ is going to return to this earth soon, *enforcing* world peace (9:6-7) and bringing a *change* to men's hearts. Yet the Gospel also teaches that peace is available *now*—through living by the commands of God. Indeed, God has given us an annual Festival—Pentecost—that represents the bestowal of His Holy Spirit in this age (cf. Acts 2) to enable His servants to actually *obey* His law. This year, it is observed on May 23.

For the rest of the world, peace will not come "until the Spirit is poured upon [all mankind] from on high [after Christ's return].... Then.... the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Is. 32:15-18). At long last, the fighting will be over: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (2:4). What a glorious age that will be! 

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#### Europe— The New Babylon?

With the introduction of the euro—the Continent's new common currency—European economic integration is almost finished. But as the publishers of this magazine have been teaching for decades, that's only *part* of the story....

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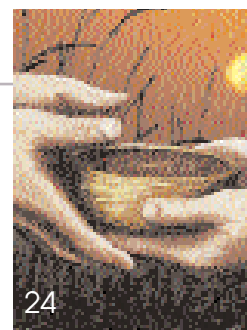
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**M**any now seem to believe that when it comes to their leaders—whether political, military or even religious—it doesn't really matter all that much if they have serious character flaws. "Things seem to be going just fine, so why," they ask, "don't people leave him alone and let him do his job?" Or, "Hey, we've got higher incomes and lower interest payments right now. Isn't that all that counts in a leader?" But can someone really be a good *public* leader while his *private* moral behavior is atrocious?

In recent decades, Americans have had to listen to a litany of misdeeds of our civil leaders—from

to *matter*? It wasn't that long ago. In 1988, Senator Gary Hart's bid for the presidency was *derailed* by his inappropriate relationship with Donna Rice. Fortunately, Senator Hart had the courage to admit to his staff, "Through thoughtlessness and mis-

the parochial politics of Arkansas, dogged by accusations of indiscriminate *marital infidelity*, and with no record of military service... to embody the aspirations and values of the nation.... This suggests that the

# Meltdown of Morality

by Raymond F. McNair

**Character is becoming less and less of an issue for those who would hold high positions in government. But is a leader's personal morality—as reflected in his private affairs—really of no consequence?**

big-city mayors and governors to congressmen and even our presidents. Who can forget the many reports of the "goings-on" in the White House during the Kennedy administration? Yet we might wonder if that would even raise eyebrows these days.

President Richard Nixon misled the American people in November 1973, saying, "I am not a crook"—but he was later forced to resign after it was proven that he had in fact *lied* to the American public concerning the infamous "Watergate" scandal and subsequent cover-up. Our *current* president, however, hasn't resigned even though he has openly lied before not only the American public, but before a grand jury.

*Remember when morality used*

judgment I've let each of you down. And I deeply regret that." His frank admission reaffirmed America's long-professed standard of morality for those seeking high office.

Even as late as 1992, Bill Clinton's bid for the presidency was very *nearly* scuttled because of his reported 12-year affair with Gennifer Flowers while serving as governor of Arkansas. But then, even after a resurgence of traditional values under the Reagan and Bush administrations, something changed in this country—Mr. Clinton was voted into office anyway. And the London *Spectator* made this observation: "The election of Governor Bill Clinton is nothing less than a cultural revolution... [Americans] have chosen a youngish man, with little experience beyond

America of the Baby Boomers is a radically different place from the America of their parents.... It is hard to avoid the conclusion that **a large part of the American people have turned their backs on that old-fashioned quality: virtue—private and public virtue**" (Nov. 7, 1993, p. 5).

So no one should have been surprised when, four years later, President Clinton had wracked up a list of falsehoods that, by some counts, totaled over 200. Incredibly, he still managed to be elected to a second term—defeating Republican candidate Senator Bob Dole by a wide margin. But when Mr. Clinton's second term began, the character issue again began to plague his presidency. A year later, an avalanche of reports began circulating, giving

lurid details of "affairs" that have occurred *since* he began occupying the White House.

Yet as much hype as all this created in



the president continue in office.

When the Watergate scandal occurred, a great deal of money and countless man hours were wasted in the government's quest to get to the truth behind what had happened—and most blamed Richard Nixon. Today, the investigations of Mr. Clinton's misconduct have cost U.S. taxpayers more than 50 million dollars—and rather than blaming the one who has lied, covered up and committed apparently jailable offenses, most Americans blame the investigator!

Even the impeachment trial, decided by partisan politics and the court of public opinion, was for all intents and purposes a farce. Indeed, one senator reportedly said he would have voted guilty if only the American public actually cared. Well, shame on him—and shame on America.

## Where Is the Outrage?

Things have certainly changed since our first president, George Washington, was sworn into office in 1789. We've all heard the famous story in which his father asked him if he had cut down a cherry tree. His answer: "I cannot tell a lie!" And he confessed to the deed. Then there's America's greatest president, Abraham Lincoln ("Honest Abe"), who reportedly walked several miles to return a few cents he had been overpaid by someone.

But, many now ask, is the character issue really that important? Notice this from a recent issue of *USA Today*: "George Bush got swept under when he ran against

Clinton in 1992, believing to the end that the old verities of *duty*, *honor* and *country* would help him prevail against what he saw as a *character-flawed opponent*. But Clinton convinced a plurality of voters that his approach to fixing the *economy* was more important than his draft manipulations and rumors of *womanizing*" (Sept. 21, 1998).

Again, people just don't seem to care. During the '96 election, Bob Dole made the character issue central to his campaign—but to no avail! "When few seemed to care about what he saw as Clinton's legal and moral transgressions, a frustrated Dole fumed, '**Where is the Outrage?**'" (*USA Today*). So we can be thankful that a few prominent American leaders still believe that immoral conduct in a U.S. president is an *intolerable outrage*. But unfortunately, such people are getting fewer and farther between.

In his eye-opening book, *The Death of Outrage*, William Bennett—secretary of education under President Reagan and Director of the Drug Enforcement Agency under President Bush—says, "Much, perhaps most, of the public commentary about President Clinton's adulterous relationships makes them seem unimportant, trivial, of no real concern. Sex is reduced to a mere riot of the glands. Susan Estrich, for example, breezily *excuses* the president's adultery... in a way that one assumes she would *not* excuse in her husband. Hendrik Hertzberg considers it stupid to get caught but not wrong to commit adultery, an 'essentially victimless' activity. An aggrieved spouse might



## What About King David?

A few months ago, a reader of a national magazine wrote, "According to *Newsweek*, it seems the Bible's King David was seduced by Bathsheba.... Really? I had always thought that David saw Bathsheba, sent for her, had sex with her, got her pregnant, had her husband killed and then took her for his wife. I realize that it is no longer fashionable to take responsibility for one's actions, but I hope that this was merely ignorance on your part and not a subtle attempt to excuse the president" ("Letters," *Newsweek*, Sept. 21, 1998).

The reader is quite correct in relaying the events of 2 Samuel 11, which tells us, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD" (v. 27). God did *not* consider David's sins of *adultery* and *murder* a trivial matter. So He sent His prophet to impress upon the King what an awful thing he had done (12:1-9). Further, the Prophet Nathan, asked David, "Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house" (v. 9).

Then Nathan proceeded to pronounce another of God's awful judgments upon King David. "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor.... For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun'" (vv. 11-12).

What would King David's response be? Would it be to *lie* to Nathan, and to God, by saying, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman"—as did the president after his affair was revealed in January 1998? Would David fume indignantly, complaining to the country about how Nathan was prying into his personal affairs? On the contrary, David came clean, admitting the truth and bitterly repenting of his awful sin.

Notice what happened: "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD'" (v. 13). The depth of David's heartfelt repentance is recounted in Psalm 51: "Have mercy upon me, O God.... Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast

me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (vv. 1-11). David, then, was deeply repentant—fully resolved to walk in God's way from that moment forward. And his apology was so public that it became a song for Israelites to sing generations later!

Incidentally, some think it a sin to publish the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. They were especially critical of the Starr Report. But did God think it wrong to publish the David-Bathsheba affair? Clearly not. Indeed, He saw to it that David's scandal was recorded in His Word, so that *billions* could later read about his illicit affair and learn of its terrible consequences.

Consequences? But David said he was sorry, didn't he? Yes. And God forgave him. But though God forgives us upon repentance when it comes to eternal salvation, He still lets us go through some of the penalties sin incurs in this life—to thereby help us and others learn valuable lessons (see "Reaping What You Sow" on page 24). Under the law of Israel, David should have been executed—as David himself pronounced. It was only God's direct pardon through a prophet that kept David alive and in his office: "Nathan said to David, 'The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die'" (v. 13). Nevertheless, other severe consequences came as Nathan had pronounced.

In certain respects, events in the King David affair with Bathsheba do parallel the recent Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. But as noted, there's a big difference. Unlike King David when confronted, our president did *not* immediately show *contrition*, confessing and bitterly repenting of his shameful conduct. His response was one of denial—indeed, of seemingly *criminal* denial, as such perjury is a felony for which others are now sitting in prison. Later, the president did make numerous statements intended to show that he *was* repentant—but even many of his *friends* remarked that his "contrition" miserably failed to convey genuine repentance. Moreover, there was no divine message that the current president should remain in office. Besides, the president is not a king answerable to no one but God—he is, rather, answerable to the Constitution of "We the people."

Finally, though David committed this horrible and grievous mistake, he never did anything like it again. His life overall was one of devotion to God and His law. Read Psalm 119 and you'll see the kind of man he really was—and why God later called him "a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22). If only we had such a leader in office today.



take exception to that characterization; even Bill Clinton admitted to... 'causing pain' in his marriage."

There *are* some who were dumbfounded to see that, even in the face of continued revelations of extramarital affairs, the president's popularity ratings kept rising. They, with Dole and Bennett, are asking, "Where is the outrage?" Indeed, where?

The problems, as even Bennett points out, go much deeper than the presidency. Just why is it that decent character—which used to be considered vital to anyone in a public office—doesn't seem to really count all that much in the eyes of a majority of American voters? Dr. James Dobson, well-known publisher of *Focus on the Family*, states that "our greatest problem is *not* in the Oval Office. It is with the *people* of this land!"

Bennett says, "The most comprehensive study of American sexual patterns comes from the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. According to the NORC survey, 21 percent of men and 11 percent of women have committed adultery at some point in their married lives" (p. 22). Some estimates, however, put marital infidelity by U.S. husbands as high as 70 to 80 percent, and assert that adultery by their spouses may run as high as 50 percent or more!

Those who look upon adultery as an "essentially victimless" indiscretion embrace all sorts of permissive ideas. Their reasoning goes something like this: Since *everybody does it*, it's no big deal! Many seem to believe that *personal gratification* is man's highest goal (cf. 2 Tim. 3:4)—**so if it feels good, do it!** They argue that a person's *private* morality (or rather, *immorality!*) has absolutely nothing to do with his *public* morality.

In the eyes of these *apologists*, acts of marital infidelity should be winked at as unimportant. Such people maintain that since a large number of husbands commit adultery, we must *accept* marital infidelity as a fact of life. And they conclude that those who seemingly cannot refrain from committing adultery are to be *excused*, since they are supposedly held in the grip of a "sexual addiction." But by this kind of reasoning, any crime or sin, no matter how heinous, is excusable!

The truth is that far too many Americans themselves lack character, and are therefore quite willing to overlook it in others, particular if they see benefit in it for themselves. Far too many have bought into the idea that so long as *they* personally have good incomes, bigger homes and flashier cars, it doesn't really matter whether or not their leaders carry on shamelessly! Material prosperity has taken its toll on the moral fiber of our people, just as the Bible said it would (cf. Deut. 8; Rom. 1:28-32).

Yes, the Bible. Though President Andrew Jackson called it "the rock on which our republic rests," it's a book that's not so fashionable these days. In recent decades Ameri-

can morals have been revised downward! Today's "liberals" preach *situation ethics*, arguing that there are "no absolutes"—no infallible guidelines for mankind to follow. They hotly dispute the biblical teachings that clearly declare some types of



conduct to be *right* and others to be *wrong!* These people enthusiastically embrace *moral relativism*, concluding that "ethical truths" depend solely on personal point of view, making them free to establish their own self-serving moral standards.

Such liberal *apologists* often find fault with the Creator Himself for—instead of giving ten *suggestions*, as He "should" have—actually having the audacity to dictate to us ten *commandments*, of which "You shall not commit adultery" and "You shall not bear false witness" are two (Ex. 20:14, 16). Even many who profess Christianity forget that Jesus Christ Himself said, "If you want to enter into [eternal] life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:16).

The American winner of the 1978 Nobel Prize for Literature, Polish-born Isaac Singer, once said, "When we are trying to decide whether a leader is a good leader or a bad one, the question to ask is: 'Is he *with* the Ten Commandments or is he *against* them?' Then you can

determine if the leader is a true messiah or another Stalin" (Safire, p. 147).

Dwight D. Eisenhower, U.S. president from 1953 to 1961, said this of the integrity America's leading official should exhibit during his term: "I believe deeply that every occupant of the White House... has one profound duty to the nation; to exert *moral leadership*. The president of the U.S. should stand, visible and uncompromising, for what is *right* and *decent*—in government, in the business community, in the private lives of the citizens. For *decency* is one of the main pillars of a sound civilization. **An immoral nation invites its own ruin**" (qtd. by William Safire, *Leadership*, 1960, p. 147).

The Bible agrees: "**Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people**" (Prov. 14:34). When a nation's leaders are righteous—obedient to God's commandments (Ps. 119:172)—it will be exalted and blessed. But through sin—*breaking* God's law (1 John 3:4), as adultery, lying and deception certainly do—the nation will inherit shame, as ours definitely has.

### Defining Us Down

Can a president who has lost moral authority with his own people effectively govern

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me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (vv. 1-11). David, then, was deeply repentant—fully resolved to walk in God's way from that moment forward. And his apology was so public that it became a song for Israelites to sing generations later!

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# TWIST OF FATE

by Thomas E. Robinson

IS EVERY DETAIL OF YOUR LIFE  
ALREADY MAPPED OUT IN ADVANCE?  
HAS YOUR ULTIMATE FATE BEEN  
SEALED SINCE BEFORE YOU WERE  
EVEN BORN? ARE YOU NOW JUST  
A PREPROGRAMMED FIGURE  
IN A COSMIC GAME OF CHESS,  
BEING MOVED FROM SQUARE TO  
SQUARE BY IRRESISTIBLE DESTINY?  
THE TRUTH MAY SURPRISE YOU.

There are many who think that everything that happens in life is inevitable and unavoidable. They believe that fate—the supposed force, principle or power that pre-determines events—rules throughout the universe. A number hold that a Supreme Being, the Creator God, is the author and controller of fate. On the other hand, there are those who maintain that even God Himself is actually *subject* to this all-powerful force. But what is the truth?

Furthermore, does fate reach beyond the grave so that some people are foreordained to be saved and the rest lost, as certain nominal Christian denominations teach? Or is this idea actually a *distortion* of what the Bible says about “predestination”? Just what *does* Scripture reveal?

## God and Predestination

During World War II, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain told the United States Congress, “He must indeed have a blind soul who cannot see that some great purpose and design is being worked out here below” (Dec. 26, 1941). And many others throughout the centuries have certainly recognized this fact.

But who or what is “working out” this “great purpose and design”? Logic and reason would dictate that it must be an infinite Intelligence. And indeed, the Holy Bible *names* that Intelligence—God. Within its pages, the Eternal God is declared to be the Supreme Being, for there is “no one greater” (Heb. 6:13). Thus, if fate exists, God has dominion over it. For One who is *supreme* cannot, by definition, be subject to anything but Himself!

The same great and infinite God tells us, “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure’” (Is. 46:9-10). This, then, should remove all doubt. God is supreme and nothing can prohibit Him from doing whatever He wants.

Perhaps even more interesting, though, is that from the beginning of history, God has declared the *end* of it. But how can this be?

Does the future already exist, so that God can merely look into a “crystal ball” and see it? Not at all! Rather, He explains how in the very next verse: “**Indeed, I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.**” In other words, God, who “sits at the controls of the universe,” steers events and circumstances to bring about whatever He has foretold.

And that brings us to predestination. Does the Bible actually mention this subject directly? Yes. In fact, the word “predestined” occurs four times in the *New King James Version*. First in Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He *foreknew*, He also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son.... Moreover whom He **predestined**, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified” (8:28-30).

And then in Ephesians, the same apostle said that God “*chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having **predestined** us to adoption [sonship] as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself.... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being **predestined** according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (1:3-5, 11-12).

Notice that those who are foreknown and predestined are referred to as having been “called.” In other places, the Bible refers to such individuals as the “elect” (Matt. 24:24; Rom. 8:33)—in fact, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2).

All of this, then, begs the question: Is an individual’s eternal salvation a *fait accompli*—a done deal—before he is even born? And more disturbing still, if salvation is predestined for only some, does that mean the rest are already foreordained by God to eternal condemnation—having been doomed to a hopeless fate before even coming into existence?

## Fate vs. Free Will

A major branch of Protestantism teaches that God, from the beginning, predetermined everyone who would

be eternally saved as well as everyone who would be eternally condemned. Those who profess this religion maintain that there is *no choice* in the matter whatsoever. According to them, whether a person ever follows God or not is based solely on what God decided in advance. It gets worse when you realize that these people also believe in an eternally burning hellfire for those He has already decided would remain unrepentant. This would mean that God created certain people—indeed, *billions* of them, as *most* who have ever lived have not even *professed* Christianity—just to torture them forever in unending flames! What a horrendous, monster god that would be!

Thankfully, the true God is a God of infinite love and mercy! For one, the real hellfire doesn’t burn forever, but rather incinerates the incorrigibly wicked for their own good (write or call for our free reprint article, “All You Ever Wanted to Know About Hell”). And furthermore, it is actually quite easy to show from the Bible that God has not predestined any individuals to condemnation. Paul states that “**God our Savior... desires ALL men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**” (1 Tim. 2:3-4). And Peter says essentially the same thing: “**The Lord is... not willing that ANY should perish but that ALL should come to repentance**” (2 Peter 3:9). He also says that “God shows *no partiality*” (Acts 10:34)—as does Paul (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9). So God is eminently fair. Moreover, it is His expressly revealed will and desire that every person ultimately be saved. Yet according to Revelation 21:8, some will indeed perish forever—be annihilated—in “the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” *Therefore, it is absolutely clear that it is not God’s pre-termination that puts them there!*

Rather, as God told ancient Israel through Moses, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have



set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore **choose life**, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut. 30:19; cf. Josh. 24:15; Prov. 1:29). Thus, they had a CHOICE. For God had made them *free moral agents*, having the free will to make their own decisions. And so it is with us today.

But as clear as that may be, there are still some important questions to be answered. For based on what we’ve already seen, weren’t some people foreknown and predestined to certain actions? Yes. In fact, specific individuals were ordained beforehand: Christ (Dan. 9:25-26; Is. 7:14; 53:1-2); Jacob’s ascendancy over Esau (Gen. 25:20-26); Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1-20); Josiah (1 Kings 13:1-2; 2 Kings 23:15-16); Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-10); the triumph of King Cyrus of Persia over Babylon and his decree to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple (Is. 45:1; 44:28); John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-57); and the Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:15).

Of course, these were all *positive* roles. There *are* some who were preappointed to play *negative* roles. Examples include the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus, whose heart God hardened (Ex. 10:1-2), and Judas Iscariot, Christ’s betrayer (Rom. 9:14-18; John 6:70; Acts 1:16-20). Consider also that God has prophesied in Revelation of the coming of a great evil dictator called the Beast and his accomplice known as the False Prophet—both of whom will be destroyed at Christ’s return. Here, then, is where many become confused. And this is quite understandable. For how can it be that God has predetermined such unenviable roles that seem to end in condemnation while saying, as we’ve seen, that His will is that *none* should perish?

Moreover, the Bible emphatically states that only through the name of Jesus Christ can anyone be saved (Acts 4:12). Yet two-thirds of the world do not profess a belief in Him as the Messiah. And lest any immediately jump to the notion that these four billion people are entirely responsible for their blindness to the truth, notice the words of Jesus Christ: **“NO ONE can come to Me unless the Father who sent me DRAWS him; and I will raise him up at the last day”** (John 6:44; cf. v. 65). But has the entire world been drawn? No! Remember that only some are specifically referred to as the “called” and even fewer as the “elect”—i.e. “chosen.” And though we are saved through the Gospel Christ and His apostles preached (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2), Jesus told His followers, “It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the rest of humanity] it has not been given” (Matt. 13:11). How then can the Bible be true in saying God shows no partiality and wills that none be condemned? And how can it really be that we have free will?

## The Divine Plan

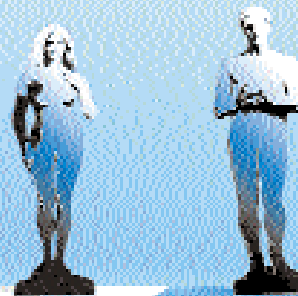
The difficulty in understanding this subject is based on a mistaken notion of mainstream Christianity—that God is in a great soul-winning contest with Satan, trying desperately to save the world *now*. That, it must be understood, is simply NOT the case. Rather, God is merely *allowing* this world to be deceived by Satan—for the time being. Notice how the Apostle Paul put it: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of THIS AGE has blinded, who do not believe, **lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ... should shine on them!**” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). The omnipotent God *allows* Satan to preside over this present age, deceiving those who would otherwise understand the Truth!

As recounted in Genesis 1-3, mankind got off to a bad start in the Garden of Eden. Because of their wrong choice, God has cut off mankind in general from the knowledge of salvation—letting them go their own way to learn the lesson of how much they need God. Since that time, every human being except Jesus has sinned, i.e. broken God’s law, and fallen short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 3:4 KJV)—and therefore deserves the death penalty (Rom. 6:23). In that sense, the vast majority of the world is “perishing,” as the verse quoted above describes. For if not ultimately redeemed, they would be doomed.

But remember that it is God’s will that NONE should perish! And so Jesus Christ, the One through whom the Father created us (Eph. 3:9), gave His life as an atoning sacrifice to pay the death penalty for the *entire world*—whoever would accept it (John 3:16).

Yet in the face of such a widespread lack of even professing Christianity, how is the world at large to be saved? The wonderful answer—shocking to some—is that this is not the *only* day of salvation! God is only calling a few now. In fact, the Greek word translated “church” in the New Testament—*ekklesia*—means “the called-out ones.” And those in God’s Church are referred to as His “*firstfruits*” (James 1:18 KJV; cf. Rom. 8:23). This clearly implies that there will be *later* fruits to come! And so there will be.

When Jesus Christ returns, He will put down all resistance and establish a Kingdom that will rule mankind for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4; cf. Is. 2:2-4). Reigning with Him will be the saints—those called in this age who remain faithful to the end—who are raised to immor-



tal life in what is called the “first resurrection” (vv. 5-6). During that period known as the “Millennium” (meaning 1,000 years) the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the oceans are full of water (Is. 11:9), and the vast majority of mankind will be saved.

But what about the billions who have lived throughout the ages without understanding God’s Truth? A parenthetical sentence in Revelation 20:5 answers, “But the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (NRSV). At that time, these people will be resurrected to physical life (cf. Ezek. 37) and given God’s Spirit (cf. vv. 12-14). They will then go through a judgment—not sentencing—period (Rev. 20:11-12), just as God’s Church is being judged today (1 Peter 4:17). And many will repent at that time, as they *would* have, according to Christ, if His work had been done among them (cf. Matt. 11:21-24; 12:41). It should be noted, however, that this does NOT mean anyone will ever be given a “second chance” to be saved. Although it will be their *second life in human flesh*, it will be their “first chance” to really understand and follow the Truth of Almighty God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Amazingly, then, God has foreordained three judgment periods: the present age, the Millennium and the Last Judgment. Therefore, to answer one of the major questions of this article, predestination does not concern whether or not individuals will be ultimately saved or condemned. Instead, it clearly refers to WHEN people are *offered* salvation! Some will not be offered it until the Millennium or the Last Judgment. But God predestined that a few would be called in this age and given the opportunity before Christ returns. Yet these people—as in all ages—still have free will. The decision of whether to accept Christ is each person’s to make individually. And even then, whether or not that person remains in God’s grace or chooses to reject Him is ultimately up to that individual as well (cf. Heb. 2:1-3; 10:26-27, 35-36).

## God’s Guiding Hand

Of course, some will claim that even this is not fair. And they still wonder how a just God could preappoint individuals to negative actions. Notice how *The Living Bible* paraphrases what Paul said about this:

“Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was an example of this fact. For God told him he had given him the kingdom of Egypt for the very purpose of displaying the awesome power of God against him: so that all the world would hear about God’s glorious name. So you see, God is kind to some just because he wants to be, and he makes some

refuse to listen. Well then, why does God blame them for not listening? Haven’t they done what he made them do? No, don’t say that. Who are you to criticize God? Should the thing made say to the one who made it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ When a man makes a jar out of clay, doesn’t he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar beautiful, to be used for holding flowers, and another to throw garbage into? Does not God have a perfect right to show his fury and power against those he has been patient with for all this time? And he has a right to take others such as ourselves, who have been made for pouring the riches of his glory into, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, and to be kind to us so that everyone can see how very great his glory is” (Rom. 9:17-24).

In other words, God had every right to shape and mold Pharaoh to be the way he was. After all, God created him and Pharaoh was, like everyone else, worthy of death—so adding a hardened heart to his list of sins did not make any real difference to him in the overall scheme of things. The Lord, it must be noted though, did not directly make him sin, for God does not tempt *anyone* to sin (James 1:13). Rather, it was part of Pharaoh’s rebellious nature all along (Ex. 8:15, 32). The omniscient God merely knew how to get this reaction out of him. Pharaoh will, of course, be given his opportunity to repent and receive salvation during the Last Judgment.

God, then, sometimes steers events and circumstances—even seeing to it that certain people are influenced into particular actions—to make sure His overall plan and purpose is fulfilled. But He clearly doesn’t directly bring about all that occurs at any given moment with all people. For as His Word tells us, **“time and chance happens to them all”** (Eccl. 9:11). Thus God has *not* mapped out every detail of every person’s life.

As for the question of why God calls particular individuals—perhaps you, if you are beginning to really understand what you are reading in the *World Ahead* magazine—that answer is known by God alone. And He, as the Creator, has the prerogative to call a person at whatever time He chooses. We should trust that whatever time He decides to call a person is the best time for that individual. And though being called now is a wonderful privilege, that does not make one better than those called later (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29). After all, even if we *are* being called now, all of us still have free will—and therefore we can still fall away if we don’t continue to obey the Truth. For we are not just pawns on a chessboard. So let’s hold tight to the wonderful salvation offered to us now by our Creator, allowing the awesome future that He wants for us to become a reality. ■



# Be Swift to Hear

by Rex I. Sexton

I spotted it as soon as I walked into the garage. My brown tackle box was partially opened on the shelf above the freezer. Bulging out of the tackle box was a mess of old fishing line, lures, broken and dirty spin-n-gloves and some rusty treble hooks. I knew immediately what had happened—my 11-year-old son had done it again! I had told him several times not to take my tackle box with him when he went down to the river fishing. And yet here he had taken it without permission and had ruined some of my good lures! He must not have even dried them off because the hooks were already rusting!

To put it mildly, I was *fuming* as I swung open the utility room door and entered the house. “RYAN, GET DOWN HERE RIGHT NOW!” reverberated through the entire house, sending a loud and clear message to the whole family that Dad was really upset with something.

The girls retreated to the family room. Ryan came down the stairs with a look of fear on his young face. Immediately, I launched into a stern tongue-lashing about him taking my things without permission and how I was going to make him work and pay for whatever he had lost or ruined of my tackle. “But... but... but, Dad...,” he kept trying to interrupt.

I raised my voice even higher, “No buts, Ryan! You are going to start listening to me and obeying what you are told. Do you understand?”

I could see that his face was turning red and a tear was welling up in his eye. Convinced that my stern lecture had had its effect, I finally let him speak. “OK,” I asked, “now what do you want to say?”

Starting to cry a little, Ryan looked up at me. “Dad,” he began, “those old lures and line weren’t yours. My friend Douggie and I went down to the river last week when it was low, looking for lost lures in the rocks and logs. We gathered together what we found as a present for you and put them in your tackle box where you would find them. I thought you would be excited when you discovered it.”

To say that I felt terrible beyond words would be an understatement. I wanted to find the nearest toilet so that I could go stand in it and hit the flush lever. No apologies could now make up for the hurt feelings my son had been dealt. I would have to try to make it up to him somehow, even though it would be difficult and would take some time. I also knew, inside, that I had sinned against God. I should have remembered His command to “be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

Perhaps one of the greatest human weaknesses is the tendency to rush to judgment. Even though Jesus Christ clearly instructed us, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:27), how *rarely* do we take the time to obey this simple instruction!

Often we make quick judgments based on the first bit of information we have. When we react, based on only part of the picture, we are likely to do or say things that we later regret. The Bible warns us, “He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him” (Prov. 18:13). Yet, especially when it comes to dealing with our children, we often assume that we know much more than we do about a given situation or event than we actually do. The result of these quick judgments or condemnations can be very serious and leave long-lasting scars. If we judge too quickly or harshly, we communicate to our children that we do not trust them and don’t care to hear their explanations or reasons.

Children whose parents treat them this way repeatedly may eventually give up even trying, thinking, “What’s the use?” Perhaps this is what the Apostle

Paul had in mind when he wrote, “Fathers, do not provoke your children,

lest they become discouraged” (Col. 3:21). Just so we don’t forget the point, he repeated it for us in Ephesians 6:4: “And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Surely if this weren’t such a potentially serious problem, God wouldn’t have cautioned us twice about it in the Scriptures!

## Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism,  
he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,  
he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule,  
he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame,  
he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance,  
he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,  
he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise,  
he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,  
he learns justice.

If a child lives with security,  
he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval,  
he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with  
acceptance and friendship,  
he learns to find love in the world.

That God commands us to train, teach, and correct our children is very clear in God’s Word. The Proverbs are replete with admonitions such as “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (22:6), and “He that spares his rod

hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly” (13:24). But they also show that we should *delight* in our children (3:12)—in other words, take time to enjoy them and appreciate these wonderful gifts from God that He has entrusted to our care during their formative years. God even says that children are a blessing and reward from Him (Ps. 127:3-5).

So we need to occasionally ask ourselves this question: Am I following the guidelines of the Creator in dealing with my children? If we are honest and are carefully studying the Scriptures, we will see areas in which we are strong and areas in which we need to make a conscious effort to improve. Being too quick to raise our voice, criticize or assign blame may be a “needs improvement” area for most of us who are parents.

It is so easy to be hasty in judgment with children! Parents today are often very busy and have a constant flurry of things on our minds or on our daily “to do” lists. Beset with the frustrations and deadlines of modern day Western culture, we can easily react too quickly when dealing with those we live with. We are all products, in one way or another, of the *impatient* society that we live in. So when it comes to being too quick to judge our children, we all need to make a conscious effort to heed this advice: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its mold” (Romans 12:2 *Living Bible*). Instead, we must look to God for help. The fruit of His Spirit working in our lives includes patience and self-control (Gal. 2:22-23)—two very important qualities of good parenting.

Indeed, even if our judgment is correct, it is never okay to “blow up” at the first sign of wrongdoing. Consider how patient with us God, our Father, is—with whom there is *no* misunderstanding of our actions or motives. He knows perfectly the innermost heart of human beings, which is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). And yet He does not lash out at the first provocation: “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.... He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.... For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Ps. 103:8-14). If He was not so controlled, we’d be dead: “For I am the LORD,” He says, “I do not change; therefore you are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). And remember—God discerns the heart instantly. We can’t.

I never forgot the lesson from the tackle-box. During the years that we lived near the Kenai River in Alaska, my son and I enjoyed countless hours together fishing for salmon. It certainly takes patience and a willingness to learn in order to catch fish. But it takes a great deal *more* patience and a willingness to really *listen* in order to properly raise children.





## The New *Babylon?*

by Norbert Link

WITH ITS COMMON-CURRENCY PROJECT NEAR COMPLETION, EUROPE IS ON THE RISE. A ONCE-DIVIDED CONTINENT IS COMING TOGETHER. BUT UNIFICATION HAS SOME OBSERVERS ALARMED. WHY? AND WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN, IF ANYTHING, FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD—AND FOR YOU PERSONALLY?

Since January 1, 1999, the long-awaited European common currency is no longer just a pipe dream of the architects of the Common Market. Rather, to a large extent, the *euro*—as it is called—has *already become* the currency for much of the continent. Having just returned from a trip to Europe, I could see that all non-cash transactions, such as credit card purchases, are being

carried out on the basis of the euro. And come January 1, 2002, all hard national currencies of the then-participating European countries will start to be exchanged with euro coins or notes. As it is now planned, July 1, 2002, will mark the end of all national currencies of participating European nations. Thus, no more German marks, French or Belgian francs, Italian lira, etc. (While I was in Europe, discussions were under way about possibly accelerating the process to accomplish these goals one year early).

According to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*'s 1998 annual

chronicle, 11 European Union (EU) countries are currently participating in the euro—namely Portugal, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Finland, Germany, Austria and Italy. Greece applied, but has been rejected for the time being, as it didn't meet the criteria. Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden have adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude (p. 87).

The introduction of a common currency for Europe is a truly remarkable achievement that has major implications for not just the continent itself, but for the whole planet. Indeed, it seems to be part of a chain of events that will soon take the entire globe by storm. Yet it's been a project long in the making. Indeed, more than a thousand years before ancient Rome even existed, this project's foundations were laid in the sands of the Middle East. And it's important that we understand.

### Foreseen Developments

Though most of the world dismissed it as flight of fancy for decades following World War II, the editors and authors involved in this Work stated all along that Europe would unite, both economically and politically. For example, more than 30 years ago, in an October 1967 article, the *Plain Truth* magazine—predecessor to *The World Ahead*—asked readers whether there would one day be a "common currency in Europe." And we further pointed out in the same article, "This... could lead to the speedy realization of a prophesied ten-nation political union

in Europe.... Britain will not be one of the ultimate ten nations that will unite to resurrect the final restoration of this prophesied Roman Empire."

We'll take a closer look at where these ideas came from shortly. But for now let's simply realize that finally, after decades, these statements are beginning to come to pass. We now *have* a common European currency. And for the moment at least, Britain is *not* part of it. (This, however, does not mean it won't or couldn't be for a while.) Moreover, *economic* unification is paving the way toward European *political* union as well.



You see, as we have so often mentioned, it was never the goal of the European Union to stop at mere *economic* cooperation. In a 1997 booklet published by the German Federal Ministry of Finance, one of the ultimate goals of the EU is European citizenship, as apparently distinguished from national citizenships (*The Euro: Strong as the Mark*, p. 58). And amazing as it may seem, despite widely reported disagreement among German citizens regarding the euro, the German magazine *Stern* states that 58% of them now favor an increased "political unification of Europe with the ultimate goal of a 'United States of Europe'" (April 1999, p. 34). Frankly, our longtime readers should not be surprised, as this very phrase has appeared numerous times in our publications for nearly half a century.

But now it's really happening. The geopolitical landscape is about to change drastically. Less than a year ago, a *Business Week* headline proclaimed, "The Euro will turn Europe into a Superpower" (May 4, 1998, p. 30). *National Review* reports the same: "The economics of the Euro are just the beginning, though. EU leaders themselves freely say that monetary union is first and foremost a *political* project.... French officials cite the Euro as a means by which to develop a global political counterweight to the world's only superpower [the United States]. Former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt says, 'the arrival of the Euro will... change the whole world situation so that the United States can no longer call all the shots'" (Oct. 26, 1998, p. 30).

To some observers, this is an alarming development. There has already been talk of trade war following the recent crisis over banana tariffs. There have even

been calls for breaking up the NATO alliance, leaving Europe to fend for itself militarily. And with growing anti-American sentiments across the Atlantic, none of this seems to bode well for the United States. *National Review* continues, "A headline in the German weekly *Der Spiegel* referred thus to Americans and the Euro: 'At first they mocked, now they fear it.' Is it possible that the malign nationalism that EU leaders insist they are burying will be replaced with a malign supranationalism?"

Yet it's not only Americans who are concerned. Many in Europe have also expressed fears and doubts about the new European government that's being instituted—particularly those who are very democratically oriented when it comes to the freedoms they enjoy under their particular national sovereignty. For that is now being challenged.

An editorial in the above-quoted issue of *Stern*, titled "More Democracy for Europe," has this to say: "Most laws are being enacted on a European level. National governments ratify only what has been given to them. Most of the time, the citizens don't know what's going on. They become aware of the changes only when it's too late.... There is no expectation that the European Parliament will amend the situation." The same magazine contains an article with a very telling headline: "We Demand a Europe of the People." It states, "More and more national power is being transferred to European institutions. Eighty percent of all economic rules and regulations are being made in Brussels. Europe must no longer be ruled from behind closed doors.... The power of the EU grows.... The EU is a governmental system without opposition.... Right now, the EU can no longer be controlled."



But we've all heard, no doubt, the "golden rule" of this evil world—that is, "He who has the gold makes the rules." Well, a lot of money from all over Europe is making its way into the coffers of the individual states participating in economic unification—making it that much easier for the EU to do as it pleases. *Stern* says that "in Germany alone, 14 billion marks are being collected in taxes annually from commerce within the European

## THE ANSWER LIES IN THE STUDY OF BIBLE PROPHECY—AND THROUGH CAREFULLY WATCHING AND ANALYZING WORLD EVENTS IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT IT REVEALS.

Union. Nearly 60% of all German exports are going into Europe."

No wonder, then, that despite all the concerns about the EU having too much power, negating national sovereignty and making secret deals, many are calling for it to have even *more* power. For instance, Germany's exterior minister, Joschka Fischer, demands that the right of EU member states to veto important decisions be *abolished* and the rights of the European Parliament be *increased*.

As mentioned, none of this has come as any surprise to those of us behind this magazine. We have been predicting it for a long time, having

even foreseen Europe's now-increasing attention to the affairs of the Middle East—particularly Israel. So we are *also* not surprised to see the following in the *National Review* issue quoted earlier: "It's not just Americans who can feel [Europe's] heavy breathing. Miguel Moratinos, EU envoy to the Middle East, recently accused the *Israelis* of having an attitude problem. 'How long can you go on ignoring us?' he asked. 'Europe will have a single currency next year and what will you say then? **How will you be able to ignore such power?**'"

So just where did we get the idea that these things were coming? How could we have known all this so far in advance? The answer lies in the study of Bible prophecy—and through carefully watching and analyzing world events in the light of what it reveals. As our long-time readers know, we have repeatedly pointed out that the Bible prophesies an economic, political, military and religious power bloc to arise in Europe just prior to the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. In fact, that power bloc, the final manifestation of ancient Babylon, will be the tenth and final resurrection of the ancient Roman Empire.

### Once and Future Empire

A special edition of *Newsweek* magazine came out this past winter labeled "Euroland." Its cover artwork portrayed the ancient **Tower of Babel**, with the euro symbol on its top, rising up from amid other European national structures in the background, such as France's Eiffel Tower and Italy's Tower of Pisa. The magazine's introductory article, titled "**What Strange Beast?**" was accompanied by the image of a giant, multi-headed red bird representing the euro participant countries. While this "strange beast" flies away with a

bank truck, miniature representations of Uncle Sam, the British bulldog, the Chinese panda and the Japanese Komodo dragon watch in dismay. The article begins, "In January, the world will start getting used to a new currency. Whether you love the euro or hate it, know this: *nothing so big has ever happened before.*"

Whether the editors of *Newsweek* intended it or not, the images of a resurrected Babel or Babylon and a multi-headed red beast come straight out of the Bible. Indeed, Revelation 17 portrays "a woman sitting on a **scarlet beast...** having **seven heads** and ten horns.... And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT" (vv. 3-5). But what does this have to do with the new Europe? Actually, the story began around 4,000 years ago when a man named Nimrod built the first empire of Babylon in Mesopotamia (Gen. 10:8-11). At that time, he encouraged the people of the ancient world—all of one language—to come together to build a tower as a challenge to God's sovereignty (11:1-4). But God intervened and scattered the people abroad over the face of the earth by giving them different languages. From then on, Babylon would serve as a metaphor for society in rebellion against God.

So, of course, the spirit of Babylon continued—through the ongoing promulgation of the religious, political and economic ideas born there. Indeed, the city itself came to world prominence once again in the 600s B.C. under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, builder of the renowned Hanging Gardens. During his day, the Prophet Daniel explained visions that outlined the future of this new empire and three others to succeed it in the spirit of ancient Babel—the empires of Medo-Persia, Greco-Macedonia and Rome (cf. Dan. 2, 7).

According to the same visions, as amplified by Revelation 13, Rome itself would experience *ten resurrections*, the last *seven* of which would be dominated by a religious power. Barbarian invaders—the Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths—represented Rome's first three resurrections. Following these, under the dominion of the Roman Catholic Church, came



the Holy Roman Empire. Its revivals occurred under Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V Hapsburg, Napoleon and the Hitler-Mussolini Axis. That makes six, with one yet to come. Like the visions Daniel interpreted, the scarlet beast of Revelation 17 shows that the future empire—end-time Babylon—will have ten kings or dominions that relinquish their sovereignty to a single ruler. An unequalled military power (13:4), this coming superstate will, as other prophecies indicate, be trusted in for world peace and security. (To learn more about all of this, write for our free booklet, *The Beast of Revelation.*)

Like the previous six resurrections of Rome, the last will also be dominated by the religious power of "Babylon," depicted by the woman riding the scarlet beast. In verse 18, she is called "that great *city* which *reigns* over the kings of the earth."

The beast's seven heads are explained as "seven hills on which the woman sits" (Rev. 17:9 NIV) or, as *The Living Bible* paraphrases, "a certain city built on seven hills where this woman has her residence." And what famous city is called the "City of Seven Hills"? Rome! Indeed, many commentaries agree that Babylon, as described in the book of Revelation, is a reference to Rome. *Halley's Bible Handbook* says, "The description of Babylon the Great... exactly fits Papal Rome. Nothing else in world history does fit" (p. 731).

This makes sense when we remember that the religious ideas of Rome originated in Babylon—as did many other elements of Roman civilization. In a footnote to Revelation 17:5, the *Ryrie Study Bible* makes the same identification: "Though the famous city of Babylon was on the Euphrates River, the name seems to be a symbolic reference to Rome. In chapter 17 Babylon represents the false religious system that will center in Rome.... In chapter 18 it represents more the political and commercial aspect of the revived Roman Empire.... Thus the term stands both for a city and for a system (religious and commercial) related to the city (much like 'Wall Street,' which is both a place and a system)."

A commercial system too? Yes—Babylon was the greatest trading center of the ancient world. Rome would, of course, later follow suit. And so too will *end-time* Rome/Babylon—as it enjoys the greatest economic market the world has ever seen. In Revelation 18, we find described in vivid terms the vast wealth of this commercial system, with all of its precious merchandise, by which all the merchants of the earth are made rich (v. 12-15).

And all springing from Rome! The modern economic and political unification of Europe after World

War II *started* in Rome when, on March 25, 1957, the Roman Contracts or the Treaty of Rome were signed, giving birth to the European Economic Community. And now at last a common currency to bring the dream of ages to pass! A single Europe—economically, politically, militarily and religiously.

The introductory *Newsweek* article quoted above says, "Through all the pageantry of European history... one fact stands out. No single regime has ever united the entire Continent. The Romans never civilized the German tribes; the Ottoman Turks were halted at the gates of Vienna. Napoleon and Hitler were defeated by force of arms. And so it has gone for more than a thousand years.... Europe, even as its baronies evolved into kingdoms and then into nations, somehow remained its old self: a cacophony of cultures, politics and markets. **Now a new millennium will mark a sharp break from the pattern of history.** Come January 1999, what Charlemagne and his successors failed to achieve violently will be accomplished, in partial measure, peacefully" (p. 5). An inset article, "The Euro's Roots: Do as the Romans," lauds that "ever since the Emperor Diocletian, Europeans have sought a common currency. After 17 tumultuous centuries of fits and starts, they may have finally gotten it right" (p. 6).

And on top of this comes real possibilities for healing religious rifts and encouraging Christian morality throughout the world. As many observers have commented, Europe needs a spiritual heart. Otto von Habsburg, writing quite a few years ago about a united Europe in his book, *The Social Order of Tomorrow*, stated, "Christianity is our very soul" (p. 156).

(continued on page 19)



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## WHERE'VE WE BEEN?

You have failed to send me the latest issue of *The World Ahead* (January–February 1999). You have also failed to give me an explanation for the delay and the inconvenience you have caused. Please cancel my subscription to the *World Ahead* magazine immediately!

**Thomas A. Seaman**  
Swainsboro, Georgia

Actually, there was no January–February issue of *The World Ahead* this year—nor a March–April. We apologize for any inconvenience this has caused to any of our readers. The *Global Church of God*, which publishes this magazine, recently experienced some turmoil when Editor in Chief and television presenter Roderick C. Meredith founded a new church organization. He had written and spoken extensively over the past six years in support of brotherly, collective Church government by a group of Spirit-led ministers (the *New Testament pattern*). Nevertheless, Dr. Meredith finally showed that he never really accepted this type of leadership at all, opting instead for authoritarian, one-man rule. In an unauthorized letter to the Church's membership, Dr. Meredith referred to himself as "God's anointed" and made many false accusations against those on the board of directors—saying that they were attempting to neutralize him and take over his position, which was never the case. We have been shocked and are deeply saddened at the actions taken by Dr. Meredith, and pray sincerely that he will repent of what he's done.

Tragically, many members evidently believed his false accusations, as they

have followed him into his new organization. The departure of so many in our fellowship has cut deeply into our financial resources. That, and the increased responsibilities of a diminished staff, resulted in our decision to skip a couple issues of *The World Ahead*, enabling us to regain our footing. We are not fearful—for we know that God is with us. It is our intention to continue publishing the *Gospel of the Kingdom of God* through this magazine and our other booklets, as God allows. Furthermore, though we can no longer afford to air our telecast on superstation WGN, it continues on public access cable stations across the nation. We are also pursuing an increased presence on the Internet.

From now on, of course, you will no longer be seeing articles with Dr. Meredith's byline—or bylines of a few of our former regular contributors who have decided to follow him. We will, however, continue to publish booklets and reprints that have previously borne their names—including Dr. Meredith's—these are owned by the *Global Church of God* and are actually the work of several individuals, with vast portions of most of them having been authored by others—ed.

## FREE OF CHARGE

I must say that your magazine, *The World Ahead*, is excellent—a very good publication. And as for the stories, they are brilliant, full of the news of things happening around the world. I love the fact that you keep the words of our Lord Jesus, who was made flesh and dwelt among us. I must also say that you have not asked for a penny for your magazine. This is unbelievable in this day and

age—not like most churches, which are always looking for money.

**Stephen McDonnell**  
London, England

*There is no price tag on the Truth of God. Therefore, The World Ahead has no subscription price. It is absolutely free of charge, with no follow-up request for money. Your subscription has been paid for by the tithes and offerings of the members and coworkers of the Global Church of God. We never solicit the general public for money. Jesus told us, "Freely you have received, freely give"—ed.*

## WORLD'S CHRISTIANITY

I am very grateful for your incomparable kind of literature. It is so bold, fearless and shockingly different—especially in revealing the truth about the misleading and deceitful Christianity of this world. *The World Ahead* is a great tool for waking the world—especially devoted Christians who have been innocently indoctrinated and unsuspectingly injected with anti-Christian lies. I hope you won't tire of this noble mission.

**Marief Manzano-Donovan**  
Manila, Philippines

Thank you for sending *The World Ahead*. Those of us here who read it have been enjoying it and gleaning its numerous lessons. We believe the Lord is spiritually using your ministry in a powerful way. I totally agree with you that there is much that is masquerading as Christian in this end time. The religion loudly calling itself Christianity is just the fusing of the ancient Babylonian Mystery religion, Greek philosophy and Roman syncretist theosophy. And it is thus absolutely different from the Christian religion taught and practiced by the Lord Jesus, His apostles, and the rest of the early Christians.

**Maxwell Oppong-Asare**  
Prestea, Ghana

I have recently read your booklet *Christianity's Greatest Deception* and have found it to be very enlightening. I have come across most of the information before and it does make a lot of sense to me. I've been a Christian for approximately nine years and know that there has to be more power in Christianity than what is being exhibited through *nominal* Christianity. All I want is to know the Truth of

God, to live my life according to that Truth, and to teach others the same.

**James A. Foster**  
Chester, Pennsylvania

You seem to resemble—if not actually represent—the former Worldwide Church of God and its newsmagazine, *The Plain Truth*, of which I used to be a subscriber. At some point, communication was suddenly cut off and I don't know what has become of them since.

**Anne Mwongela**  
Nairobi, Kenya

*The former Worldwide Church of God (WCG) was led by Herbert W. Armstrong, our spiritual predecessor in this Work of God. Since Mr. Armstrong's death, the WCG has abandoned the important truths that made it distinct from mainstream Christianity. Indeed, it is now simply a Protestant organization. Those of us involved in this Work could not abide such apostasy and have determined to continue to preach the "whole counsel of God" (cf. Acts 20:27). The World Ahead, though much smaller in circulation, continues in the tradition of the old, not the new, Plain Truth—ed.*

## PURPOSE IN LIFE

I wish to convey my greatest appreciation of your well-written magazines and booklets. Thank God, for it has been a wonderful time in my life since I started receiving your material. A most thrilling publication was the brochure *America and Britain in Prophecy*. The work you've put into your literature should be commended. I've found it all to be very inspiring. It has opened my mind, helping me to understand the true teachings of the Bible. I used to be such a sinner, without a strong faith in the Father, His Son and Their teachings. But since I started reading your magazines and booklets, I have come to realize the whole purpose of God for mankind, and especially for my personal life. Thank you for your good work.

**M. Brock**  
Nimetuo, Solomon Islands

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.

EUROPE—  
(continued from page 17)

The last article in the special *Newsweek* edition states, "Now, in the words of Francois Mitterrand, France's president through the 1980s, Europe is 'returning to its history and geography like one who is returning home.' Can Europe reclaim its past glory by adopting the euro? Obviously the common currency is just a metaphor for a deeper union among the states.... 'Europe' was not a term commonly used until the 18th century.... In earlier times, when people spoke of common ideas, institutions and people of the Continent, they spoke of—Christianity. Christianity was the central organizing principle of European societies. It was the basis of the educational canon, of art, music and culture. As an institution, the church was second only to the state in power and wealth. **The term used to describe Europe long before 'Europe' was Christendom**" (p. 104).

Pope John Paul II is a champion of European unification. And why not? Europe is heavily Roman Catholic, particularly in its cultural tradition. Can this, then, serve as the "glue" that binds the continent together even more than the euro? Time will tell. But religion is certain to play a primary role.

## "Come Out of Her, My People!"

And so, we ask, isn't all of this good news? Isn't a united Europe a dream to be desired? Especially one that brings an end to political unrest, that enriches the rest of the world and that stands for Christian morals and ethics? Maybe a better question would be: Will a united Europe really bring these things with it? The special *Newsweek* edition poses a similar question: "The test of European political integration is simple. Will it make the world a safer place?" (p. 91).

Perhaps at first. But tragically, the Bible reveals the answer to ultimately be *no*. For as things will turn out in the end, Europe's "break from the pattern of history" will not be as sharp as the world is now being led to believe. Eventually, a regime will come to power that will be far more sinister than any that have gone before. And its actions will lead to the most cataclysmic war in history, in which it will unleash terrible weapons of mass destruction!

But what about the abundance of wealth from the end-time economic system? What about all the precious goods that will be traded? Well, as the saying goes, all that glitters is not gold. Shamefully, there will also be trafficking in slaves and dead bodies, as other nations are conquered! (Rev. 18:13). Furthermore, the Bible foretells that this system will be in total defiance of God Almighty, just as all previous manifestations of Babylon have been—indeed, more so! And the fact that so many are made rich by the system is the very thing that enables

(continued on page 28)



America is a religious nation. At least that's what people tell the pollsters. Over 95% of the population professes a belief in God. In addition, nine out of ten households have at least one Bible. The overwhelming majority—87% in a *Newsweek* poll—believe that God answers prayer, and about half of the population claims to pray on a regular basis.

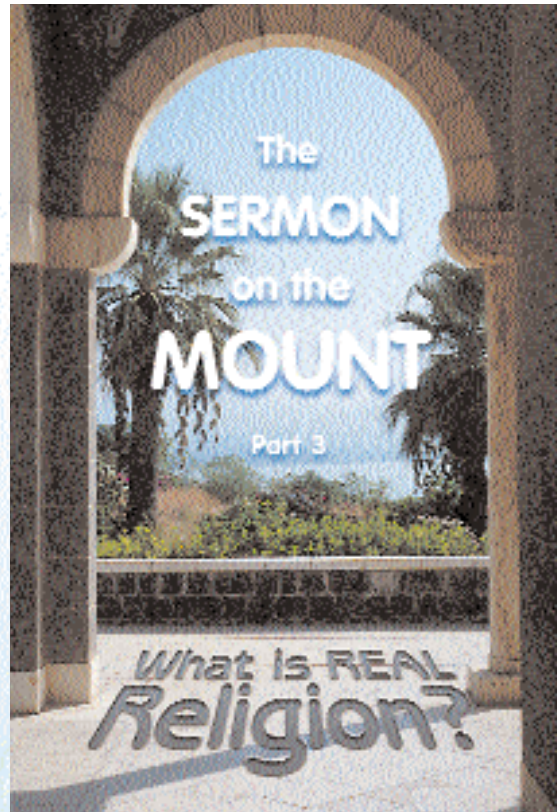
In addition, religion is big business. Billions of dollars are contributed to churches and religious ministries. There are churches throughout the land. Late night radio, as well as Sunday morning television, is crowded with preachers. These churches and ministries come in all shapes and sizes.

It seems that whatever you're looking for, it's out there. Whether it's incense and ritual or a rock band complete with drums and electric guitars, there's a church that offers it. From stiff and formal to spontaneous and emotionally-charged, there's a church to suit every taste. Additionally, churches come with a wide range of emphasis—from social action to "soul-winning."

Yet in spite of being seemingly awash in religion, America is also beset with burgeoning moral problems. Divorce, pornography, abortion and violence have all increased to an unprecedented degree during this century. Though politicians regularly invoke God and religion, political scandals abound. There appears to be a great paradox in the comparison between what the nation professes

and what it practices.

What kind of religion is really acceptable to God? What is He really looking for in the lives of those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ? Our entire Western World has historically *claimed* to be Christian. In fact we have exported various forms of Christianity to the rest



of the world for centuries. To what extent, however, do the various approaches to Christianity common in our modern world square with what the Bible really says?

In the Sermon on the Mount, given near the beginning of His ministry, Jesus Christ of Nazareth outlined what He expected of His followers. The claims He made on those who would be His disciples were truly radical. In fact, the pronouncements of Jesus flew directly in

the face of what passed for religion in His day. Moreover, they still fly in the face of what passes for religion in *our* day! In this final installment of our three-part series on Christ's Sermon on the Mount, let's carefully examine the demands that Jesus of Nazareth made upon His followers.

### Three Pillars of Jewish Religion

Perhaps the essence of being viewed as "religious" in first-century Judea involved prayer, fasting and the giving of alms. After having explained the spirit of the law to His hearers—as we saw in our last installment—Jesus Christ next addressed the heart and core of "being religious."

In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus made plain that it wasn't simply *what you do*, but rather the attitude and motive *behind* what you do. To Jesus, it was a given that His disciples would do the things just mentioned. After all, He said, "*when you do a charitable deed*" (v. 2), "*when you pray*" (v. 5) and "*when you fast*" (v. 16)—not *if*.

However, the manner in which the act was carried out was crucial.

Christ called those who practiced their religion for the purpose of impressing others "hypocrites." This English term derives from a Greek word that originally referred to actors on the stage. Jesus likened certain "religious" people of His day to those who simply played a part. Their religion was not a simple matter of personal piety, but rather of

ostentatious display.

Christ's point was that we're to live our lives before *God*, being deeply conscious of *His* watchful presence. When we seek to call public attention to our religious devotion or to our prayers, we are seeking the praise of men, not of God. So why do people do this? Simply because God isn't very real to most people!

Note the attitude of many religious people in Jesus' day: "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they 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). The invisible God seemed far off and remote to these religious people. And sadly, He seems the same way to most people today.

Christ emphasized to His disciples that prayer was private and personal communion with God. It was to be done from the heart, not according to rote and ritual. Ironically, the very words that Christ gave to His disciples as an *outline* for prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) have been made into something to be rattled off by rote by many professing Christians. Yet this "Lord's Prayer," as it has come to be known—or by some as the *Pater Noster* ("Our Father")—was given in the very context of Christ exhorting His hearers, "But when you pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (v. 7). Christ was giving them instructions about *how* they should

pray—not *what* they should pray!

Also, Christ clearly wasn't trying to convey that private prayer should never be lengthy, as some might interpret this passage. He Himself prayed at length on various occasions (cf. Luke 6:12). His point was for His followers to avoid meaningless, repetitive prayers. Our Father knows the needs of His children, yet He wants us to learn to ask Him for these needs in confidence and trust.

One important aspect of our prayers that is highlighted here (Matt. 6:12-15) involves asking God for forgiveness. Christ emphasized that in order to receive forgiveness for ourselves, however, we must also give it to others. Of course, our forgiving of others doesn't somehow *earn* God's forgiveness for *us*. Rather, it is evidence of the humble and contrite heart that God requires of those who receive His mercy.

### First Things First

We live in a world where myriads of "things" compete for our attention and our affection every single day. There are demands made upon our time from seemingly every corner. In this day of cellular phones and pocket pagers, fewer and fewer seem to ever really "get away from it all." Whether driving down the road in an automobile or eating in a restaurant, people are often trying

to do two or more things at once.

In our materialistic age, advertising attempts to lure us to "have it all." Whatever we already have, there's



probably a new and improved model which, as the ads tell us, we simply can't afford to be without.

The multiplication of two-career households has radically changed the American family in recent decades. Increasing numbers of couples are either foregoing having children altogether or else limiting themselves to one child. Day care centers have become a major industry. Consequences of our society's materialistic, hedonistic perspective are increasingly evident in the horrendous problems of our youth. How, then, could we go unaffected?

Yet Christ judged materialism harshly. Now, the Bible nowhere condemns wealth itself. In fact, various individuals in both the Old and

Views from the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

© Images by Karen Myers/World Ahead Magazine

What kind of religion is really acceptable to God? What is He really looking for in the lives of those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ?



New Testaments are described as being wealthy. Abraham had great herds and flocks and Philemon had a home large enough to accommodate the entire Colossian Church as a meeting place. It's all a matter of priorities. Finances becomes a problem if we begin to put them before God—a real danger. Christ explained that no one can serve two different masters (7:24). To attempt to do so will involve us in a struggle with conflicting loyalties. So He told His followers that they simply couldn't be a servant to both God and money.

Instead, God should always come before everything else. This is a truly foreign concept to the world around us. For though most people are completely in favor of religion, they often compartmentalize it as only one small area of their lives. In reality, the true religion of the Bible is an entire way of life that should determine all of our other priorities, whether in the realm of family, employment or even entertainment.

Perhaps the most fundamental principle of the Bible is that no one ever truly gets ahead by putting God last. Christ said, **“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all [your needs] shall be added to you”** (v. 33).

God knows that we have physical needs—and will certainly provide for them. After all, He is the One who designed us as physical creatures. So Christ continues, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself” (v. 34 NIV). If we are truly walking with God in all of our ways, then worry and anxiety will be put away. We will be developing a firm reliance upon

and confidence in God in all aspects of our lives. This is the result of putting first things first.

### Judging and Asking

What did Jesus mean next in Matthew 7:1 when He instructed His hearers not to judge? After all, every time we make a choice we render a judgment, don't we? From the time we arise in the morning until we go to bed at night, we are confronted with choices to make.

Contemporary Western society prides itself on being very non-judgmental. Behavior once defined as “deviant” or “perverse” is now considered an acceptable “alternative lifestyle.” In many of our schools, this approach is being promoted to young children. Books such as *Heather Has Two Mommies* have been used in elementary schools to present homosexuality as “normal.” Is this the approach Jesus had in mind?

The Greek verb rendered “judge” here, *krino*, has a wide range of definitions. It can mean to make a judicial ruling, to condemn or to discern. As the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* explains, Christ wasn't here forbidding “all judging of any kind, for the moral distinctions drawn in the Sermon on the Mount require that decisive judgments be made. Jesus himself goes on to speak of some people as dogs and pigs (v. 6) and to warn against false prophets (vv. 15-20)” (vol. 8, p. 183).

Rather, in Matthew 7 Jesus is exhorting His disciples not to be judgmental and condemning in dealing with people. We aren't to have a negative, critical, “holier-than-thou” attitude toward others. The one who

takes it upon himself to stand in judgment of the hearts of others is usurping the place of God, the Judge of all mankind. Christ says that such a person will be called into account by the very One whose role he usurps—and will be judged by Him!

As He went on to explain in verses 3 through 5, before we can take the “speck” out of someone else's eye, we must first get rid of the “log” in our own eye. How can we help others by pointing out some small mistake or fault when we are a thousand times more guilty—and are thus blaring forth our hypocrisy? Rather than pointing the finger at everyone else, we need to go to God and ask Him to reveal to us our own faults—so that we can change. *Then* we can effectively serve others, helping them to overcome *their* weaknesses.

We must come to see that God is very real and really does answer prayer. Christ told His disciples to ask, seek and knock (v. 7)—and that God would be there to provide. Even human fathers, with all of their natural human selfishness, would never dream of giving their own children something hurtful when they were hungry and had asked for food (vv. 9-10). Christ then emphasized how much more willing our Heavenly Father is to give good gifts to His children when they ask (v. 11). For God's way is a way of *give*—of *love* and *outflowing concern*.

And *God's* way must become *our* way. “So in everything,” Jesus said, **“do to others what you would have them do to you,** for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (v. 12 NIV). Known as the Golden Rule, this familiar statement helps to summarize all

that Jesus had been teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Here He showed the true direction to which all of the instructions of the Old Testament pointed. Interestingly, this principle was taught in its negative form by the rabbis of Christ's day. Quoting a statement by Rabbi Hillel, dating from about A.D. 20, the Talmud states, “What is hateful to you, do not to anyone else” (b Shabbath 31a). By stating it in the *positive* form as He did, however, Jesus included sins of *omission* as well as *commission*.

### Two Paths, Two Trees and Two Houses

In the conclusion to His teaching on the Mount, Christ drew a series of contrasts. If we are truly to be a disciple of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, then we must learn to make the right choices while rejecting the wrong ones. From the days of our first parents, Adam and Eve, God has intended that mankind confront contrasting choices and thereby learn to choose what's right.

The pathway that leads to eternal life is depicted by Jesus as a narrow way traversed by comparatively few. It is contrasted with the wide and popular pathway where the many are to be found. Those who follow in the footsteps of the Messiah will find that the path is often difficult and fraught with peril (vv. 13-14). As the Apostle Paul explained, the pathway that leads into the entrance of the Kingdom passes through many hardships (Acts 14:22).

It is the pathway of righteousness, which is illuminated by the lamp of God's Word (Ps. 119:105).


Next, Jesus drew a contrast between two trees. One yielded good fruit and the other yielded bad. The fruit produced testifies to the kind of tree which produced it. Christ told His listeners that they would encounter false prophets but that they could discern the true from the false on the basis of the fruit they produced (Matt. 7:15-20). These false prophets would, of course, claim to be true ones—but the evidence of their life and teaching would belie their claims.

For simply paying *lip service* to Jesus Christ as “Lord” (v. 21)—as our present society does—is not enough. Rather, the word “lord” means *owner* or *master*. If Christ is *truly* our Lord and Master, we will be *following His instructions*. Christ told those who asked of Him the way to eternal life that they should keep His Father's commandments (Matt. 19:17). God's commandments reflect His will, and only those who actually *submit to* and *practice* His will can enter His Kingdom. And those who claim to profess Christ with their mouths, but whose message and actions proclaim them as workers of lawlessness, will find themselves denied entrance into the Kingdom that Jesus Christ came announcing (7:21).

The last of the contrasts drawn in the Sermon on the Mount is that between two houses. One was built on solid rock and the other was built on sand. When storms came,

one house remained standing and the other collapsed—“and great was its fall” (vv. 24-27). Nothing can be more substantial than the *foundation* upon which it is built. Jesus likened those who listened to His words and then proceeded to put them into practice in their lives to the man who built his house upon the rock—a solid, sure foundation.

You see, it's not enough to merely hear the Truth, to know it academically or even to acknowledge it and to pay lip service to it. **The Truth of God is something that must be practiced in our everyday lives.** Jesus the Messiah came with a powerful message that directs His followers to a radical transformation of their own lives—including their priorities and even their innermost thoughts, attitudes and motives. His listeners stood amazed. For He didn't teach the way they were accustomed to. Rather, “He taught them as one having authority” (vv. 28-29)—indeed, having *absolute* authority, as He was the very *Creator* of mankind (Eph. 3:9).

Almost 2,000 years later, the teachings of Jesus *still* have authority. His words are indeed the very words of life (John 6:63). In the Sermon on the Mount, the Messiah announced the essence of His teachings to those who aspired to inherit the Kingdom that He came proclaiming. It is imperative that each of us personally take those words to heart and put them into practice in our own lives—always. 

Perhaps the most fundamental principle of the Bible is that no one ever truly gets ahead by putting God last. Christ said, **“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all [your needs] shall be added to you.”**



“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked,”

The Life of Jacob —

## Reaping What You Sow



by David E. Medici

warned the Apostle Paul, “for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Cliché? Platitude? Or law? Your happiness depends on the answer.

The sentiment expressed by Paul is not new to any of us. “What goes around, comes around,” “Turnabout is fair play” and “Just wait, you’ll get yours” are expressions we’ve all used. Yet is that all they are—just wishful thinking or expressions of hoped-for revenge and justification?

The Bible reveals Paul’s solemn admonition to be much more than a pithy saying. It’s a very real law—a cause-and-effect principle as dependable as the law of gravity. And its operation can be dramatically seen in the life of the progenitor of the nation of Israel, the patriarch Jacob.

### Sowing the Seeds

Jacob was the son of Isaac and Rebekah, the grandson of Abraham, and the younger fraternal twin of Esau (Gen. 25:19-24). These two boys, however, were different in every way. While the hairy Esau was impulsive, an active outdoorsman skilled in hunting, and the favorite son of his father, Jacob was quiet-natured, adept at business, and the favorite son of his mother (vv. 27-28). With such dissimilar personalities and divided parental

affections, the twins were destined to have very different fortunes.

Esau was Isaac’s firstborn son—the heir-apparent to Isaac’s position as head of the family and the son who, by tradition, would inherit the birthright blessing. But Esau never showed much interest in his role as heir. Rather than learning the business of the family and the skills nec-

essary to assume leadership of a growing clan, Esau spent his days away from the camp, hunting.

The younger Jacob, however, worked diligently around the camp. He devoted himself to managing the family’s herding trade, becoming an astute businessman, as well as developing the skills of a head of family. As a second-born son, though, Jacob had little hope of inheriting the much-valued birthright—unless Esau were to die or willingly part with it. Eventually, Jacob’s opportunity arose.

Late one afternoon, an exhausted Esau returned to camp, having taken no game all day. Jacob sat quietly stirring a savory lentil stew. When the famished Esau appeared, Jacob shrewdly sized up the situation.

“Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary’.... But Jacob said, ‘Sell me your birthright as of this day.’ And Esau said, ‘Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?’ Then Jacob said, ‘Swear to me as of this day.’ So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob” (vv. 30-34). By playing upon his brother’s impulsive nature, the birthright was now Jacob’s. But he had just sown the first of many corrupt seeds which, unknown to him, would yield a very bitter harvest.

Having manipulated Esau into

selling his birthright, however, did not guarantee that Isaac, their father, would give Jacob the blessing that was to accompany it. There was, indeed, every possibility that Isaac would choose to bless Esau, since this twin was his beloved firstborn.

Eventually, Isaac grew old—his eyesight almost completely failing. And the day came when he decided to settle his affairs and elevate Esau to be the new head of the family. “Behold now, I am old,” he said to Esau, “I do not know the day of my death. Now therefore, please take

told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me” (v. 19). Isaac asked Jacob to come near him so that he might feel whether he was indeed Esau. Feeling Jacob’s forearms, the goatskins succeeded in deceiving Isaac. “The voice is Jacob’s voice,” Isaac remarked, “but the hands are the hands of Esau” (v. 22). Isaac asked one more question: “Are you really my son Esau?” Jacob told one more lie: “I am.” Isaac then ate the savory meat and blessed Jacob.

Jacob had now sown the last of the bad seeds that

The story of the biblical patriarch Jacob contains a powerful lesson for us today. It illustrates an important law affecting our happiness in life.

your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die” (27:2-4).

But Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau. And understanding that the son of her affection, Jacob, was about to be excluded from leading the family, she resolved to act quickly. “Go now to the flock,” she instructed Jacob, “and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death” (vv. 9-10).

“And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, ‘Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing’” (vv. 11-12). Nevertheless, Jacob wanted the blessing, and now he had an ally in his mother. He did not fear deceiving his father so much as he feared being caught in the act!

“But his mother said to him, ‘Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me.’” Remember these words. We’ll come back to them.

So Jacob did as Rebekah instructed, and she prepared the goats, made savory meat as Isaac loved it, then secured the goatskins to Jacob’s forearms to imitate Esau’s hairiness. To complete the deception, Rebekah took Esau’s “choice clothes” and put them on Jacob. As many commentators note, this probably referred to a particular garment—an outer coat—of special significance, denoting Esau’s position as heir-apparent. With the instruments of his deception—a slain goat and a special coat—Jacob went in to his father, the almost wholly blind Isaac.

At first Isaac was suspicious, but Jacob reassured him. “I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you

were destined to yield a harvest more bitter than he could have imagined. Now he would begin to reap what he had sown.

In short order, both Isaac and Esau discovered the deception. But the deed was done, and Isaac could do nothing to undo it (v. 33). Esau in his rage impetuously plotted to kill Jacob after Isaac’s anticipated death, but the plot was revealed to Rebekah. Knowing her eldest son’s impetuous nature, she made arrangements to send Jacob to his uncle Laban “until your brother’s anger turns away” (vv. 41-45). Isaac, too, saw the need to send Jacob away from Esau’s wrath, and he resolved to use the opportunity to also get a wife for Jacob from Rebekah’s family.

So Jacob departed, traveling north toward Haran, the city of Laban. On his way, though, he stopped in Bethel, where in a dream God assured Jacob that He would be with him in all his travels (28:10-15). God Himself would have a hand in all that was about to transpire.

### A Taste of His Own Medicine

Nearing Haran, Jacob stopped at a well used for watering flocks. There he met Rachel, the beautiful daughter of Laban, and he instantly fell in love with her. Hurrying back to her father, she informed him of Jacob’s arrival. Laban was eager to have Jacob in his household, for he remembered the lavish gifts that had been given to his father when Abraham’s servant took Rebekah to wife for Isaac years before (24:29-30). There might be profit in the arrival of Jacob! “Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister’s son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house” (29:13). Jacob was a skilled businessman, but he was now in the hands of a man even more subtle and wily than he.

Jacob stayed with Laban for a month, and it didn’t



take long for Laban to see Jacob's interest in the younger Rachel. So a deal was struck—Jacob would serve seven years as a bridal price for Rachel. "And they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her" (v. 20). At the end of the seven years, a wedding feast was arranged.

But Laban had an elder daughter, Leah, whose eyes were "weak" (v. 17 margin)—a flaw that would drive away suitors. So Laban contrived to rid himself of the unmarriageable Leah, and at the same time ensure that Jacob would be bound to remain longer with him. "Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her" (v. 23).

His senses stupefied with the wedding wine, his sight dimmed by the evening and the darkness of the bridal tent, Jacob went in to Leah, thinking her to be Rachel. Jacob was reaping the bitter crop of deception that he first planted when Isaac was weak with old age, nearly blind, and in *his* tent! "So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah" (v. 25). Can you imagine his thoughts, his feelings of betrayal? Did he now begin to think about what he had done to his father?

Jacob was enraged. "What is this you have done to me?" he demanded of Laban (v. 25). "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn," answered Laban, using the word that must have slapped Jacob with the reality of what was happening—firstborn!

"Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years" (v. 27). And so, as Jacob cunningly maneuvered Esau into selling his birthright, so did Laban cunningly maneuver Jacob into serving another seven years! How bitter was this harvest Jacob himself had planted—and there was more to come!

Jacob served Laban 14 years for Leah and Rachel, then another six years tending Laban's flocks. During this time God had given him 11 sons and a daughter, and had multiplied all his flocks and herds. So Jacob became very wealthy, but Laban did not.

Eventually Laban began to resent Jacob, and so God told Jacob to depart (31:1-3). In leaving, Jacob said something interesting to his wives: "And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me" (vv. 6-7).

What a picture this gives us of Jacob's 20 years with Laban. How those years must have worn on Jacob! Trickery, deceit, double-dealing and faithlessness at every turn. Jacob could never trust his father-in-law. For doing the very same things himself to his brother and father, Jacob was made to endure a 20-year sentence under the oppressive hand of Laban. And there was yet more!

### The Full Measure of Bitterness

Jacob returned to Canaan where his father dwelt. The return was no doubt filled with hope and anxiety—hope because he would once again see his father and the mother who so dearly loved him, but anxiety because he would have to finally face Esau.

Upon entering Canaan, Jacob learned that Esau was coming to meet him with an army of 400 men! Was the wrath of Esau not abated? Would Esau butcher Jacob and all his family? True to his changeable nature, Esau was actually heartened to see his brother and embraced him (Gen. 32-33). There was relief, for the moment.

His return to his father (35:27), however, was a more bitter occasion. Jacob had been away 20 years, and during that time Rebekah, the mother who had so doted upon and favored Jacob, had died!

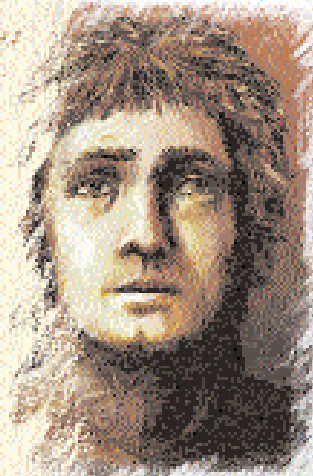
Rebekah herself reaped a bitter harvest too—planted when she deceived Isaac. Remember her words, "Let your curse be on me." When she sent Jacob away, *she would never see him again*. Imagine the rest of her days—never again seeing her beloved son, never again

touching him with her hands, never again holding him in her arms, never again hearing his voice. As Isaac had been blind to her deception, so would her beloved son be hidden from *her* sight by his absence. As she had disguised Jacob as Esau, so was she *left with* only Esau and his detestable wives (26:34-35). As she clothed the hands and arms of Jacob with the goatskins, so her hands and arms would be bare of the touch of the son she longed for. What a bitter end to her plotting and scheming!

But for Jacob, there was more yet to come!

As the years passed, he and his family continued to prosper. Yet God would still allow Jacob to reap the consequences of his deeds. His family was filled with envy,

As the years passed, he and his family continued to prosper. Yet God would still allow Jacob to reap the consequences of his deeds.



Rebekah herself reaped a bitter harvest too—planted when she deceived Isaac. Remember her words, "Let your curse be on me." When she sent Jacob away, *she would never see him again*. Imagine the rest of her days—never again seeing her beloved son, never again

just as there was envy between Jacob and Esau. His wives continually vied for his attention and engaged in mutual jealousy. His sons grew to be deceitful and rash, even slaughtering all the men of Shechem (Gen. 34). And the son of his favor, Joseph, grew to be hated by all his elder brothers. Jacob's family life was far from happy.

Like his father Isaac, Jacob also had to ensure that his family would continue after him under a good leader. For that responsibility, he chose Joseph, the first-born son of Rachel, his most beloved wife. He gave Joseph special treatment and training, but this only further embittered his other sons against Joseph and bred disrespect for their father. The brothers had finally had enough when Jacob gave Joseph his famous "coat of many colours" (37:3 KJV) to symbolize his position.

When Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers one day, they contrived to be rid of him forever. When Joseph approached them, the brothers seized him. They would have killed him on the spot had not Reuben intervened to spare his life (vv. 18-22). Instead, he persuaded them to sell him as a slave to traders bound for Egypt.

Joseph was gone, but the brothers had to conceal their crime. So they took Joseph's coat, killed a kid of the goats, dipped the coat in the blood, and presented the coat to their father Jacob and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" (v. 32).

Jacob was devastated! "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces" (v. 33). All Jacob's hopes were cruelly dashed. The son he so dearly loved, the firstborn of Rachel his beloved, was gone! What agony he endured. How his heart was pierced with unbearable sorrow! "Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. And... he refused to be comforted" (vv. 34-35). Indeed, for more than 20 years, Jacob would believe the terrible lie his own sons had concocted—that his most dearly loved son was dead.

How ironic! Not just brotherly jealousy and family deception once again. But with the very items by which Jacob had deceived Isaac those many years ago—a slain goat and a special coat!—the unkindest blow of all had returned upon him!

The harvest was now fully reaped. Years later Jacob would stand before Pharaoh and describe his life: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life" (47:9). How sad—and yet how true.

### The Lesson for Us

The stories of the Old Testament are not outdated myths. They describe real events that were recorded

for our benefit. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning." And 1 Corinthians 10 tells us that the things that happened to those in the Old Testament "happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (vv. 11-12).

So the story of Jacob is definitely for us. We must never think we are above what it has to teach us. Jacob's life dramatically illustrates Paul's admonition, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Indeed, as we have seen, this is no mere platitude. It is a very real cause-and-effect principle—a law of God!

Is it a *cruel* law? Certainly not of itself. Rather, the crop you yield depends upon the seed you decide to sow. God is a God of love (1 John 4:8), and He greatly desires that we be blessed in every way (3 John 3). So, in love, God has set in motion a law that will allow us to control the degree to which we are blessed or cursed. *But we must choose!* God says, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" (Deut. 30:19).

Yes, the choice is ours. There's a *way* of life that *leads* to life with great happiness. And there's a way that leads to misery and, ultimately, death. We can choose to sow good seed and reap blessing upon blessing. Or we can choose to sow bad seed and reap curse upon curse, making our days "few and evil."

But what if we've already sown bad seed? Indeed, who hasn't? (cf. Rom. 3:23). We can be thankful that, upon repentance, God will relieve us of some of the consequences of sin. But he won't remove *all* of them in this life—so that we may learn important lessons, as Jacob's story demonstrates. His life, we should remember, wasn't *all* bad. After all, he became a man of God whose name was changed to *Israel*, meaning "Prevailer with God" (Gen. 23:28). And he later stated that God had "redeemed [him] from all evil" (48:16), at last finding happiness in his final years with Joseph.

Still, it was a long, hard and bitter road to that place. But it didn't have to be—if Jacob hadn't sown the corrupt seed that he did. And the same is true for us. Seed *will* be sown—we cannot escape it—but the *character* of that seed is entirely dependent upon us. For life is all about choices. And if we've *been* sowing *bad* seed, the answer is to stop *now*—asking God's forgiveness—and to start, with His help, sowing *good* seed for a wonderful future harvest. Again, it's up to us. WA



EUROPE—  
(continued from page 19)

it to get away with so much evil.

Yet, some might wonder, how can this be, with Christianity at its helm? Sadly, the Bible shows that the Christendom emerging and emanating from the city of Rome has been a *counterfeit* of true, scriptural Christianity. That's why Christ warns His people about "Babylon"—again, as this false Christianity is called—in these terms:

**WE ALL,  
REGARDLESS  
OF WHERE WE  
LIVE, MUST  
SPIRITUALLY  
COME OUT OF  
THE BABYLONIAN  
CONFUSION  
OF THE WAY-  
WARD WORLD  
AROUND US.**

**"Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.** For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities" (v. 4). So, in the end, the whole corrupt church-state and economic system will be brought down and destroyed. "The kings of the earth who... lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning" (v. 9).

The warning for us now is that we not be part of this system. But one might ask: How can I, personally, "come out of Babylon"? What if I live in Europe? Must I literally leave


the European continent to escape God's punishment upon it? Not right now, of course. But at some future point, it will no doubt come to that for some. During the Middle Ages, true Christians had to flee from religious persecutors, hiding in caves and deserted places. And prior to World War II, many Jews could have escaped their terrible fate in concentration camps if they had only heeded the warning signs and left Germany (cf. Jer. 51:6).

But in its final, ultimate sense, Babylon represents a wrong way of life—engendered by this world's systems—in total opposition to God. And we all, regardless of where we live, must spiritually come out of the Babylonian confusion of the wayward world around us.

In his remarkable book, *The Death of Outrage*, William J. Bennett points out how easy and dangerous it is to become part of the wrong system of this world: "In his influential 1978 essay *The Power of the Powerless*, Vaclav Havel wrote about daily life under communist rule in Eastern Europe. The Czech regime was thoroughly permeated with hypocrisy and lies. And there were citizens, he wrote, who **'live(d) within the lie.'** What he meant by this phrase was that every greengrocer, every clerk who agreed to display official slogans not reflecting his own beliefs, or who voted in elections known to be farcical, or who feigned agreement at political meetings, *normalized falsification*. Individuals may not have believed all the falsifications, Havel wrote, but they behaved as though they did, or they at least tolerated them in silence. Each individual who lived the lie, who capitulated to 'ideological pseudo-reality,' became a petty instrument of the regime. This led to a de-moralized person, **upon which the system, in turn, depended**" (p. 129).

Coming out of Babylon, then, may mean for you and me today that we simply live by God's Word, standing up boldly for the Truth, despite what the world around us thinks. It may include keeping God's weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days (Lev. 23) at the risk of ridicule or even losing our jobs. It may mean rejecting wrong concepts and ideas—such as the celebration of Babylonian festivals like Christmas or Easter—no matter what the consequences. It may mean not adopting the Babylonian model of trusting in a human leader for salvation (cf. Ps. 146:3; Jer. 17:5)—as this world is poised to do—but rather putting our faith and trust solely in God, following men only as their fruits demonstrate that they are following Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1).

The final Babylon is rising in Europe right now—and will eventually plunge this world into all-encompassing global war, unparalleled in human history (Jer. 30:5-7; Matt. 24:21-22). No one will escape this horrible time except the very few who have their faith and trust firmly in God and are careful to live by His Word. They *will* be spared (cf. Rev. 3:10; 12:14; Zeph. 2:3)—but only *after* they have proven to God that they are always willing to stand up for Him, even if that means enduring suffering and shame (Heb. 13:12-14). Will YOU be one of these faithful few?

Though the return of Jesus Christ itself will be a wonderful, momentous time, the events that precede it are not pleasant. Neither are they pleasant to write about. But they are in YOUR Bible. And they are certain to happen just a few years down the road. As it was in ancient Babylon, the handwriting is already on the wall (cf. Dan. 5). May God give you the wisdom and strength to listen—and then to ACT accordingly. 

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Why do you tell people to keep the commandments? That was only for the Jews in the Old Testament. New Testament Christians don't have to do that.**

We tell people to keep the commandments because this is the message of the whole Bible—Old and New Testament. Though the rituals and sacrifices attached to God's law in Moses' day were not intended for New Testament Christians (Heb. 8, 10), the commandments are for all humanity at all times.

In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, God said of the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:11), who lived long before Moses, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (26:5). Later, King David wrote, "All [God's] commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever" (Ps. 111:7-8 KJV). Solomon summed up, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13 NKJV, 1982).

Jesus Himself said, **"If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments"** (Matt. 19:17). And, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called the least [by those] in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (5:19).

The Apostle James, Christ's brother and the pastor of the Jerusalem Church, said we must live "as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12). John, the apostle "Jesus loved," wrote, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar" (1 John 2:3-4). He further states, **"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.** And His commandments are not burdensome" (5:3).

Even Paul, whom many claim did away with God's law, wrote, "For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the *doers* of the law will be justified" (Rom. 2:13). And he also stated,

"Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, **but keeping the commandments of God is what matters**" (1 Cor. 7:19).

In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, the true Church is described as those who "keep the commandments of God" (12:17; 14:12). The Bible ends with a statement about these points of God's law: **"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 [New Jerusalem]" (22:14).

Clearly, then, this is something we must be preaching today.

**But how do you explain the fact that the Bible says Christians are not under the law but are under grace?**

Though keeping God's commandments is clearly a requirement for all people, as the above answer shows, no one but Jesus Christ has done so perfectly. Sin, the Bible says, is "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4 KJV). And according to Romans 3:23, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." But breaking God's law exacts a dire penalty: "For the wages of sin is death" (6:23). "So death passed upon all men, for that all sinned" (5:12 KJV). And "death reigned... over" everyone (v. 14).

In that it passed *upon* men and reigns *over* them, men are thus *under* death. That is, they are under the death *sentence*—the penalty the law claims for transgression. And this is really what it means to be, as Paul frequently states, "under the law." It refers to having its penalty hanging over you.

Yet many—indeed, the whole Protestant world!—argue that those who are "under the law" are those who believe they are under the requirement to *obey God's commandments* in order to be saved (as if this were a bad thing). But the terminology simply cannot have this commonly attested meaning. Why not?

Notice what Paul says in Romans 3: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, **that every mouth may be stopped,**

**and all the world may become guilty before God"** (v. 19). According to this verse, the *entire world* has been under the law—not just those Jews who believed they needed to be observing the Mosaic law. And therefore the *entire world* stands guilty—condemned under death.

This is why the whole world needs, as Romans 5 explains, God's "grace"—i.e. His favor, especially as expressed through free, unmerited pardon of our sins. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the death penalty has been paid in our stead. We have but to repent of our sins (Acts 2:38)—that is, be sorry for what we've done and commit to obeying God from now on—and, in faith, accept Christ sacrifice for our atonement along with Him personally as our living Savior. We are then "under grace." But again, **repentance includes the commitment that we will strive to keep God's commandments** (Luke 13:24; 1 Cor. 9:24-27), as we are empowered by *another* aspect of grace—the receiving of God's Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 5:3). We will not succeed in obedience *perfectly* in this life (1 John 1:8-9; Rom. 7). But we must be *growing* to become more like Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). No wonder Paul said, "What then? shall we sin [break God's law], because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!" (Rom. 6:15 KJV).

Our predecessor in this Work of God, Herbert W. Armstrong, explained the truth on this whole matter quite well. He said, "The law has a penalty—DEATH. It claims the life of the one who transgresses it. The law has power to take the life of the transgressor. It therefore is more powerful than the sinner—and is OVER the sinner, holding a claim on his life. It is the SINNER who is UNDER the law. But when the sinner REPENTS of his transgression, and accepts the sacrifice of Christ as payment of the *penalty* of the law, then he is PARDONED—UNDER GRACE—the law no longer stands over him, claiming his life. Those who are still sinning are still UNDER the law! **And those who, through repentance, obedience and faith have turned from disobedience and are, through faith, keeping the law, are the only ones who are UNDER GRACE!**" (*The Good News of Tomorrow's World*, Aug. 1971, p. 4).



the most powerful nation in the world? As already mentioned, more than *two-thirds* of Americans polled said they thought the president should continue in office—that his “governing character” has nothing to do with his “private character.” But that leaves another third who disagree—who believe he needs to go. A sampling of *this* group’s reasoning can be found in the “Letters” section of the October 19, 1998, edition of *Time* magazine.

One letter says, “If [Mr. Clinton] had the moral courage to do the right thing he would spare us this pain. He would resign. Perhaps, like Richard Nixon, he might eventually have a chance to earn a measure of our respect again. Unfortunately, resignation is not likely. **This is not about sex; it is about morale courage,** and President Clinton doesn’t have it.”

Another person states, “I do not blame Starr for unearthing this scandal. I blame the President for his actions. It is clear that Clinton lacks the wisdom to run his own life, let alone the life of this country. Starr was just doing his job.”

Still another says, “It is curious that polls show Americans heartily approve of the job Clinton is doing as President despite his conduct behind closed doors. But the American public is sending a message. As long as we make a lot of money, the character of the people leading us to the Valley of Plenty doesn’t matter.”

Is that really so? Bennet comments in *The Death of Outrage*, “It is said that *private* character has virtually no impact on *governing* character; that what matters above all is a healthy economy; that moral authority is defined solely by how well a president deals with public policy; that America needs to become more European... in its attitude toward sex; that lies about sex, even under oath, don’t really matter; that we shouldn’t be ‘judgmental’.... **These arguments define us down;** they assume a lower common denominator of behavior and leadership than we Americans

## Character Matters, Says Insightful Youth

After the president’s August 1998 speech following his grand jury testimony, this letter to the editor, by Christopher Vincent, appeared in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*:

“I am 18 years old. Though I am not old enough to vote, I am writing this on behalf of my generation. The recent speech by the President and the reaction of our nation to it gives me reason to write this letter in hope that those who read it will be challenged to look closely at the condition of our nation.

“In the President’s speech he admitted to having a relationship with Monica Lewinsky that was ‘improper’ and ‘wrong.’ Then he said that it was time to move on.

“Many people have said that the President’s private affairs are his own business and people should not pry. Others have said that the President’s private affairs do not affect the job he does. The President himself touched lightly upon the supposed injustice of prying into his personal life in his speech.

“Hugo Grotius once said that a man cannot govern a nation if he cannot govern a city, he cannot govern a city if he cannot govern a family, he cannot govern a family unless he can govern himself, and he cannot govern himself unless his passions are subject to reason.

“The President is accountable to the people. We must know whether he can control himself or not. If the President cannot control himself, he certainly is not capable of governing a nation. Yet we sit in our selfishness and refuse to look at the truth because it does not feel good. We look at the nation and see a booming economy. We look around and see prosperity and say, ‘Why should we mess this up?’ And yes, Mr. Clinton has helped with all these things. But there are better things than financial security, and there are worse things than poverty. We give the control to a man who can make us feel good but cannot control himself.

“I would like to call your attention to a recent international affair where Pakistan and India were developing nuclear weapons. The President offered a deal to Pakistan saying that if they would stop developing nuclear weapons the United States would protect them in the case of an attack. The Pakistani minister of foreign affairs said that he did not believe that the President (Clinton) would follow through on his promise. This was because he saw the character of our President and realized he could not be trusted. This endangered the lives of the citizens of Pakistan and India, more than 900 million people. Although war has not broken out, we must heed the warning: the character of the President affects the entire world.

“The American people have chosen to become selfish, and my generation—your children—are growing up seeing the highest authority in America, a man who cannot control himself. Why should I put others first when the President himself will not even put his duty to his wife or his nation before his sexual desires? I’m asking you, the generation that holds the voting power, to think of your children and the future of the world. If we cannot trust our President to fulfill his marriage vows, can we trust him to do what he has promised us?

“And if we cannot trust the man our parents elect, can we trust our parents? You owe it to the world, you owe it to God, and you owe it to your children to consider this.”

ought to accept.... Civilized society must give public affirmation to principles and standards... notions of right and wrong” (pp. 8-9).

But what’s the real harm in a leader’s lack of character? Perhaps we won’t see the worst effects until today’s children are grown. Indeed, many are greatly concerned about the negative message young kids get when they learn details of the president’s scandalous conduct. According to an elementary school counselor, “If we had a group of 8, 9, 10, 11-year olds sitting around this table, 99% of them would say, ‘No big deal, everybody does it’ This is what has happened” (*USA Today*). Bennett says, “In a *Time* magazine cover story, sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade boys at a Denver middle school rationalize a sharp rise in lewd language, groping, pinching, and bra-snapping this way: ‘**If the president can do it, why can’t we?**’” (pp. 42-43).

The former secretary of education concludes by saying, “Let’s turn to the final component of the arguments offered by those determined not to be outraged by the president. These apologists may concede... that Bill Clinton’s capacity for governance has been impeded (somewhat) by his propensity for private deceit.... Defenders of both Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton forget that **the cost of raising the threshold of moral outrage is paid out over generations—and with compound interest** [cf. Ex. 20:5]. How much of the political cynicism that today says ‘they all do it’ can be laid at the feet of actions committed twenty-five years ago during the Watergate scandal? Twenty-five

years from today, what will be the cost of the Clinton scandals to the America of our children and grandchildren?” (pp. 50-51).

### Righteous Leaders

What kind of character should leaders possess—according to the Word of God? King David, remember, made some serious mistakes during his reign over Israel, but he learned from them and didn’t repeat them. Shortly before his death, he gave this warning that we would do well to heed today: “The God of Israel said... to me: ‘**He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God**’” (2 Sam. 23:3-4).

And it was King Solomon, David’s son, who wrote the proverb quoted earlier: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). He also wrote, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan” (29:2). Indeed, a nation will be truly blessed if its leaders are people of character who obey God—setting an example for all to follow.

Near the end of Solomon’s life, he came to a vital realization: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13-14 NKJV, 1982). The current edition of the New King James Version renders this last phrase, “...for this is man’s all.” But the Jewish Publication Society’s *Holy Scriptures* translates this perhaps more accurately: “...for this is [or constitutes] a WHOLE man.”

Indeed, for those who would try

to compartmentalize our lives and separate character from leadership ability and performance, William Bennett answers, “The intimate connection between private and public character was understood [by our Founding Fathers and even the ancient Greeks] as a form of *integrity*, whose root word is *integer*, meaning ‘whole.’ **The leader must be WHOLE; he cannot have his public character be honest and his private character be deceitful.** ‘The purity of his private character gave effulgence to his public virtues,’ were the beautiful words said of George Washington upon his death” (p. 37).

For the most part, presidents like Washington, Lincoln and, in modern times, Truman, Eisenhower, Carter, Reagan and Bush all set fine records as leaders possessing character and integrity. May the Great God help America through our ongoing presidential scandal. Perhaps He will grant that our great nation can once again be governed by leaders of *exemplary character*. However, as conditions are ever worsening toward the end of this age (2 Tim. 3:1), it may be that the time for such presidents is past. We simply cannot know.

But one thing is certain. The whole world is in desperate need of righteous leaders—*truly* and *wholly* righteous leaders who will set our planet on the right track. And, thank God, that IS coming, in what we call the World Ahead. For when Jesus Christ soon returns to this earth, He and His perfected saints, including King David, forever purged of sin, will reign supreme for the absolute good of the governed—and the people will truly rejoice. ■



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**—EASTERN TIME**

MI, Ann Arbor: *Media One*—Ch 9, 8:00 pm, TUES  
NY, West Nyack: *TKR*—Ch 28, 6:30 pm, FRI

**—CENTRAL TIME**

AR, Little Rock: *Comcast*—Ch 27, 1:00 pm, SAT  
MN, Duluth: *Public Access*—Ch 7 & 24, 9:30 am, SAT & SUN  
MO, Jefferson City: *JCTV*—Ch 3, 6:30 pm, FRI  
TX, El Paso: *Paragon Cable*—Ch 15, 2:30 pm, SAT

**—MOUNTAIN TIME**

AZ, Prescott: *Community TV*—Ch 13, 1:30 pm, SUN  
CO, Denver: *DCTV*—Ch 58, SAT & THU

**—PACIFIC TIME**

CA, Sacramento: *RCCTV*—Ch 20, 7:00 pm, SUN  
WA, Spokane: *TCI*—Ch 25, 5:30 pm, SAT

**RADIO**

**INTERNATIONAL**

**—LUXEMBOURG**

Luxembourg City: *Radio Luxembourg*—LW 1271m, 4:45 am, MON  
(French)

**—UNITED KINGDOM**

Isle of Man, Douglas: *Manx*—1368 kHz AM; 89/97.2/103.7 MHz FM,  
10:00 pm, SUN

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