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By Jerold Aust

Page 4



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Will God Continue to Bless America? If Not, Why Not?

By Don Hooser

Page 10



After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, many Americans, including people of faith, continue to ask, "Why did God let this happen?" A year later, let's reflect on the terrorist attacks and their aftermath from a biblical perspective.

Oops! I Made a Mistake!

By Janet Treadway

Page 15



We all make mistakes (oops, mistakes). How do we respond to our own mistakes? And how do we respond to the mistakes of others? Responding in a godly way is a vital part of Christian character.

I Dare You!

By Robert Berendt

Page 18



"I dare you! I double dare you!" Then what? Those words are often followed by actions that are dangerous, illegal, embarrassing or risky in one way or another.

The Diets of the Millennium Should Be the Diets of Today

By Tom Damour

Page 22



After the second coming, Jesus will not only heal people, but teach the world how to build and maintain good health. This is one of the lessons of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

The Inspiring Fall Holy Days

By Don Hooser

Page 28



The celebration of the seven biblical Holy Days is a deeply meaningful and joyous experience. The spiritual climax of the year is the fall, when four of God's festivals portray prophesied end-time events.

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Armageddon: The End of the World?

By Jerold Aust

A cover story in a recent issue of TIME magazine was "The Bible and the Apocalypse," which explained that the "end time" is very much on the minds of the American people. But the talk of Armageddon is more fiction than fact, more ballyhoo than Bible. Here is what the Bible says about Armageddon.



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY SAY about Armageddon? It tells us that the last great battle of man's age will take place in the Middle East. The armies will gather at a place Scripture calls Armageddon. So, not surprisingly, Armageddon has come to portray our worst nightmare: the end of the world.

Some Bible scholars claim that Armageddon is predicted to terminate society as we know it. More-detailed speculations speak of it as a battle of cataclysmic proportions, possibly a nuclear war that will annihilate mankind. Even Ronald Reagan, the former U.S. president, spoke of Armageddon in such terms. That Armageddon is named in the Bible (Revelation 16:16) and that it serves as the prelude to "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (verse 14) deserves our concern and attention.

The meaning of *Armageddon*

The word *Armageddon* can be traced to Megiddo, a significant fortified town in Palestine in ancient times. Most scholars think *Armageddon* comes from *harmegiddon*, meaning "hill of Megiddo." The area has quite a history. Excavations of Megiddo have revealed 20 layers of occupation dating from the fourth millennium B.C. to about 450 B.C. The site is about 18 miles south-southeast of the Port of Haifa in northern Israel and about 55 miles north of Jerusalem.

Megiddo's strategic location gave it greater importance



Archeological excavation at Megiddo

than its size would suggest: a mere 13 acres within the city's ancient walls during the time of Solomon. Megiddo overlooked the narrow entrance to Israel's northern mountains from the Plain of Megiddo--also known as the Valley of Esdraelon, or Jezreel--a level expanse some 20 miles long and 14 miles wide.

Northern Palestine, especially the area of the Plain of Megiddo, was militarily important because it guarded part of the easiest route across the Fertile Crescent, which stretched from Mesopotamia to Egypt.

Throughout ancient history, the great powers of Mesopotamia--Assyria and Babylon--contended with

Egypt for control of this area.

The territory of the ancient kingdom of Israel was at the crossroads of three continents--Africa, Europe and Asia. Bounded on the west by the Mediterranean Sea and on the east by the Arabian Desert, this relatively small area between sea and desert was the strategic land link between the three continents. So important, so desirable, so coveted was this narrow land bridge that ancient armies frequently and regularly battled for control of it.

In modern times the Arabian Desert has been prized for its great oil reserves. In ancient times parts of the territory of Israel were coveted for their militarily crucial passes. Megiddo guarded one of those passes. More than 200 battles have been fought at or near there (Alan Johnson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1981, Vol. 12, p. 551). One scholar calls the area "the battle ground of the centuries" (Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1966, p. 89).

What about the future of Megiddo, or Armageddon? Does the Bible reveal anything about this strategically vital area?

Prophecy of Armageddon

Although Armageddon is mentioned in Revelation 16:16 ("And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon"), Scripture says nothing about armies actually attacking each other there. It does indicate, however, that armies assemble on the Plain of Megiddo, apparently using the large, level area as a staging ground to prepare for a great battle. But who is being gathered, who is gathering them and for what purpose?

Those being gathered appear to be two political and military coalitions--"the kings of the earth and of the whole world" (verse 14) and "the kings from the east" (verse 12), from east of the Euphrates River. These leaders aren't necessarily "kings" as we use the word today; the original word means ruler, leader or commander. We might use descriptions like president, prime minister, chairman, chancellor or general to refer to such leaders today.

We don't normally think of people actually daring to go to war against God... But the Bible reveals that men will actually try to fight the returning Jesus Christ.

At that point in history, many heads of nations will have banded together to support the mighty "beast" power mentioned in Revelation 17. In

describing this confederation of peoples, nations and rulers as a beast, God is likening this enormously powerful alliance to an animal driven by ungodly instincts and motivations.

Those comprising this alliance "are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast" (Revelation 17:12-13). The book of Revelation shows that demonic spirits performing miraculous signs will influence these leaders to gather "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty...to the place called in Hebrew Armageddon" (Revelation 16:13-16).

Why will the armies of these nations gather at Armageddon? Apparently these military powers will invade the Middle East for a showdown over who will control the world.

However, instead of fighting each other, they will turn on the returning Messiah, Jesus Christ, to fight Him!

We don't normally think of people actually daring to go to war against God. People war against other people. But the Bible reveals that men will actually try to fight the returning Jesus Christ. These end-time dictators and demagogues covet rulership of the world, and they hope to succeed through their immense armies and destructive weapons--weapons powerful enough to destroy all life from the planet.

God knows that, unless He sends Jesus Christ to intervene in human affairs at that critical juncture, "*no living thing could survive*" (Matthew 24:22, New English Bible, emphasis added throughout).

Satan and Armageddon

Behind the scenes another powerful leader figures prominently in gathering the armies to Armageddon. Satan, as "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4), will have deceived all nations (Revelation 12:9). As the adversary of humanity (1 Peter 5:8), his avowed purpose is to deceive and destroy the human family. The massive armies that will arise in the end time will, to him, seem the ideal vehicle for accomplishing such incredible destruction (Isaiah 14:12, 17).

But what the nations won't know, and Satan won't accept, is that God *allows* him to deceive such arrogant leaders into thinking that this decisive battle will enable them to take control of the world!

God Himself will enter into battle with those deceived nations bent on destruction (Zechariah 14:1-3). God will prove that *He* is all powerful, not Satan nor those whom he deceives. And God will not allow man to completely destroy himself (Matthew 24:22).

With this background, we can better understand the purpose of Armageddon when we read how the armies will be gathered "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14).

The prophet Zechariah also describes this climactic time: "Behold, the day of the LORD is coming...For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem...Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east" (Zechariah 14:1-4).

Military forces gather

The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* offers another insight into Armageddon: "It is surprising that no one has suggested taking *magadon* as deriving from the secondary sense of the Hebrew *gadad* that means 'to gather in troops or bands.' The simple way in Hebrew to make a noun from a verb is to prefix a *ma* to the verbal form. Thus we have *magad*, 'a place of gathering in troops,' and the suffix *o*, meaning 'his,' yielding 'his place of gathering troops.' This is almost equivalent to the expressions in vss. 14, 16--'to gather them (the kings and their armies) for the battle on the great day of God Almighty'--and would allude to the prophetic expectation of the gathering of the nations for judgment" (Johnson, p. 552).

Armageddon, while a symbol of the destruction of the forces of evil, is also a prelude to humanity's salvation. In Joel 3:9-10 God depicts these rulers and their preparation for invasion and warfare: "Proclaim this among the nations: 'Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up [to Jerusalem, verses 12, 16-17]. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, I am strong.'"

The prophecy indicates that the leaders will disrupt societal needs, converting facilities for manufacturing agricultural implements to produce armaments and munitions.

The armies will gather near Armageddon, almost filling the surrounding plain, and continue their deployment throughout other areas of the Holy Land. But the actual battle will take place some 55 miles south of Armageddon, around Jerusalem.

In truth that great battle will not be much of a contest. God will allow the armies to gather at Armageddon so that, in the end, there will be no question that He rules supreme. By permitting Satan, his demons and deceived human leaders to stir up nations to pit their massive forces against Him, God will allow those armies who would resist Christ's rule to close in on Jerusalem--only to be destroyed in their battle against Him.

Armageddon, therefore, becomes a symbol of a great battle, not between mighty nations and military alliances, but between the forces of good and evil. That climactic battle will be fought at and around Jerusalem.

The battle is joined

The Bible describes that time of earth-shaking events as "the day of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10; Zechariah 14:1)--the time during which God will intervene in human affairs to put an end to man's rebellion against Him.

Continuing the prophecy recorded in Joel, God says: "Let the nations be wakened, and come up [to Jerusalem] to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow--for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:12-14; compare with Revelation 14:15-19).

Jesus Christ will deal with these massive armies at His return: "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations...He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15). Birds gather to feed on the remains of those who war against Jesus Christ (verses 17-18, 21).

Apparently the carnage isn't limited to the area immediately around Jerusalem. Revelation 14:20 indicates that it will extend for some 200 miles.

Armageddon: prelude to peace

Jesus Christ will finally be recognized as humanity's Savior and Deliverer, its King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). Mankind will recognize the futility of rebellion against God.

The prophet Malachi also spoke of God's supreme authority: "For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles [nations]; in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations,' says the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:11).



God will at last be acknowledged as Supreme Ruler of mankind. For millennia Satan--the god of this world--has palmed himself off as the god of mankind (2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14). However, God has prophesied that one day He will fulfill His plan for mankind, for which He created the earth.

When this happens, the human family will enjoy unprecedented peace and unparalleled prosperity on earth. This peace has been promised to mankind for thousands of years (2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; Isaiah 11:1-10).

Armageddon, while a symbol of the destruction of the forces of evil, is also a prelude to humanity's salvation. It is then that human misrule will come to an end. At Armageddon the greedy, power-mad demagogues of that time will be gathered into one place so that Christ can put an end to the misery they have wrought on mankind.

Armageddon signals the end of fear, pain, destruction and untimely death. Sadly, there is simply no other way for mankind to learn its lesson. God must finally step in, intervening in human affairs to force peace on this foundering world (Revelation 19; Zechariah 14; Joel 3).

Christ will replace this world's social, economic, political, educational and religious systems and build a world based on God's ways (Daniel 2:44-45).

How to understand mankind's future

God has given to mankind several annual festivals that unlock the mystery of our future. For example, the Feast of Trumpets foreshadows the return of Jesus Christ "with a great sound of a trumpet" to vanquish the armies gathered against Him (Matthew 24:30-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 11:15).

The symbolism of the Day of Atonement reveals that Christ will bind Satan, preventing him from influencing humanity (Revelation 20:1-3).

The Feast of Tabernacles depicts 1,000 years of peace and prosperity that will envelop the earth and its inhabitants (Revelation 20:4-5; Isaiah 11).

The Last Great Day signifies the time when all who didn't know the true God will be resurrected to learn His truth and receive their opportunity for salvation (Revelation 20:11-12; Ezekiel 37).

To learn more about the incredible future God has prophesied for humanity, request your free copies of two booklets [*The Gospel of the Kingdom*](#), and [*God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*](#).

Armageddon is not the end of the world. It's a gathering place for enormous armies, God's summons for deceived human leaders to enter into a decisive battle with Him at Jerusalem. Rather than marking the annihilation of mankind, Armageddon is the preface to 1,000 years of peace and prosperity for all. Humanity will live on, for what begins at Armageddon establishes Christ as supreme ruler on earth and over all nations. The earth will then become immersed in peace and prosperity in the Kingdom of God.

Will God Continue to Bless America? If Not, Why Not?

By Don Hooser

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, many Americans, including people of faith, continue to ask, "Why did God let this happen?" A year later, let's reflect on the terrorist attacks and their aftermath from a biblical perspective.



ON THE MORNING OF SEPT. 11, 2001, terrorists armed only with box-cutter knives hijacked four passenger airliners to use as flying bombs. Some 3,000 people died as a result of the complete collapse of the World Trade Center's twin towers, the attack on the Pentagon and the crash of the airplanes themselves. The calamity was shocking and heart-rending. This has been a year of mourning.

And this year, perhaps more than ever, Americans have been inspired to say, "God bless America." But how much do they *pray*, "God bless America"? And those three words can sound like a demand. We could at least say "please." And we should also be praying, *Please grant us repentance and forgiveness and obedience so that we will **deserve** to be blessed.*

Considering all the stresses and distresses of this past year, it is a wonder that we are doing as well as we are. Consider the frightful revelations of our homeland *insecurity!* Americans have learned how extremely vulnerable this country is to all sorts of terrorist attacks and sabotage. So why has there not been even *one* more terrorist attack on our mainland since 9/11/01? And why has our economy done as well as it has?

We in United Church of God believe it is *God's* doing. If God wants a country to be secure for a period of time, it has the greatest source of security possible. If God wants a country to remain prosperous for a while, it has the greatest possible element of success. But all this must not be interpreted as a sign of God's approval of this nation. God has always used people and nations for His purposes even at times when He is highly displeased with them. With God, justice delayed is still justice. God sees to it that all people and nations eventually reap what they sow.

Getting back to normal

And God must surely have been pleased with the spiritual awakening and rededication of many people following the calamity of 9/11. But probably not as pleased with most of them as we might think. God looks on the hearts and sees much better than any of us whether our religious rededication is superficial, misdirected and short-lived. We wondered how long it would take for this nation to get back to "normal." Well it didn't take very long. It wasn't long before church attendance was back down to its abysmally low level. It wasn't long before most people drifted back to their old bad habits of self-centeredness, partisan politics, lust, greed, dishonesty, immorality and hedonistic lifestyles.

After 9/11, there certainly was more prayer. Reportedly, there were many sincere prayers saying, *Please help and comfort the families directly involved; thank you, Lord, that I didn't get incinerated; please protect me; please bless me; and God bless America.* A year later, it seems that not many people are praying with anywhere near the same fervor. And though these requests were certainly appropriate, what other prayers are missing from this list that God would like to have heard?

From what was reported in the news, there weren't many prayers saying, *Father, thank you for awakening us from our spiritual sleep; thank you for your mercy that our calamities have not been nearly as bad as what we deserve; please show me and the people of this country our sins so we can repent and get our lives on the right track; please forgive me for my sins; help me to study and understand and live by Your holy commandments and Your Word; and please guide us Americans to humbly rely on You much more than ourselves to fight our battles and to bring true peace.*

This is not meant to be critical of America's leaders. Many of our top officials are dedicated Christians who are providing us with strong, courageous and visionary leadership. Many are doing the best they can with what they know and understand of God's ways. But this humanistic world relies too heavily on e-mail and technology rather than knee-mail and theology.

"God bless America"

The biblical prophecies reveal that in the end time, the people of these Anglo-Saxon countries will continue to drift further and further from knowing and living by the Bible. And that is in spite of the fact that God has given them an abundance of blessings, including ready access to relatively inexpensive Bibles. God's Word says, "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

As a result, God has required much of the United States--to set a righteous example that would logically be expected of a country with a Judeo-Christian heritage. Sadly, in that responsibility, the United States is failing miserably. Bible prophecy foretold the rise of the United States and it foretells something hard to envision at the present time--the fall of the United States and its key allies, ultimately to be conquered militarily. Once the Western nations have suffered the consequences they deserve, God will judge and punish the rest of the nations of the world just prior to the climactic return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

The prophet Jeremiah was patriotic in the best sense of the word. His love for his country Judah was deep and strong, but he did not ignore or excuse the sins of the people.

The fact that the United States is taking a strong stand and waging war

on terrorism is admirable. And it probably is buying us more time to get our spiritual lives in order and for the Church to reach many more people with the life-saving message about the soon-coming Kingdom of God. At the same time, the financial and other costs of war, crime, dishonesty, greed, immorality, natural (and unnatural!) disasters, the negative balance of trade and our growing national debt are rapidly draining away our resources, setting the stage for America's downfall. God has His own timetable, and we can be sure everything is happening right on time.

Our Pledge of Allegiance still says this nation is "under God." If this nation and the world truly submitted to the rule of God, including the Ten Commandments, we would be shown the way to peace. If a war were needed, God would fight our battles. It didn't cost much for the walls of Jericho to come tumbling down.

God gives fair warnings

A perusal of the Bible makes it clear that God gives warnings before He punishes individuals and nations. The warnings come verbally through prophets and preachers. And they come through calamities, as warning shots or spankings. There is ample reason to believe that the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, were allowed by our loving God as a stern warning to awaken us spiritually--to give us another chance to see our disobedience and depravity and to repent of our sins. "If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?" (Amos 3:6).

Religious leaders all tried to give perspective and comfort, but the ones who called for national repentance were shouted down. When they said the tragedy was because of our collective sins, most of them did not mean that those who died or were injured in the attacks were more evil than the average American, but their messages were misrepresented that way in the press. If any preachers did mean that, they were clearly wrong, as Jesus Christ explained that those who suffer tragedies are not necessarily worse sinners, "but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:1-5). The main point is this: the primary response to calamities should be individual and national self-examination and repentance.

Timeline of Critical Events on Sept. 11, 2001

8:45 a.m. EDT: American Airlines Flight 11 out of Boston , with 92 on board, crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center, setting it afire.

9:03 a.m.: United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston, with 62 on board, crashed into the south tower.

9:30 a.m.: President Bush, speaking in Sarasota, Florida, said the country had suffered an "apparent terrorist attack."

9:40 a.m.: The FAA halted all flight operations at U.S. airports, the first time in U.S. history that air traffic nationwide had been halted.

9:43 a.m.: American Airlines Flight 77 carrying 64 people crashed into the Pentagon.

9:45 a.m.: The White House was evacuated.

10:05 a.m.: The south tower of the World Trade Center collapsed.

10:10 a.m.: A portion of the Pentagon collapsed.

10:10 a.m.: United Airlines Flight 93 with 45 on board from Newark, New

Jersey, also hijacked, crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, southeast of Pittsburgh.

10:24 a.m.: The FAA reported that all inbound transatlantic aircraft flying into the United States were being diverted to Canada.

10:28 a.m.: The World Trade Center's north tower collapsed.

11:02 a.m.: New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani urged New Yorkers to stay at home and ordered an evacuation of the area south of Canal Street.

1:04 p.m.: President Bush, speaking from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, said that all appropriate security measures are being taken, including putting the U.S. military on high alert worldwide. He asked for prayers for those killed or wounded in the attacks and said, "Make no mistake, the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts."

4:00 p.m.: A news report said that U.S. officials say there are "good indications" that Saudi militant Osama bin Laden, suspected of coordinating the bombings of two U.S. embassies in 1998, is involved in the attacks.

5:20 p.m.: The 47-story Building 7 of the World Trade Center complex collapsed.

7:45 p.m.: The New York Police Dept. says that at least 78 officers are missing. The city also says that maybe one half of the first 400 firefighters on the scene were killed.

6:54 p.m.: President Bush arrived back at the White House.

8:30 p.m.: President Bush addressed a nation in shock and mourning.

Right kind of patriotism

Patriotism toward one's country can be wholesome, noble and inspiring, or it can be cocky, narcissistic and chauvinistic. Of course, love for God must be one's highest priority and allegiance. The prophet Jeremiah was patriotic in the best sense of the word. His love for his country Judah was deep and strong, but he did not ignore or excuse the sins of the people. On the contrary, he preached year after year, showing the people their sins and pleading with them to repent so they would be forgiven and blessed. He wanted them to escape the awful punishment that the people were bringing on themselves.

But most of the leaders and citizens disliked and rejected Jeremiah because he wasn't preaching what they wanted to hear. They said his messages were pessimistic and unpatriotic because he denounced the evils and prophesied their captivity rather than being a cheerleader for the culture. They wanted comfortable, reassuring messages that all would be well because they were God's favored people. Just like many people today, they wanted to feel religious without being righteous--without submitting to God's laws. They didn't want to hear *repent*. They wanted to hear, *God bless Judah*.

How long will the blessings and protection God has bestowed on this country continue on? A realistic assessment would indicate *not long*. But the people of the United States, insulated and isolated by prosperity and geography, often haven't seen the storm clouds on the horizon. Americans tend to be self-absorbed in a materialistic and hedonistic culture. The news is dominated

by sensational happenings on the domestic scene. While Americans are now paying more attention to the international scene, the focus on Islamic extremists distracts us from what may be even more significant developments elsewhere, in Europe. Bible prophecy reveals that America will one day be involved in another great war, and once again it will be with an enemy based in mainland Europe.



The book written by Jeremiah is timely and relevant to our nations today. If our country does not heed Jeremiah's warnings and those heralded by God's people today, a worse destruction than 9/11 awaits. Then, after the return of Jesus Christ, there will be a time of restoration and rebuilding of the nations of the earth. More than ever before, all people will see God bless America.

Parallels with Pearl Harbor

There are many parallels between this fateful day and another major turning point in our history, the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, referred to by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a "day of infamy." Both were absolutely shocking and sickening visual spectacles. But rather than the world only seeing black-and-white film footage long after the attack, this time much of the world was able to watch on color television the real-time unfolding of the horrifying events and the incessant replay of them as well.



Pearl Harbor as it looks today

And this time the attack was on our mainland, in the heart of our largest city, against its most prominent and cherished landmarks, and against civilians rather than military personnel. Being the city's tallest skyscrapers filled with prestigious corporate giants of capitalism, and being in the heart of the country's financial district, they were regarded as symbols of America's economic greatness. The swift destruction of those beautiful buildings may turn out to be the beginning of the end of America's financial strength.

Recommended reading

Bible prophecy has more to say about the future of the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other Anglo-Saxon countries than any other countries. If you want to understand this extremely important Bible subject, please request or download our eye-opening booklet [The United States and Britain in Prophecy](#). It's yours free for the asking.

The terrorist attacks, as bad as they were, could have been even much worse. That subject was covered in ["Reflections on September 11, 2001"](#) in the November 2001 issue of *United News*, still available to read at www.ucg.org. That article partially answered the question, "What did God *not* allow to happen?"

Oops! I Made a Mistake!

By Janet Treadway

We all make mistakes (oops, mistakes). How do we respond to our own mistakes? And how do we respond to the mistakes of others? Responding in a godly way is a vital part of Christian character.



THE PROVERB, "to err is human, to forgive divine," has been popular since the 14th century. Yes, we all need erasers on our pencils. We make mistakes aplenty. But then what? How we handle those mistakes and the mistakes of others can determine how well we do in life.

Several years ago I worked in a curtain factory as a cutter, cutting the material to be sewn into curtains. Stan, my boss at the time, was a patient and kind man who would take much time in training and helping his employees to succeed on their jobs. I was to learn later what a truly great boss he was.

One day was particularly productive for me. Everything seemed to go right. I must have cut 500 shower curtains, setting a record for me. Needless to say, at the end of the day I left for home very pleased.

500 mistakes!

The curtains that I cut went on to the sewers to be hemmed before going on to the packers. A couple of days later the bomb fell! It was discovered that the curtains were two inches too short. I had forgotten to change the drum that they were cut on to the correct size. The sewers didn't catch the mistake either. Here on racks, waiting to be packaged, were 500 shower

curtains, all of which were too short! I was mortified, because in that year--1993--a shower curtain retailed for at least \$10.00.



My boss spent most of the morning in a meeting with management over the situation. While I sat out in the plant crying over my stupid mistake, management was discussing my fate. I felt so bad that I had cost the company a great deal of money because of this huge mistake, and I would probably be fired. Instead, to my surprise and great relief, *my boss fought for me*. Management only saw the money lost for their company. Stan, my boss, saw me as a valued employee who had made a mistake but was worth keeping instead of being thrown away. He did not stop there but, knowing how I felt, he came out after the meeting to *encourage* me. He told me this was not the worst thing that would happen to me in life, and that I would get through this.

While encouraging me he began to help me rip out the hems so they could be rehemmed at a longer length. The curtains ended up at Odd Lots, a bargain store, so the company was able to regain some of its losses.

Lessons I learned

Though it seemed like a nightmare at the time, I learned some valuable lessons that day from Stan.

- **Be humble and don't look down on others when they make mistakes.** Stan did not belittle me and make me feel worse than I already did. He refrained from making statements to me like, "How could you do this?," "You cost the company tons of money" or "How many times have I told you?" Instead, he built me up and built me up to the managers in the meeting. Stan was able to take my focus and management's focus off the mistake and on to the good contributions I gave to the company.
- **Look for ways to help a person solve the mistake.** Stan got right in there and helped me solve the problem. He first fought for me to keep my job and then came out and worked side by side with me ripping out the hems in the curtains.
- **Avoid punishing yourself and others when mistakes are made.** Stan did not punish me; he knew that I was already doing that to myself. He could have fired me. He could have given my job to someone else. He could have belittled me. Instead, he forgave my mistake and looked for gentle ways to avoid this happening again. He gave me another chance.
- **Encourage others when they make a mistake.** Stan encouraged me by saying, "Janet, you will get through this. I know you; you will do better and not let this happen again. We all fail from time to time; we just get back up and go on." Stan spoke those words to me while I wept. His encouragement was able to turn my emotions around from feeling shame and worthlessness to a valued person despite the mistake. He helped me to see that this was a small thing in life and that mistakes happen to all of us. Most of all Stan used his power of authority to get me back up and going again, not to crush me. Stan showed me by his example that I was of more value than the money that

was lost by the company.

So how do you handle another person's mistakes? Do you use your authority to crush or to build up a person? How do you handle your own mistakes? Do you feel like giving up or learning from your mistakes and moving on? I felt like a failure and felt I could not get back up and go on. I wanted to quit, but my boss would not let me. Mike Ditka, a famous coach, once said, "You are never a loser until you quit trying."

Treat others as God treats us

God is the same way with us. He knows our frame and how weak we are. He did not call the mighty of the world, but people He could gently work with. He called people who know they are weak without Him.

God sees what we can become instead of focusing on our mistakes. He lifts us up and encourages us to go on. He does not get rid of us or replace us with someone else. God gives us chances after chances as long as we have a repentant heart and keep trying. That sums up a lot about God's grace, and it is by His grace that we have hope of salvation and eternal life! For a thorough outline of God's relationship to and plan for mankind, please request or download the booklet [*Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*](#). It, like all our literature, is free for the asking.



We all make mistakes--
we all need erasers on
our pencils.

In Colossians 3:12-13, God instructs us on how to deal with each other as he deals with us: "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another..." Stan did that for me. I became one of the best cutters the company ever had. There was nothing I would not do for my boss. I continued to work for him until they closed the plant. I was one of the last employees out of 200 to be laid off when the plant closed several years later.

God deals with you and me the same way Stan dealt with me. God invests a lot of time in us and is not ready to wipe us out because of our mistakes. Instead, He encourages us not to quit.

So the next time you or someone you know makes a mistake, be gentle, kind and encouraging. Look for ways to solve the problem and don't quit! Treat others the way you would want to be treated if you were the one who goofed. Look beyond the mistakes in yourself and in others and see the potential. We will all say the words, "Oops, I made a mistake," many times before we reach our full potential. But keep trying. Keep learning. Keep forgiving. We can all be in God's Kingdom some day in spite of our mistakes.

I Dare You!

By Robert Berendt

"I dare you! I double dare you!" Then what? Those words are often followed by actions that are dangerous, illegal, embarrassing or risky in one way or another.



"I DARE YOU!" Have you ever said that? Has anyone ever said it to you? The words "I dare you" are powerful, especially to insecure young people, and especially to boys. Children want approval--to fit in--and are easily tempted to do foolish and foolhardy things when they feel they must prove their courage, toughness, allegiance or some other virtue or vice by passing a silly, arbitrary test. Kids will often give in to such coercion and go against their consciences or normal restraints in order to prove something, such as their not being a "sissy" or "chicken." Some kids feel compelled to do this over and over again, and become regular daredevils.

She said "I dare you" and...crash!

Funny how clearly we remember some things in the past. Many years ago, I had a new bike--maroon and beautiful! For a while, my brother and I were getting our thrills by riding over a big pile of dirt beside a depression where a house had burned to the ground. With a good run at the pile, you could "get a little air" and then ride through the dugout that once was a basement.

Then along came a girl--a very pretty girl--who said "I dare you." "I dare you to ride as fast as you can over the pile." Well, I thought I was a hotshot rider, and there were six or seven onlookers who heard the dare. So like most boys presented with a dare from a pretty girl, I took off like a shot! My legs were going so fast, I imagined myself launching like a rocket,

shouting a "Whoop!" and gracefully clearing the hole while my awestruck audience broke into applause.



Some rocket! I was as graceful as a rock or a newly shot duck! I did not defy gravity. I crashed! Gravity and my lack of circus skills denied me my glory. The only smart thing I did was when I was losing control (which was during the first millisecond of flight)--I kicked the bike away so I wouldn't fall on it. I was glad I didn't get hurt, but my pride was sorely wounded. Embarrassed, I just stood there, grinning like an idiot. Needless to say, I was much more careful about taking dares after that, pretty girl or not.

Beware of the dare

Growing up these days can be like walking a gauntlet of "dares." Teens who have the keys to Dad's car are vulnerable to "I dare you." The higher percentage of accidents by teen drivers within a few months of their newly gained freedom is why their insurance rates are so high. All too often there is someone around they are trying to impress. Children need ongoing education warning of the dangers and temptations of life, warning that others will dare them or coax them to do what is sinful or foolish and explaining how they can answer and respond to the tempters.

Children need to be taught

One of the main problems that children--and some childish adults--have is a lack of judgment (which should include a healthy fear). Adults (parents especially) have the responsibility to teach the younger generation. "Train up a child in the way he should go," we're told in Proverbs 22:6.

It is a huge responsibility to care for a child from the moment he is born until he matures. Children are greatly blessed when they have a good relationship with their parents who both are teaching them biblical truths and how to have their own relationship with God. Our family was fortunate in that area. Actually our whole town took part in training the children. Life was a little easier then, and the children grew up with far fewer confused thought patterns. We had absolutes rather than ambiguities.

The words "I dare you" are powerful, especially to insecure young people, and especially to boys.

The biblical book of Proverbs is a gold mine of wisdom. By example, it also shows *how* to teach wisdom--a loving approach with vivid illustrations--like a parent having heart-to-heart talks with his child. Parents will do well to read it for their own wisdom and as well as read it and explain it to their children. The content is very practical for everyday applications.

Along with the biblically-based teaching, wise parents also know to gradually give children increasing freedom to make their own decisions as they grow up, allowing them to make small harmless mistakes that they will learn by. That combination will help youngsters gain wisdom, confidence, responsibility, self-control and decision-making abilities, which are key marks of maturity. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn in the safety of one's home. Under

wise guidance, children usually survive their childhood with little more than some bumps and bruises. A little damaged pride here and there usually heals without scars. Slow learners or no learners are destined to live a life of regret and/or pain that could have been avoided. With self-control and correct standards, life can be fun every day, all day.

Adults are also faced with dares

Adults are frequently tempted to respond to dares also! Dares are more common than we tend to think since they come at us in many subtle as well as not-so-subtle ways. Life is full of people and influences that dare you to do things that are for *their* profit or pleasure, *not* for *your* benefit! Since we humans tend to be driven by vanity and ego, we are sort of programmed to take dares. Pride makes us do foolish things. Wisdom and maturity lead us to safety.

Life is largely about choices and decisions. The Bible is full of exhortations to flee temptations, avoid bad influences and foolish companions and say *no* to sin. "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent" (Proverbs 1:10). *Don't go!* Be on guard. It is so easy to let someone influence us to make a wrong decision and do something foolish.

"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent" (Proverbs 1:10).

Satan dares us to do evil

We are not usually aware of the cunning spirit beings behind the scenes that plot and prompt the dares and enticements. God has allowed Satan and his demons to temporarily blind people's minds to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). At one time, Satan was Lucifer, one of the greatest angels (Isaiah 14:12-14). He led one third of the angels in sin and rebellion against God, and now he is intent on causing people to rebel against their Creator and against all that God says is right. The story of Satan's influence over humans began in the Garden of Eden. The serpent enticed Eve to take of the forbidden fruit. You can almost hear him say, "I dare you."

We are told the story of Satan, in a sense, daring David to number Israel in 1 Chronicles 21:1. A classic case of daring someone to do evil is Satan tempting Christ (Matthew 4). We ought to remember that the forces of evil are just as dangerous today. People who are spiritually immature and ignorant of the laws and ways of God are easy picking for the crafty devil and his demons. But those who choose to consistently obey God and live His way of life, even if it costs them their physical lives, are blessed by God and will be given the gift of eternal life (Matthew 10:38-39).

Right and wrong kinds of dares

Don't just go along with the crowd or a supposed "friend" who would influence you to do what may hurt you in the long run. Always take the time to think before you leap. If you are a parent, teach your children to think and to think long-term. If you are a child, remember that your parents love you and have your best interests at heart. And may we all remember that *God* has our best interests at heart. He knows what is best for us.

Dare to stand up for what is right. Dare to stand up to bad peer pressures. Have the courage

to suffer wrongfully for choosing what is right. Dare to run risks and make sacrifices to do what pleases God. Choose the right path. Do the right thing.

But when someone or some influence *dares* you to do something *foolish*, don't you *dare* do it!

The Diets of the Millennium Should Be the Diets of Today

By Tom Damour

After the second coming, Jesus will not only heal people, but teach the world how to build and maintain good health. This is one of the lessons of the Feast of Tabernacles.



This is the second article of a two-part series in which the sad state of health in today's world is discussed. In last month's issue of Virtual Christian Magazine, the article "[Take Responsibility For Your Own Health--Nobody Else Will](#)" introduced this vital subject. This month's article contrasts today's sick world with the way the world will be after Jesus Christ establishes the Kingdom of God on earth.

SURPRISING AS IT MAY BE TO SOME, Jesus Christ promised to return to restore God's government on earth. Hundreds of scriptures speak of His return and the utopian conditions that He will bring about. We find some particularly clear and inspiring prophecies of a new world in Luke 1:31-33 and Isaiah 9:6-7.

What do we mean by "God's government"? We can summarize according to the three branches of government the free world recognizes--legislative, executive and judicial. God's government consists of His holy laws, the teaching and enforcement of those laws and judging the people of the world according to those laws.

The most important laws, of course, are the spiritual laws, summarized by the two great commandments (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Ten Commandments. To break any of those laws is sin (1 John 3:4). The laws this article addresses are called natural laws, physical laws or laws of science which were also instituted by the great Creator of all things. The breaking of those laws brings automatic penalties--the lawbreakers bring punitive consequences upon themselves (Jeremiah 2:19; 5:25). People reap what they sow (Galatians 6:7). Every curse has a cause (Proverbs 26:2).



Natural law includes laws or principles of health. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that breaking health laws brings health problems. Good health

is the direct result of living in harmony with the basic laws of health. To be sick is to be out of harmony with natural law. Overcoming health problems is achieved mainly by discontinuing the breaking of the relevant health laws. But once a person is sick, getting well often takes a long time. It is much easier to prevent health problems from the start.

Your life is not your own

It is very difficult to understand why people in general don't do more to prevent health problems. Logic would tell us that people would educate themselves and apply that knowledge in order to get well and stay well. But those who respect the Bible as the divinely revealed Word of God should have an additional and stronger motivation to take care of their bodies and minds.

Yes, for those in the Christian community, vibrant health takes on additional importance. The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian church of this important fact in 1 Corinthians 6:20: "For you were bought at a price; therefore *glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*" (emphasis added). Our bodies and minds belong to God! Then we, as good stewards, are held accountable by God to "tend and keep" God's property (Genesis 2:15)! We are blessed to be made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), so our bodies and minds are very special to God--they have a special purpose--and honoring them honors God.

While 1 Corinthians 6:20 refers primarily to using our bodies and minds in ways which are not spiritually harmful, the principle also logically applies to taking care of our bodies and minds in ways that promote physical health. Likewise, the principle of Romans 12:1 can be applied physically as well as spiritually: "I beseech [urge] you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable [rational] service." Certainly, our energy and effectiveness in fulfilling our spiritual calling is largely determined by our physical well-being.

Meaning of Feast of Tabernacles

The Bible commands us to observe seven annual sacred festivals in addition to the weekly Sabbath. Four of those occur in the fall, in September and/or October. One of those festivals is the joyous highlight of the year for God's people--the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. Contrary to the idea that these days were nullified by God, they will still be observed, and even enforced, after Christ's return (Zechariah 14:16-21). God's Holy Days are not just for the Jews, but, also for people of all nations.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that breaking health laws brings health problems. Good health is the direct result of living in harmony with the basic laws of health.

The purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles is for God's people to reflect on and, to some extent and in a very limited way, act out the prophecies of the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. What does that have to do with leading a healthful life now? It is this: The way of life that will be taught and practiced by people during the Millennium should be the way of life today's disciples of Christ should be practicing now. You see, we don't need to wait until Christ returns to earth to have His government over us as individuals. We can voluntarily submit to Christ's rule over us right now. In fact, how can we expect to be teachers in God's Kingdom when we are not willing to live by those same precepts now?

In Acts 3:18-19, Peter speaks of the necessity for people to repent of their sins and accept Christ as their Savior. Then he said, "...and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive *until the times of restoration of all things*, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (verses 20-21). Christ will restore everything--spiritually and physically--to the condition that the world started out with in the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve disobeyed and thereby rejected God's government over them (Isaiah 51:3). The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates this time of universal restoration.

Not only will spiritual knowledge be restored, but so too will knowledge of the laws of health. Knowledge of how to maintain good health will dramatically change the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

You are what you eat

One of the most important keys to good health is nutrition. "You are what you eat" should be expanded to, "You are what you eat, drink, breathe and absorb through your skin." By what we take in, we determine not only the composition of our bodies, but how well they function.



Throughout the creation account God repeatedly said that "it was good" (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). God knew what He was doing. He didn't make mistakes. He didn't make anything of inferior quality. He designed the human body, and He designed foods that are ideally suited to our nutritional needs. So it is ridiculous for humans to think that they can *improve* on God's creation!

Every time man takes away some component of a food or adds something artificial to it, he not only diminishes its health-giving benefits, but he often causes it to be health-damaging in some ways.

The *standard American diet* (SAD!) is woefully lacking in good nutrition. We need to understand so much about this big subject. How could people for hundreds of years be fairly healthy without having myriad books on health, much less the Internet? The answer is this: Almost all the food alternatives most people could choose from were healthful. Today, the majority of options in a supermarket are unhealthful. When we go shopping, we desperately need good knowledge to make good decisions.

How did we end up with so much junk on the store shelves and in the restaurants? The industrial revolution opened the door to our present-day abilities to manufacture things and alter our food. And most tampering of food is motivated by greed for greater profits. For example, the "refining" of flour from grains may make a finer texture and a more appealing appearance, but the motive for refining flour is to make it last longer and therefore more profitable to produce and sell. But tragically, the fine healthful qualities God put in the grains largely disappear.



Clean and unclean

The foregoing principle should be obvious--the more we alter food from the way God created it, the more we damage its healthful qualities. Many other keys to good health exist which human beings can figure out. The keys humans cannot determine for themselves, especially before the modern era of scientific research, are revealed in the Bible by our loving and merciful Creator.

One of those keys is the knowledge of which animals are edible and which are not. The animals that God created to be healthful sources of food He designates as "clean," and those that God did not intend to be eaten are designated as "unclean." The first mention of clean and unclean animals is found in Genesis 7:2: "You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animal that are unclean, a male and his female." Apparently, God's instructions in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:3-21 concerning which animals were fit to eat was a restatement of information once known by God's people but lost during their years of Egyptian slavery. (For a full explanation of what the Bible says about this subject, please request or download our booklet [What Does the Bible Teach About Clean/Unclean Meats?](#) We also suggest the booklet [Making Life Work](#). They both are available free of charge.)

Sadly, today humans cause much of their food to be literally unclean by the addition of or exposure to chemical fertilizers, pesticides, drugs and synthetic food additives. We pollute our water, soil, food and, in turn, ourselves. For example, in order to increase profits, ranchers and feedlot operators often feed chemicals to their livestock to speed weight gain. And man-made sex hormones and antibiotics are used to shorten the time necessary to prepare an animal for market.



Charles Moore states, "Meat contains about 35 times as much pesticide residue as grains and cereals, and about 20 times as much radioactive material. Residues of some 600 different chemicals are potentially present in supermarket meat--only 10 percent of them monitored [inadequately] by governments. Virtually all feedlot cattle are treated with medications like antibiotics (9 million tons of which are used annually in livestock feed in the U.S. alone) and/or synthetic sex hormones. Routine sub-therapeutic agricultural use of antibiotics has been linked to evolving drug-resistant disease bacteria like the so-called "flesh-eating" streptococcus..." (*Bible Food*, Charles Moore).

With such large amounts of man-made substances in our meat supply, federal authorities are questioning the wisdom of consuming large quantities of these substances in our diet.

God's Food Laws

"There is no clear statement as to when God first revealed the difference between those animals that are designated 'clean' and those that are not. The absence of a clear command on this matter should not be taken as proof that no instruction was given...

"The first statement in Scripture concerning 'clean' and 'unclean' animals is

found in Genesis 7:2, where Noah is commanded to take seven (or seven pairs of) clean animals and only one pair of unclean animals. When God told Noah to build a giant ark, He gave explicit instructions on its size, composition and design, yet God saw no need to instruct Noah about which creatures were clean and which were unclean. *God's instructions and Noah's response clearly indicate that Noah understood which creatures were clean and which were not...*

"Whenever animals are mentioned in Scripture as a food source or in connection with sacrifice before Mount Sinai, they are invariably clean animals (Genesis 15:9--cows, goats, sheep, dove and pigeon; Genesis 22:13--sheep; Exodus 12:5--sheep or goat). The law of clean and unclean meats clearly predate the Old Covenant, regardless of what role they may have played within that covenant" (from the booklet [*Fundamental Beliefs of the United Church of God an International Association*](#), pp.30-31, emphasis added).

What should be our focus?

In Romans 14:17, we are reminded that the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. This reminds us that Christians must keep their spiritual focus on God as their number one priority. But, it is also very important to make sure we properly nourish our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

God's Word teaches us that we should seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first (Matthew 6:33). We show by our *actions* whether or not we really want the ways God intended for His creation. Are we truly seeking God's will to be carried out in our lives? Are we asking, "What would God have us do?" And then *doing* it? Doing all this requires moderation, self-control and diligence. It takes character to make right choices. This is true in every area of life, including our eating and exercising habits.

The purpose of this and the previous article on health has been to encourage you to educate yourself about this very important subject and then to take action. Knowledge of itself is of no value unless acted upon. As you study into this critically important subject, remember to strive for balance. Not everyone agrees as to what constitutes a healthy diet. However, what is important is to begin to become educated. Take the time and effort to study this subject, then make changes where appropriate.

Christians must keep their spiritual focus on God as their number one priority. It is also important to properly nourish our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Today's humanistic world tends to separate the physical and spiritual as if they aren't linked, which is not God's intent and it is not reality. They are intertwined. An even more important point is that we should look to God to rule over *not only* the spiritual side of our lives but the physical side as well.

We arrive back full circle to the subject of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast pictures the time when Christ will rule over the world--all aspects of the world, spiritual and physical. What kind of food will people eat then? *That's what we should be eating now.* How will they

be living their lives? *That's how we should be living our lives now.*

Internet Site Listings for More Information

- <http://expertfoods.com/FAQs> - Accuracy of Nutrition Facts Labels--you need to know just how far you can trust the numbers on those labels.
- http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/nutrition/food_labels.html - Deciphering Food Labels.
- <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/label.html> - FDA Food Labeling, an overview of the new food label and more.
- <http://www.nutri-facts.com> - Nutri-Facts, a searchable database of nutrition label information.
- <http://www.truthinlabeling.org> - Truth in Labeling Campaign, concerned that MSG is a toxic substance hidden in ingredients that are listed on food labels under more than 40 different names.
- <http://www.living-foods.com> - Living and Raw Foods.
- <http://sgreports.nlm.nih.gov/NN/> - Reports of the Surgeon General.
- <http://www.mayo.edu/healthinfo/resources.html> - Mayo Clinic Internet Health and Medical Resources.
- <http://www.hacres.com> - God's Way to Ultimate Health
- <http://navigator.tufts.edu> - Nutrition Navigator.
- <http://www.acefitness.org> - American Council on Exercise.
- <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/addskava.html> - Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Selected Federal Resources

Health and Human Services (HHS) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide many sources of information on nutrition and health. Selected resources are listed below:

- <http://www.healthfinder.gov> - Healthfinder, HHS's gateway to reliable health information, including [diet](#), [nutrition](#), [healthy lifestyle](#), and [physical activity](#).
- <http://www.nutrition.gov> - USDA's gateway to nutrition information.
- <http://www.foodsafety.gov> - FDA's gateway to Federal food safety information.
- <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/> - National Action Plan on Overweight and Obesity.
- <http://cis.nci.nih.gov> - Cancer Information Service, National Cancer Institute, NIH, HHS.
- <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov> - Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, FDA, HHS.
- <http://www.cdc.gov> - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HHS.
- <http://www.usda.gov/cnpp> - Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA.
- <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov> - National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, NIH, HHS.
- <http://www.niddk.nih.gov> - National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, NIH, HHS.

Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

The Inspiring Fall Holy Days

By Don Hooser

The celebration of the seven biblical Holy Days is a deeply meaningful and joyous experience. The spiritual climax of the year is the fall, when four of God's festivals portray prophesied end-time events.



GOD COMMANDED HIS PEOPLE to observe seven *annual* sacred festivals as well as a weekly Holy Day, the Sabbath. That law is still "on the books"--in the Bible. Rather than the New Testament nullifying, rescinding or abrogating it, the New Testament elevates, magnifies and reinforces that law.

And what an absolutely beautiful law it is! For those who have come to love God's Word and way of life, the Holy Day gatherings and celebrations are the highlights of the year. It seems God made us human beings with an innate desire to observe traditional anniversaries and special days, whether they be Holy Days or holidays, when people gather together to celebrate or mourn. As a result, almost every culture has national and religious high days. How much better when the days one is observing are ones that God Himself has instituted and commanded, as will be explained!

Seven festivals, four in the fall

God has made the fall a special time of year. Four of the seven annual festivals of God occur in September and/or October. In the fall many retail stores begin to display things pertaining to Christmas, but Christmas is not one of the biblically mandated Holy Days. Christmas is not even mentioned in the Bible, and the Bible gives no suggestion of celebrating the anniversary of Jesus' human birth. Jesus Christ should indeed be worshiped; and the Holy Days that God the Father and Jesus Christ have instructed mankind to observe all honor Jesus Christ and what He has done, is doing and is going to do. God's seven festivals convey and portray the seven most important steps in God's

master plan for offering salvation to every human being that has ever lived or will live!

A fascinating and thorough explanation of God's festivals and their meaning is contained in our free booklet, [*Holidays or Holy Days: Does it Matter Which Days We Keep.*](#)

The observance of the Holy Days fulfills all the natural desires for tradition, excitement, reunions of loved ones, camaraderie, eating together, spirituality, music and inspiration. In addition, the observance of God's Holy Days includes worship, interesting ongoing education in the Bible and learning the deep meaning and purpose of life!

Countless people who have been called by God over the past few millennia have come to regard the celebration of God's feast days as the most joyous days of the year. The religion of Judaism honors those days, but the New Testament gives us a much deeper understanding of their meaning and how they portray the ongoing work of Jesus Christ. That deeper understanding is

For those who have come to love God's Word and way of life, the Holy Day gatherings and celebrations are the highlights of the year.

why they are so spiritually rewarding and enjoyable. Many feast days include a nice meal together, but every Holy Day is a spiritual banquet of inspiring music and messages. The seven festivals are Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. Our booklet thoroughly explains the prophetic and spiritual meaning of each festival.



A preview of this month's articles

The articles in this month's issue of *VCM* are relevant to present world conditions, prophecies of the end time and the fall festivals of God. **"Armageddon: The End of the World?"** explains what the Bible really says about Armageddon and other end-time events. It summarizes God's plan and how Armageddon will be a prelude to world peace when Jesus Christ will be ruling as King of kings.

This autumn has special sober meaning for the people of the United States and also the rest of the world. Sept. 11 will be the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. Most people are much more conscious than ever before of the likelihood, even inevitability, of more terrorist attacks on the mainland of the United States as well as elsewhere. **"Will God Continue to Bless America? If Not, Why Not?"** reviews the effects of the terrorist attacks and what they portend for the future. The attacks brought about a revival of religious activity, but it seems most of it was shallow and short-lived. Amidst the sloganeering of "God bless America" and "Let's roll" looms a major question: Will God bless America as He has so many times in the past, or has America lost favor with God because it has increasingly rejected the Bible as the source of its beliefs and the guide for its actions? And if God is presently protecting America in spite of the fact that this country has turned its back on God, what might be God's reasons for temporarily preserving America?

"Oops! I Made a Mistake!" is a moving article based on personal experience with some profound lessons, similar to some of the principles of servant leadership. It has to do with our reactions when we learn of mistakes--our mistakes and the mistakes of others. It would be a kinder, gentler world if the wisdom of this article were applied.

"I Dare You!" is an important article to help parents in teaching their children how to cope with all the taunting and tempting dares with which they will be confronted. It also shows how all of us need to be on guard against responding to the more subtle dares that Satan and the world throw at us. We must dare--have the courage--to do what is right under all circumstances. But we must not respond to challenging invitations or dares to do what is illegal, sinful, damaging or foolish.

"The Diets of the Millennium Should Be the Diets of Today" addresses today's increasing crisis of poor health and why people get sick or why they stay well. One of the fall festivals of God is the Feast of Tabernacles, which portrays the coming millennial reign of Christ on the earth. What will people eat during the Millennium? Surely it will be healthful food. So shouldn't we be eating the same kind of food now in order to achieve and maintain good health? And since the Bible makes it clear that our bodies and minds belong to God, shouldn't we be good stewards and take good care of God's property? Taking good care of our health is an important Christian responsibility.

That's it for this issue. Please check the Archives for back issues of *VCM*. And for a list of our booklets on many important Bible subjects, please check the Literature Library of the United Church of God Web site, www.ucg.org. While you are there, you can subscribe to *The Good News*, the flagship magazine of United Church of God. It's free for the asking.

If you are interested in knowing more about what the Bible teaches about God's sacred festivals, please ask. And if you would like to visit a congregation for a worship service on a Sabbath or Holy Day, you will be most welcome. If you need information or directions, we'll be glad to help. For answers to any of these questions, please contact us at www.ucg.org.