



"And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth... And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles."—Zechariah 14:8-9, 16

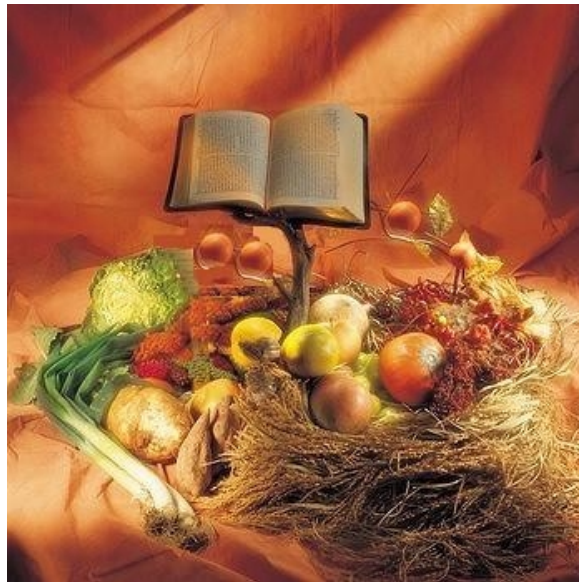
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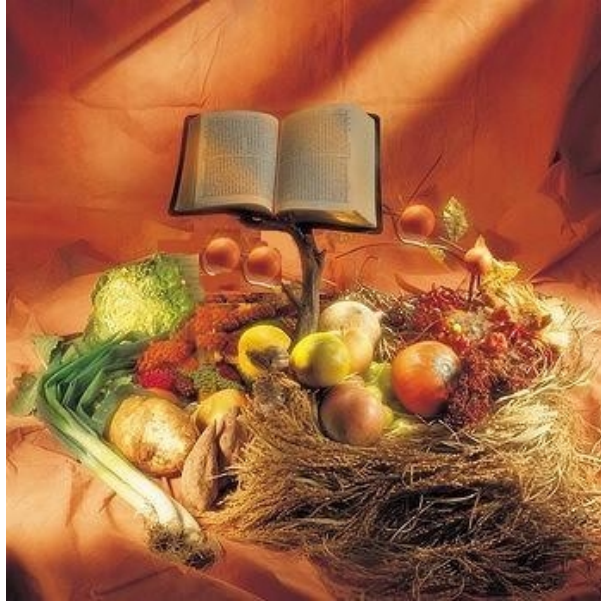
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Practicing What We Preach

By David Palmer

Are the Feasts of the Lord still relevant in today's world? Why would we keep them? Rehearsing God's Holy Days helps us to remember His plan of salvation.



A SUBSCRIBER TO OUR FLAGSHIP PUBLICATION, the *Good News* magazine, recently sent a letter to the United Church of God headquarters acknowledging the Church preaches the doctrine of keeping the Feasts of God, but asked, “While you teach them, do you actually keep them?”

Are these Feasts of the Lord still relevant today? And, if so, why do we keep them? Are they just “religious trappings,” or are we instructed to observe them for a specific reason?

In the Old Testament book of Leviticus, we see a scripture admonishing the nation of Israel to observe the Feasts of God. “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, “The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts” (Leviticus 23:2). The entire chapter then gives instructions from God as to the observances of these special feasts, and when we look closely at the festivals outlined, we learn a number of lessons. One of those lessons is particularly important in answering the question as to why we continue to observe them today.



While many mainstream churches simply neglect or ignore these festivals, the United Church of God continues to observe all of the feast days, including the Feast of Tabernacles, which takes place in the fall of the year in the northern hemisphere. But why?

Three specific words are used each time God reminds us the feasts, *His feasts*, are to be observed. So, let's take a close look at God's instructions. “These are the

feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times” (Leviticus 23:4). The word *holy* as used in this verse refers to a sacred place or thing. The Hebrew is *quodesh*, from the root word meaning “to observe as ceremonially or morally clean.”

Convocation refers to a “calling out, as in a public meeting.” In other words, “holy convocation” is a commanded sacred assembly of God’s people. But the word *convocation* means much more than this. It also means a *rehearsal*. The Hebrew is *miqra* taken from the root of the word *qara*. Why is that important? It means that each week on the Sabbath, and each year as we observe God’s annual Feast days, we are *rehearsing His plan of salvation*.

These feasts of the Lord, including the Festival of Tabernacles, are a blueprint of God’s plan for His entire creation.

These feasts of the Lord, including the Festival of Tabernacles, are a blueprint of God’s plan for His entire creation, and as we continue to rehearse God’s way, God’s plan, we are, in effect, *practicing what we preach!* We are rehearsing for the Kingdom of God.

It is interesting to note the first scripture using the phrase *holy convocation* is found in Exodus 12:16. It refers to the keeping of the seven-day feast, the Days of Unleavened Bread. The last use of the phrase *holy convocation* is in Numbers 29:12, referring to the Feast of Tabernacles.

God set the plan in motion telling us to rehearse from the beginning of the plan at the Passover season to the final fulfillment of the plan, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

Jesus and the Holy Days

Jesus made it clear He came to do the will of His Father (John 5:30; 12:49-50). Jesus, the central character of God’s plan, the Messiah, observed and kept all of God’s commands, including the command to keep the Feast days. And the apostles observed them, even after Christ’s death and resurrection. In fact, the apostle Paul reminded the New Testament Church that all of the Old Testament writings were given for our learning (Romans 15:4). The word *learning* refers to both “knowledge and function,” the concept of not just acquiring information, but also acting on the information.

So, whether looking at Old Testament scripture or bringing Jesus into the picture, we still have the commandment to keep the Feasts. And each is a portion of the overall *rehearsal* God laid out to train us so we might be better equipped as kings and priests in His Kingdom.

God tells us to keep these holy convocations, these rehearsals of His plan of salvation in their seasons. We are to observe, to rehearse, to practice, and to continue to do so year in and year out. The fall harvest is the season designated by God for us to step back from our busy world for a brief period of time, and once again rehearse His marvelous plan of salvation, by observing the wonderful, spiritually uplifting Feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus, the central character of God’s plan, the Messiah, observed and kept all of God’s commands, including the Feast days.

One day, all this rehearsal, all this practice, will be over. Jesus Christ will be here, and it will be time to implement all those things we learned at rehearsal. This is why a holy convocation, a

commanded assembly of God's people, is to be proclaimed, observed and *rehearsed*. It is why we have the command to "preach the Gospel," but not only to preach the Gospel, but to *practice what we preach*, including rehearsing God's Kingdom at the Feast of Tabernacles!

Recommended reading

For more information about God's Holy Days, read our free booklet [God's Holy Day Plan—Hope For All Mankind](#).

A Modern Tale of Two Cities

By Darris McNeely

Two world capitals play key roles within the current political and religious mix. But it is their future role that you should carefully watch and understand. As the world looks at the Middle East today, this article (originally published in September 2000 in our sister publication [World News and Prophecy](#)) still holds great meaning.



CHARLES DICKENS' NOVEL *A Tale of Two Cities* tells an enduring story of events and characters caught in the tumultuous aftermath of the French Revolution. Paris and London, the two cities of the title, were at center stage in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Their roles have diminished, and today we find two other cities not only headlining the news, but also playing major roles in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. In its ultimate fulfillment, one represents freedom, dignity and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Historically the other has played a role in enslaving mankind with chains of spiritual darkness.

Jerusalem: focus of prophecy

Let's first look at the pivotal city of Jerusalem. Bible prophecy reveals that several key events will take place in and around this city. In Revelation 11:2 we learn that gentiles—non-Israelites—"will tread the holy city underfoot." Verses 3-8 show that two powerful servants of God will arise and prophesy to the nations, but they will die as martyrs: "And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

The Bible characterizes Jerusalem as both a holy city and a type of Sodom and Egypt. This is quite a contrast for a city revered by three major faiths.

Peace talks in the last few years have been largely futile as it becomes evident that the Israelis and the Palestinians cannot agree on matters of control regarding Jerusalem.



A piece in the *New York Times* during negotiations a few years ago accurately summarized the problem: “Jerusalem is rarely publicly discussed by Israeli or Palestinian leaders in anything but black-and-white terms. It is the ‘eternal, undivided capital’ of Israel, on the one hand, and the future capital of the Palestinian state on the other: seemingly irreconcilable concepts that have led many intelligent politicians to recommend that the issue be left unresolved in the current, supposedly final, peace talks.” (May 21, 2000).

Indeed, Jerusalem’s status remains unresolved and threatens to be a major stumbling block in any effort to reach a major peace accord. The prophet Zechariah accurately predicted the central position and troublesome nature of the city in end-time geopolitics:

“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples... I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it” (Zechariah 12:2-3).

When it comes to Jerusalem, some leaders seem to be intoxicated with greed over control of the city. The most hotly contested part of the city is the area called the Temple Mount, the site of two sacred Islamic mosques as well as the Western Wall, important to the Jews. The Palestinians hope to claim permanent sovereignty over the site and claim a significant victory in the long-standing struggle between Arab and Jew.

A history of conflict

The history of Jerusalem has been a succession of changes, revolutions, sieges, surrenders and famines—each followed by restorations and rebuilding. Its time of greatest glory was under Solomon, son of Israel’s most famous king, David. Solomon built the fabulous temple described in 1 Kings and 2 Kings.

The history of Jerusalem has been a succession of changes, revolutions, sieges, surrenders and famines...

Over the centuries, the city has seen much contention. Christians and Muslims have alternately slaughtered each other in battles to control the city. Multiple thousands of people have died under the banner of the cross and the crescent within the walls and gates of Jerusalem.

From 1948 to 1967, the city was divided between the Jews and Arabs. Israel gained control and united the city during the Six Day War of 1967. Since then, Israelis have guaranteed all the major religions access to all the holy sites. The push to achieve a settlement of the Palestinian-homeland issue has again highlighted the emotional pull of the city.

Tension continues over the Temple Mount area. Undoubtedly this site will become a flash point.

More conflict prophesied

Prophecy shows Jerusalem will be the focal point of key events before the return of Christ. Notice what Jesus revealed: “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16).

Jesus was referring to a prophecy in Daniel 9. Within this detailed prediction of the coming of the Messiah, Daniel describes “one who makes desolate” (verse 27). Here God reveals a future conflict involving a sacrifice and a covenant (agreement, accord or treaty).

Jerusalem’s future will see continuing strife over conflicting ideas. As in every war, many people will suffer. Notice what Jesus said in His Olivet prophecy: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.

“For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24).

Second city’s role in prophecy

What will bring this scene to its climax? For the answer, let’s look at the other city of our story.

In Revelation 17, the apostle John describes a woman with a name on her forehead—“Babylon the great.” What does this woman symbolize? Verse 18 tells us the “woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

Here in prophecy is described a great city called Babylon that will sit astride an end-time combine of nations symbolically represented by a beast. Will this be a literal revival of the ancient city of Babylon, or are we to look for another city to fulfill this prophecy? Let’s first understand the history of Babylon.

Genesis 11 describes the human race, then united with a common language, beginning to build a massive tower at a place called Babel. At that time it was the center of culture—but a culture without the revealed knowledge of God at its core. Man began building a society apart from, and in defiance of, his Creator. God would not allow men’s designs to continue lest civilization progress too rapidly for His plan. So He scattered the people by confusing their language.

Prophecy shows Jerusalem will be the focal point of key events before the return of Christ.

Babylon was later built on the ruins of this site. The city became the antithesis of God’s purpose and the ancient scourge of God’s people. Babylon, derived from a root word meaning “to confound,” is symbolic of the system of spiritual confusion that overlays the entire world. A

modern city Scripture labels “Babylon the great” will, like ancient Babylon, set the cultural and religious standards for the end-time political-religious empire of the “beast” of Revelation.

The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible explains the biblical implications of this Babylonian heritage: “As the realm of the devil... Babylon is... understood as the arch-typical head of all entrenched worldly resistance to God. Babylon is an age long reality including idolatrous kingdoms as diverse as Sodom, Gomorrah, Egypt, Tyre, Nineveh, and Rome... Babylon, the mother of all harlots, is the great *source and reservoir* of enmity to God, as well as the objectified product of the ‘one mind’ [Revelation 17:13, 17] which gives power and authority to false gods. As such, she is the antithesis of the virgin bride of Christ, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the kingdom of God” (1962, p. 338, “Babylon (NT),” emphasis added).

Will this city be a revival of the literal city of Babylon, or is the Bible speaking here symbolically? The idea that the ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt has been popularized in the *Left Behind* series of religious-themed books. In these books the seat of the New World Order and the Antichrist is found in Babylon, in modern-day Iraq. But is this where we should look?

Babylonish religious system

The “woman” John describes is a worldwide religious system based in a city (Revelation 17:18), but its roots are ancient Babel and Babylon. Only one religion and only one city match that description today. That city is Rome, within which is Vatican City, the seat of the Roman Catholic Church.



For hundreds of years the Roman Catholic Church has claimed to be the “mother” church of Christianity. Its popes have historically claimed to be the Vicar of Christ. This belief is well documented through history.

This dogma was recently restated by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. On Sept. 5, 2000, a 36-page paper titled “Dominus Iesus” was released. It states: “Only in the Catholic Church does Christ’s Church subsist in all her fullness.

Nonetheless, outside the Catholic Church ‘elements of truth and sanctification’ exist that are of the Church... Consequently, there exists only one Church (which subsists in the Catholic Church) and at the same time there exist true particular Churches that are non-Catholic.”

Specifically, the document reiterates long-held Catholic teaching that salvation is possible only through Christian revelation. Non-Christian teaching may contain elements of truth but are deficient spiritually. The same applies to other Christian faiths. Religious relativism, the idea that all faiths are valid and equal, is denied.

However, Catholics are taught to uphold the teaching that *the sole path to spiritual salvation is through the Catholic Church*. Official Catholic dogma states that full salvation is possible only through its rites and teachings. All other faiths “suffer from defects” (“Dominus Iesus”).

It is said Christian Rome killed far more Jews than did pagan Rome.

The church’s position has led to great abuse of its power. In 2000, Pope John Paul II issued a momentous apology for the past record of persecutions by those acting on behalf of the church. Though the apology was carefully crafted not to say the church had erred, it did bring attention to the long record of death and injustice inflicted on those who dared to oppose or differ with the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

It is said Christian Rome killed far more Jews than did pagan Rome. On July 15, 1099, soldiers of the first Crusade sacked Jerusalem, killing all the Muslims of the city. All the Jews were herded into a synagogue and burned alive. For many, their last sight in this mortal life was of the sword and cross-emblazoned shield of their executioner. Millions died in the Inquisition.

Reigning over kings

Revelation 17:18 also tells us that “the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

Throughout history the papacy has crowned and deposed kings. Pope Leo III on Christmas Day in 800 crowned Charlemagne, the great Frankish king. Henry IV’s struggle with Pope Gregory VII included an excommunication. When a repentant Henry stood barefoot in the snow outside the papal residence, the spiritual power of the church was clearly demonstrated.



Pope Leo III Charlemagne

One other point should be made. In the last decade of the first century, when John received the book of Revelation, there was only one city he could have identified as the persecuting “Babylon” that “reigns over the kings of the earth”—Rome. By then Rome had sacked Jerusalem and demolished the temple. Rome had killed Paul and martyred other Christians. Rome was responsible for John’s exile to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation.

For the past 15 centuries the Catholic Church has continued to influence political institutions and leaders. Its rituals, traditions and teachings—many of them derived from pre-Christian idolatrous worship—remain the standard for many social and cultural traditions. No other city in history meets the criteria described by John in Revelation 17 and 18.

The situation today

In the meantime, the issue of Jerusalem’s status awaits a resolution. Will the Vatican, and the papacy, offer its services to break through the Gordian knot that prevents a peace settlement?

In July 2000, while the Israeli and Palestinian leaders met at Camp David with President Clinton, the pope urged that Jerusalem be governed under international protection. “...I want to ask all the

parties not to neglect the importance of the spiritual dimension of the city of Jerusalem, with its sacred places and the community of three monotheistic religions that surround them,” he said.

In September 2000 he repeated that desire for international intervention in Jerusalem. “The history and present reality of inter-religious relations in the Holy Land is such that no just and lasting peace is foreseeable without some form of support from the international community,” he said.

This tale of two cities will come to a climax with the return of Christ and the time of God’s judgment on all individuals, peoples and nations that have opposed Him. Prophecy indicates a modern “Babylon” and the city of Jerusalem are destined to touch every human life in the great upheaval at the end of this age. God’s “elect” (Matthew 24:31) need to discern between the two and have the wisdom to choose correctly.

At the return of Christ, the then downtrodden city of Jerusalem will be rescued. It will again become a city of light, truth and glory.

God does not give His people the choice of blending or blurring lines. The book of Revelation shows that two ways of life are represented by these cities. Like Egypt in Old Testament times, Rome typifies the Babylonish system that enslaves men. Its history and culture of deception, persecution and death will bring the whole earth to a state of ruin, then come crashing down itself (Revelation 14:8). God warns His servants to “come out of her” before it is too late (Revelation 18:1-5). God offers a much better way of life based on His Word.

At the return of Christ, the then downtrodden city of Jerusalem will be rescued. It will again become a city of light, truth and glory. Ruling from Jerusalem, Jesus Christ will liberate all mankind from the age-long deception that began in ancient Babylon (Revelation 17:5).

Out of the worst of times, in tribulation and the Day of the Lord, will ultimately come the best of times in the light and life of the coming Kingdom of God and the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9-11).

Recommended reading

What lies ahead for planet earth? Bible prophecy reveals the answers—answers you can better understand by reading our free booklets [Are We Living in the Time of the End?](#) and [You Can Understand Bible Prophecy](#).

Teacher, Teacher

By Robert Berendt

Ultimately, we are all teachers. How can we become good teachers who inspire our “students” to great things?



TEACHING PLAYS A PART in every aspect of our lives, from learning to tie our shoes to finding the purpose of our lives. Our Creator tells us He has developed a plan for mankind includes us learning about Him and His ways. To help, He has placed a wonderful gift in His Church—teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

The Bible speaks of false teachers as well as teachers of good things. False teachers have caused much pain and suffering for mankind and good teachers have done the opposite. In a way, we are all teachers. The only question is: Are we beloved and cherished teachers of good—or teachers of falsehoods?

Teachers—good and bad

Jesus Christ placed a heavy responsibility upon His disciples to teach the people of God good things (John 21:15-17). That responsibility continues today.

Parents with a child in school rejoice when their child has a “good teacher.” A bad teacher can turn a student off for life. I taught chemistry and mathematics. When I found a student who said, “I can’t do math,” I tried to find out what experiences he or she had with teachers.

A good teacher will be able to reflect a love for learning to his students and will set a positive example, creating a desire to learn in students. A poor teacher can remove all the excitement, joy and potential a student may have.

In Matthew 5:19 Jesus states whoever *does* and *teaches* the commandments will be great in the Kingdom. Those are two qualifications of a good teacher—to believe and live by what he teaches. A good teacher must be a good example to the student. He, too, must be a student, and he must have a zeal and hunger for the things he teaches. He must recognize the value of what he is passing on to the students.



It has been said “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and “I would rather see a sermon than hear one.” These kinds of expressions reflect the need for a teacher to be true to his profession and to be honest and trustworthy in all things. Such a teacher is of great value. Paul warned Timothy about people “desiring to be teachers of the law” who do not understand what they say (1 Timothy 1:7). Those are poor teachers.

In Mark 10:17 Jesus was called “good Teacher.” Those who genuinely wanted to learn were met with a warm and quick response. Luke 11:1 relates the request of the disciples that Jesus should teach them to pray. These were fervent Jewish men. One would think they ought to know how to pray. But Jesus gladly taught them with no criticism.

He was a good teacher because He loved to teach and fully believed in the things He taught. He knew life would be much, much better for those who listened to Him, and He was dedicated to making their lives better. The tale of Martha and Mary reveals both a teacher who is loved and a student who thrills at the teaching that is given (Luke 10:38-42).

Heavy responsibility

A teacher can have a strong influence on young minds and on all who listen. When it comes to spiritual teachings, there is a heavy responsibility we all ought to recognize. James said, “Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1). He was referring to those who purported to teach the Word of God.

In a sense all of God’s followers are teachers, if not by word, then by deeds. People expect when a person calls himself Christian, he or she will uphold a certain standard. Some who “ought to be teachers” need to learn the basics once again because they have become dull of hearing (Hebrews 5:12).

The responsibility for teaching God’s Word by our deeds as well as by our speech certainly is required of all parents by God.

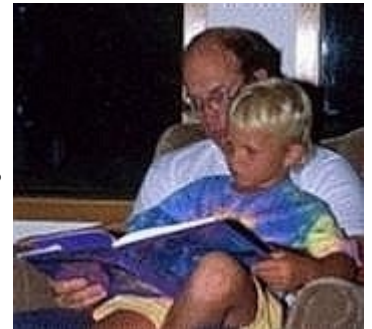
A good teacher is one who is also constantly learning. He is a good student as well as a teacher. It is by the consistent choice of living by our principles and upholding that which is noble and of value that we learn to discern both good and evil—and choose the good. We can trust in such a person.

Parents are teachers too

In an article I read recently, Charles Spurgeon told Christian parents: “Oh, fathers and mothers, the ruin of your children, or their salvation, will, under God, very much depend on you.”

It is true, our first and most important teachers are our parents. The responsibility for teaching God's Word by our deeds as well as by our speech certainly is required of all parents by God. He has entrusted the baby's mind to its parents, and designed us so that parents have a deep and fervent love for their children.

It is a little too strong to state that the child's salvation depends on the parents, but it is correct to acknowledge the *work of the parents has much to do with the mind-set and habits that their children form*. Parents are the ones who ought to teach children to be obedient, patient, inquisitive and respectful.



Parents do differ in ability to teach, and thus each child will have a unique outlook on life. God does understand this and He takes upon Himself the ultimate and full responsibility for the salvation of each person. Even a child from a dysfunctional family will be loved and cared for by God. When the Bible says He wants "all" men to be saved, He means *all* (1 Timothy 2:4). He is the most perfect Parent of all—that is why we address Him as Father.

For more about the parents' role in teaching their children, request our free booklet *Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension*.

Qualities of a good teacher

A good teacher will have some qualities setting him or her apart from those who cannot teach effectively. Such things as a good command of the language and ability to communicate effectively are paramount. We also expect the teacher to have a wealth of knowledge and to be able to impart that to us. We look for patience and sincerity in a teacher.



A teacher who loves to teach and loves to see progress and growth of knowledge in a student is readily appreciated. A good teacher is one who will be respected and trusted because he teaches respect and trust.

We can ruin much good through one foolish mistake or slip. Therefore, a teacher recognizes he teaches by his life as well as by his words. He will be seeking ways to better reach his students and always have their best interests at heart. This kind of a teacher will rejoice in the success of his pupils.

David expressed his need in Psalm 25:4-5 when he wrote, "Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me..." God is the greatest teacher, and we can totally rely on Him. He teaches through His Holy Spirit, which inspired His Word in Holy Scripture, and through human teachers. Ephesians 4:11 states God "gave" some to be teachers—it's a gift from Him.

We are all teachers in some form or another—let us become good ones!

Recommended Reading

For more interesting articles, please request our free magazine [The Good News](#).

Will a New Leader Solve Our Problems?

By John Elliott

Why, after political leaders have promised for years to fix certain problems, are those obstacles still with us? Why, when so many hope and strive for positive change, does it remain tantalizingly out of reach?



DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD elect leaders to run their governments. Winds of change are bringing brighter futures to people everywhere—or at least that’s what the stream of promises from candidates would lead people to believe.

Changes for the better would be welcomed by nearly anyone, anywhere. Knowing this, political opponents strive to illuminate all the bad that exists today and contrast it with the good that will come if only they were elected. After all, to hope to win, a candidate must make a case that he or she can bring change for the better.

In a world filled with difficulties and dangers, most people hope for positive change. Yet, in spite of so many promised improvements, people everywhere face obstacles that are only escalating—locally, regionally, nationally, internationally and globally. Complex problems confound our governments, economies, social and physical environments. Conflicts and sorrows are so pervasive that British writer Aldous Huxley once observed, “Maybe this world is another planet’s hell.”

Our modern cultures are the end result of thousands of years of attempts at improving the world we live in. Yet the problems remain.

Trial and error

What is the solution to the problems we face?

Various ideas have been put forward and tried as supposedly ideal solutions. The roots of Western big government began with the Sumerian kingdom of Mesopotamia around 3000 B.C. One of the early rulers of the region is mentioned in Genesis 10:8-12—Nimrod, who became one of the world's first tyrants. The area was “the beginning of his kingdom.” Eventually, the Babylonian domination of this region, the cradle of civilization, spawned a governmental system ultimately involving all the great empires of the western hemisphere.

These successive empires devised every conceivable tactic and system in attempts to address humanity's problems. The attempted fixes have continued down to our day. They have included improved education, greater mechanization, bigger cities, increased sports and entertainment, greater wealth and trade and one-world-government-style empires.

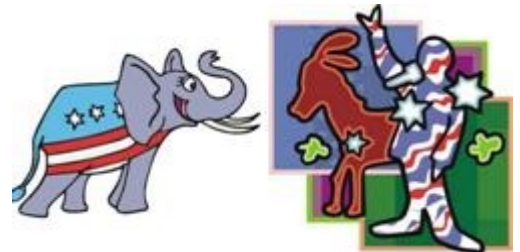
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What if?

What if you were chosen to lead a nation? Where would you begin in addressing the problems and challenges facing so many countries?

Consider the major priorities the major U.S. presidential candidates promised to address:

- Improving the nation's educational system.
- Strengthening a national retirement program.
- Providing adequate, affordable health care.
- Strengthening national security.
- Lowering taxes.



In addition to these, national leaders perennially face a number of challenges:

- Eliminating crime and the drug trade.
- Reducing poverty.
- Promoting a just judicial system.
- Ending discrimination.
- Promoting international peace and cooperation.
- Strengthening moral and family values and work ethics.
- Reducing government bureaucracy.
- Reducing pollution and promoting proper ecology.

Do these problems sound familiar? They should. American politicians have been promising to solve the same problems for decades. Yet they remain unsolved.

The big lesson is this: The right government, the correct plan and the perfect person in a crucial position of leadership isn't what we have now, or have had in the history of human governments. Although many have tried, no humanly devised government in any country or in any age has even begun to make a decent start down the road to creating a perfect civilization.

Good news is coming

But, we should never despair. There is incredible good news on the horizon. A perfect leader with a perfect plan already exists. And He has been carefully assembling a government capable of doing all these things.

The human mind laughs at such a utopian prospect, even while some leaders are now working to concoct their own world order. But an appointed Person and His staff are preparing to step in and put the world on its feet at last. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah sums up the basics: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign... over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever” (Isaiah 9:6, New International Version).

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We humans are far too young on any historical time line, too eager, immature and impetuous. We envision solutions to problems as far less complex and deep-rooted than they are. The fact so many of our problems have remained with us—not only for a few presidential administrations but for thousands of years—should prove sobering.

Fixing all the wrongs and ills of humanity is not that simple, even for God. He and His Son Jesus Christ haven't simply been “killing” time waiting for the right time to step into human affairs. They have been working diligently in preparation for “fixing” planet earth. Many aspects of the solution are much more complex than we can imagine.

Aspects of God's master plan

Biblical history and prophecy reveals some of the key strategies God has begun to or will implement to create a just, peaceful and prosperous world for all:

- Establish righteous laws that will guide human behavior and build just societies (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 5:29).
- Provide a way for people to understand and internalize those laws and keep them in their full spiritual intent (Jeremiah 31:33-34).
- Record examples from which mankind could learn so as to avoid others' mistakes (1 Corinthians 10:6; Romans 15:4)
- Establish a worldwide educational system to train people in the right way of life (Isaiah 2:2-3).
- Create a transformed world in which all suffering and sorrow will be eliminated (Revelation 21:4)
- Devise a means for humans to escape the finality of death (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).
- Arrange for the perfect King to rule all nations (Revelation 1:5-6; 19:11-16).
- Put an end to human rebellion (Revelation 19:15).
- Establish universal peace and freedom from crime, violence and war (Micah 4:3-4).
- Select and train assistants to administer proper government throughout the world (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:4; Daniel 7:27).

These events cover some of the most important aspects of the massive preparations that have been underway for as long as humans have existed.

Another change needed

Could you fulfill any of the above items? Certainly these things are far beyond our human abilities. Yet they are all necessary to solve the problems that plague mankind. Even so, yet another vital step is still missing. Without it, many of these dramatic changes could never come about, and we could never see a fulfilling, peaceful world.

The real culprit for humanity's ills is within us—the nature we each possess. Even widespread mainstream Christian movements have not tamed the inner nature of man. British historian Paul Johnson wrote, in spite of Christianity's civilizing influence, “there is a cruel and pitiless nature in man which is sometimes impervious to Christian restraints and encouragements” (*A History of Christianity*, 1976, p. 517).

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God alone can solve that problem. Ultimately, He will remove humanity's greedy, selfish nature along with its source, Satan the devil (John 8:44). Only by removing the sources of man's problems can the problems and effects begin to be erased. God then will replace human self-centeredness with an attitude of service and love toward others. Of that day He says, “I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds” (Hebrews 10:16, NIV). It is through the administration of the government of God—referred to in Scripture as the Kingdom of God—that humanity will ultimately find true happiness.

God's strategic solution

Sin is biblically defined as “the transgression of [God's] law” (1 John 3:4, King James Version). It lies at the root of every human problem. No man can heal the countless tragedies resulting from sin. We can't erase the mental pain. We can't undo the dreadful tolls of warfare, slavery, persecution and pogroms. We can't change the greed and selfishness that motivate so many human actions.

We can't even clearly differentiate between villains and victims in a world where people are too often both. We can't restructure and repay fairly all the wrongs that have happened to peoples and nations who have had outbreaks of wars and reprisals against each other. The whole human race, all of it from top to bottom, needs to repent—to truly change its ways and start afresh with a new and different spirit, the Spirit of God, leading their thoughts. Only with repentance, forgiveness and a change of our nature can all the wrongs eventually be removed and forgotten.

This is what it will take for the real solution to wars, crime, pollution, abuse, discrimination and a whole host of other problems to come about. If you're inclined to think, "If I were president, I would..." remember what the real solution entails. None of us has the smarts, the power, or the stamina to change this world's problems. The solution lies in the hands of God Himself. Let's be glad He has been working tirelessly in preparation to handle them when Jesus Christ returns to earth.

You can play a part

There's the old saying, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem." What can you do to make a difference today? Run for government office?

When Jesus lived and set a perfect example we should follow, He said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He didn't abolish disease, but He healed many. He didn't stop crime, but He had compassion on its victims. He didn't stop oppression, but told others to never oppress others. He called Himself and His disciples the light of the world, engaging them as examples of God's way of life (Matthew 5:14-16).



Those He calls today have an invitation to be living examples of godly love and concern (Colossians 3:12-15). Jesus Christ needs assistants willing to prepare to rule with Him by learning to choose right instead of wrong and beginning to govern their lives by God's Word. Remember Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan and prepare to be good neighbors, helping others as the opportunities arise. This is the mind-set Christ will employ to help Him rule the nations in His coming Kingdom (Matthew 25:36).

Another important responsibility is to pray for the leaders of our nations so the gospel of the Kingdom may be proclaimed without undue hindrance (1 Timothy 2:1-4; Colossians 4:2-4). If you have ever wished you could be part of a government that really made a difference, then seek to be an ambassador of Christ's coming government (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador is a representative appointed by one government to represent it to others. God is calling people today to be representatives of His government to all other governments and peoples. You could become one of His ambassadors, one of His representatives reflecting His way of life.

Such a role actually contributes a great deal toward the ultimate solving of society's problems and leads you into being made a coruler in the administration of the coming Kingdom of God (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26).

In this world aspiring candidates are constantly making plans to gain political power in hopes of advancing themselves or solving particular problems. People remain hopeful that some leader will one day make a real difference.

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Although that won't happen in this age of man, it is sure to occur in the biblically promised world to come. We need to awaken to the awesome plan that God is implementing for mankind. And we should be finding out about how to pursue a contributing role in His coming Kingdom.

A few leaders have bravely attempted to deal with crises that arose on their watch. Britain's Sir Winston Churchill, America's Abraham Lincoln and Egypt's Anwar Sadat are examples of courageous men at the helm of countries plying very troubled waters. Some of them gave their lives for noble ambitions of positive change.

On the other end of the spectrum, some leaders have focused more on materialistic and hedonistic opportunism, which ultimately only erodes the moral integrity of those around them and the general populace. Some leaders have been egomaniacs, focused almost entirely on the acquisition of power and possessions for ignoble ideals.

Frederick the Great (II) shamelessly declared, "I begin by taking. I shall find scholars later to demonstrate my perfect right."

Inevitably, the majority of leaders wind up making little or no lasting improvements. Checked by their competitors' agendas, they learn that real progress in the political arena is often near to impossible. Two-term President Ronald Reagan even conceded jokingly, "Government does not solve problems. It subsidizes them."

Recommended reading

How will the world ultimately see its problems solved? The essentials are carefully laid out in the following four booklets respectively titled [*The Gospel of the Kingdom*](#), [*What Is Your Destiny?*](#), [*The Road to Eternal Life*](#) and [*Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*](#).

You Raise Me Up, Because You Are Your Brother's Keeper

By Janet Treadway

Sobering statistics demonstrate how swiftly society is self-destructing. We especially see self-destructive behavior in our teens. Are we to be our "brother's keeper" and help one another?



More people than ever before need help. In the next 24 hours...

- 1,439 teens will attempt suicide.
- 2,795 teenage girls will become pregnant.
- 15,006 teens will use drugs for the first time.
- 3,506 teens will run away.

More than 50 percent of all teens use alcohol or drugs. Teens now account for over a fourth of all sexually transmitted diseases. (Source of statistics: Teen Help Adolescent Resources, <http://www.vpp.com/teenhelp/>).

A few years ago an *Entertainment Tonight* television program aired an interview of a 58-pound lady, Melissa DeHart. Melissa, a former newscaster, is struggling with anorexia and bulimia. Because of the interview, millions of people stepped in to help Melissa win this battle through letters and cards of encouragement. A doctor who works with people who struggle with this problem has offered his services for free. Melissa was overwhelmed to realize so many people cared. Melissa is also helping others who have this problem by openly talking about her problem.

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Our teens and young people are plagued with today. But what does that have to do with you and me? I don't have a problem with those things, so what? Am I responsible for them? Am I my brother's keeper?

Are we our brother's keeper? In Genesis 4:9, Cain asked God the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain was trying to deny he had any responsibility for caring for his brother. The very fact God asked Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" laid responsibility on Cain's shoulders. He indeed was his brother's keeper.

Many people failed Dara Hughes by having the same attitude Cain had.

Do you know a Dara Hughes?

The PA cracked on and our principal began to speak in a raspy, serious and sorrowful tone: "I have a tragic incident to relate to you, and I want you all to listen and think about it. Dara Hughes, a sophomore here committed suicide yesterday..."

Everyone wants to be all he or she can be. Everyone wants to be loved and to succeed. Everyone needs a friend to help him or her along this difficult journey. No man is an island!

Dara Hughes—I remembered that name. Last Friday, I was listening to the radio and Dara called in and, upon naming the top 10 hits in order, she was awarded a pizza party for herself and 25 of her friends. She had not giggled with excitement, but simply told the deejay, "Thank you... but I don't have 25 friends." The deejay tried to persuade her, but she protested, "No, really, I don't have any friends," and with a click she was off the line.

Only a week ago she had been alive and now... I shivered as goose bumps pricked all over my body. I turned my attention back to the scratchy voice of the principal: "Please look around you at your classmates. Is there anyone who is left out all the time, anyone who has no friends? Please tell your teacher if you know of anyone."

It is too late for Dara, but it is not too late to help and encourage those around you.

Sometimes life can be pretty tough, but to go the road alone can make the road long, lonely and rough. Popular singing star Josh Groban sings the song, "You Raise Me Up!" Here are the lyrics:

*When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary;
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,
Until you come and sit awhile with me.*

*You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains;
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas;
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders;
You raise me up... to more than I can be.*

Do you have strong shoulders that can lift someone up and get him or her going again when the valleys seem so deep? What if your friend has a drinking or a drug problem, how do you help? What if he or she is depressed and thinking of suicide, like Dara?

What if you know someone who is struggling, like Melissa, with anorexia and bulimia? How can we carry our friends on our shoulders until they are strong enough to stand on their own?

Here are some steps you can take to be your brother's keeper:

DO:

- Listen with understanding.
- Approach your friend gently, and don't stop! Tell your friend you are worried about him or her. Your friend will probably not admit to having a problem right off. The first step is realizing there is a problem, and it is important for you to help your friend realize this.
- Appreciate the openness and trust your friend must have to share his or her distress with you.
- Share your own struggles, be open and real. If your friend understands that you also have problems then he or she can relate to you more.
- Learn more about the problem. The Internet is full of help resources.
- Support and be available. *Do not try to analyze or interpret your friend's problem.* Being supportive is the most important thing you can do. Show your friend you believe in him or her—it will make a difference.
- Give hope that with help and with patience he or she can be free from this problem. Nothing is so deep that he or she can not rise above it.
- Give your friend a list of resources for help.
- Encourage your friend to talk to his or her parents and minister.
- Just be there.
- Get counseling yourself from your parents or minister. They can direct you in the right way to go and give you much needed support.
- *Most of all, pray for your friend!*



On the other hand, you can discourage your friend by doing certain things.

DON'T:

- Tell your friend that he or she is crazy. Your friend needs to understand there are others who have suffered through the same kind of problems and have risen above it.
- Blame him or her. Your friend feels horrible as it is and probably hates him or herself.
- Gossip about your friend. This will destroy his or her trust in you and destroy any help you could give.
- Follow your friend around to check on his or her behavior. You are a friend, not a policeman.
- Ignore your friend. He or she needs you more now than ever. It will take work, time and sacrifice and even giving up some things you would like to do.
- Reject him or her.
- Don't keep things a secret from your friend's family when health and safety are involved. This is a tough one and your friend may hate you, but in the long run you could be saving his or her life. Anger will pass and go away, but if a person dies from his or her habits that is a done deal and cannot be changed.

God will give us the strength to help others in their darkest hours. He will give us wisdom and calmness to handle it!

Being a young person is tough. Young people face many pressures in life. Everyone wants to be all he or she can be. Everyone wants to be loved and to succeed. Everyone needs a friend to help him or her along this difficult journey. No man is an island!

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and 14, we read, “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing... comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” We need each other!

God’s help

Most of all, we need God! God is there to hold us up and help us through the most difficult trials. He will raise us up to stand on mountains.

Psalm 18:32-36 states, “It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and sets me on my high places. He teaches my hands to make war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up; Your gentleness has made me great. You enlarged my path under me, so my feet did not slip.”



God, 2 Corinthians 1:4 says, “comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

God will give us the strength to help others in their darkest hours. He will give us wisdom and calmness to handle it! No matter how difficult being our brother’s keeper may prove, we must!



In the famous poem “Footprints in the Sand,” the author noted that when she was in the deepest despair, going through the toughest times of her life, there was only one set of footprints in the sand. Troubled about it, she asked God, why was this so and God replied, “The times when you have seen only one set of footprints in the sand, it was when I carried you.”

Remember, you cannot force someone to seek help, change their habits or adjust their attitudes. You can make a difference by honestly sharing your concerns, providing support and knowing where to go for more information. You may need outside help for yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, talk to a professional. With wisdom, prayer and help from others you can make a difference in someone’s life! We all should have a part in making someone all that they can be.

For we are all our brother’s keeper!

Recommended reading

For more information concerning the paths our lives should take, read our free booklet [Making Life Work](#). Life can be confusing without God’s direction.