

MARCH 1983

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



QUEST FOR THE BEST

Why Christ Died - and Rose Again!
Do You Have a Spiritual Blind Spot?

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

MARCH 1983

CIRCULATION: 160,000

VOL. XXX, NO. 3

Contents:

WHY Christ Died — and Rose Again!	1
Do You Have a Spiritual Blind Spot?	4
Twelve Reasons Why Jesus' Trial Was Illegal, Part Two	6
A Sure Test of Integrity! — "You Shall Not Steal"	9
Fervent Prayer Avails Much!	12
Are You Practicing Pure Religion?	14
Stories From the New Testament, Chapter 15: Feeding the 4,000	18
Ministudy: The Feast of Unleavened Bread — Our Part in God's Master Plan	21
Sharing: Quest for the Best	28

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: **Herbert W. Armstrong**
MANAGING EDITOR: **Dexter H. Faulkner**

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR: **Norman L. Shoaf**
GRAPHICS: **Greg S. Smith, Minette Collins Smith**
CONTRIBUTORS: **Dibar K. Apartian, Jack R. Elliott, K. Neil Earle, John A. Halford, Shirley King Johnson, George M. Kackos, Ronald D. Kelly, Raymond F. McNair, L. Leroy Neff, Richard J. Rice, Bernard W. Schnippert, Richard H. Sedliacik, Clayton D. Steep**
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: **Colleen M. Gus**

Published by the Worldwide Church of God
PUBLISHER: **Herbert W. Armstrong**
TREASURER: **L. Leroy Neff**
DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING SERVICES: **Ray L. Wright**
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: **Roger G. Lippross**
CIRCULATION MANAGER: **Boyd L. Leeson**

The Good News is published monthly (except combined June-July and October-November issues) by the Worldwide Church of God, 300 W. Green St., Pasadena, Calif., 91123. Copyright © 1983 Worldwide Church of God. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. Reentered as second-class matter at the Manila Central Post Office on Jan. 18, 1974.

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE GOOD NEWS ADDRESS NEAREST YOU:

United States: 300 W. Green St., Pasadena, Calif., 91123. For literature requests you may call toll free 1-800-423-4444; in California, Alaska and Hawaii call 213-304-6111 collect.
Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2M2. For literature requests you may call toll free 1-800-663-1242.
Mexico: Institución Ambassador, Apartado Postal 5-595, 06500 México D.F.
Colombia: Apartado Aéreo 11430, Bogotá 1, D.E.
United Kingdom, rest of Europe and the Middle East: P.O. Box 111, Borehamwood, Herts., WD6 1LU England
Zimbabwe: P.O. Box U.A.30 Union Ave., Harare
South Africa: P.O. Box 1060, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa 2000
Ghana: P.O. Box 9617, Kotoka Int. Airport, Accra
Kenya and the rest of East and Central Africa: P.O. Box 47135, Nairobi, Kenya
Mauritius and other Indian Ocean Isles: P.O. Box 888, Port Louis, Mauritius
Nigeria: P.M.B. 21006, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria
Australia, India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia: G.P.O. Box 345, Sydney, NSW 2001, Australia
New Zealand and Pacific Isles: P.O. Box 2709, Auckland 1, New Zealand
The Philippines: P.O. Box 1111, M.C.C., Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines 3117
Caribbean: P.O. Box 6063, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936
Switzerland: Case Postale 10, 91 rue de la Servette, CH-1211, Geneva 7
Scandinavia: Box 2513 Solli, Oslo 2, Norway

Notify us immediately of any change in your address. Please include your *old* mailing label and your new address. U.S. POSTMASTER: Send address change to: *The Good News*, Box 111, Pasadena, Calif., 91123.

COVER: Night view of the Ambassador Auditorium, on the Pasadena, Calif., campus of Ambassador College. Photo by Warren Watson.

Letters

Paying God's tithe

I read your articles on God's tithing law [October-November] and was optimistic with the results your writers were mentioning, and I felt I had a duty of doing my share. So I decided that, starting next check, I would give God a tenth of what I make.

The next day I was hurting for some bucks and decided to go to my credit union to withdraw some money (I figured I had just \$30 in my account). When they gave me my withdrawal slip, the amount on it was \$113. When I asked for an explanation they mentioned that there was another account in my name that was never closed out and they never realized it existed. So that was great to hear but that's not all.

When I came home from work I grabbed the mail. In it was a letter with a check inside for \$100.

So all of a sudden all the worrying I had done the day before about money was over. I couldn't really understand the sudden change. Then it all came back to me — my promise of tithing. So from now on I will give a tenth of my salary to God happily.

I also found out this morning of all the overtime coming up at my place of employment, and I feel I will now truly get ahead with my money problems and receive blessings from God.

I also wanted to mention the fact of how you have opened my eyes with your magazines and booklets.

Stan S.
Baltimore, Md.

We got our *Good News* yesterday and I just read the article, "Should a Non-member Tithe?" So I thought I would tell you my story as well.

The first time we tithed it was only \$2. Right after that my wife and I both got jobs. The very next time we tithed it was \$50. But we were deeply in debt. It took most of what we had left to pay bills. We didn't even have enough left to buy groceries. But God doesn't lie!

A friend of ours gave us four big boxes of food, and another friend gave us some meat he had just butchered. And then a lady we didn't even know gave us some more meat. We had so much food we couldn't find enough shelf space for it!

The point is: It does pay to tithe! And it gets better all the time.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy H.
Port Angeles, Wash.
(Continued on page 23)

WHY Christ Died- and Rose Again!

IT IS revealed that Jesus was "Emmanuel" — that is, "God with us" — GOD in human flesh. He was both God and man — divine as well as human. Can God die? Was Jesus really dead, or did only His body die? Was Jesus the divine One alive during the three days and three nights a body was in the tomb? What, then, is the NEED of the resurrection? Here is a brief, pointed answer.

By Herbert W. Armstrong

This is a question that has perplexed millions. It is an enigma that has never been made clear and plain to many minds.

Yet the Scriptures give us a clear revelation, in plain, simple words — if we can *believe* the Scriptures — which is to believe they mean *exactly what they say*.

We read, "Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3).

Christ means "Anointed" or "Messiah," and while the name *Jesus* may be used to denote the human man, the title *Christ* certainly refers to the divine One — the One who was God with us. This Scripture says He died and was buried. And it was He — the CHRIST — the divine One — who ROSE FROM THE DEAD. He did not rise from *life* or a living state, but from DEATH!

"For to this end *Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord* both of the

Golgotha—"the place of the skull." The general area of the trees on top of the rock was the site of Christ's crucifixion.



dead and living" (Rom. 14:9, Authorized Version). There is the answer. Through His death and resurrection Christ became Lord of the dead as well as the living. He paid the penalty for our past sins. He made possible the way so that both the dead and those now living might have life eternal — not mere temporary existence, but life everlasting.

When Christ rose, He was *revived*. When a boxer is knocked unconscious, the attendants work over him to *revive* him. The expression that Christ was "revived" indicates Christ had been unconscious — that He was dead — not that He rose from a state of conscious mental activity.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ *died* for the ungodly. . . . while

we were still sinners, Christ *died* for us" (Rom. 5:6, 8).

God in the flesh

Notice again: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was God*" (John 1:1).

The Greek word is *Logos*. It means "Word" or "Spokesman." This is referring to the One who co-existed with the Father

from eternity — who always existed — who is one with the Father, yet, as He Himself said, His Father is greater than He.

Always He referred to Himself as One *sent* by the Father. He said that the words He spoke were not spoken of Himself, but the Father who sent Him gave Him a commandment what He should say and speak. The one who gives the orders and sends another is in a position superior to the one sent, and who obeys the orders. A husband is set by God in a position superior, in the family relationship, to that of the wife. Yet they are both human — both on the same level — and they are ONE. Not one God, but *one flesh*.

In God's Church, or local congregation, an elder is in authority

during a service that all things may be done decently and in order, and he has the rule over the congregation. Yet Christ prayed that the Church would be kept as ONE, *even as* He and the Father are one. The Church is composed of many members, yet ONE BODY. And its members, more than one, are to be kept ONE in the sense of harmony and unity in love and purpose, as Christ and the Father are one — and they form ONE CHURCH, even as the Father and Christ form ONE GOD — yet more than one member, or one person.

Christ the everliving

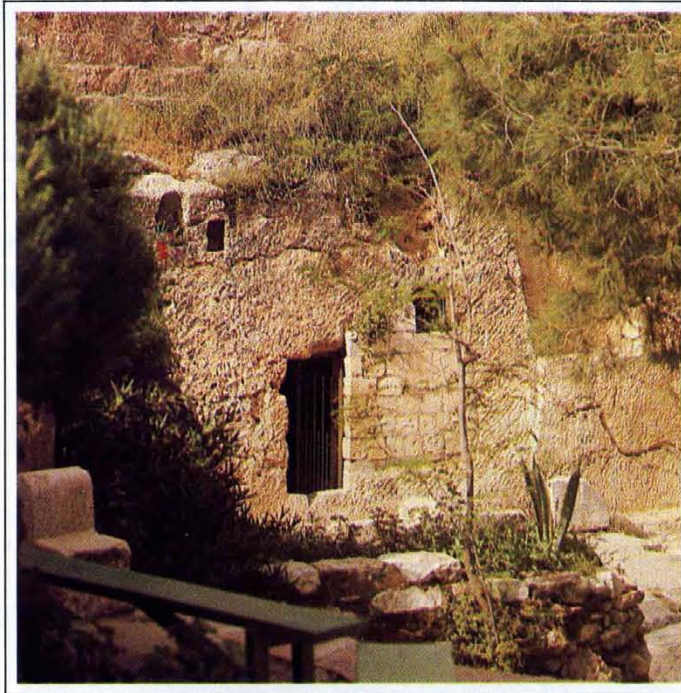
In the Old Testament the *Logos* is called by different names. God calls people and beings *what they are*.

There was an archangel, perfect in beauty, full of knowledge. He was named what he actually was — LUCIFER, which in English means “shining star of the dawn” or “lightbringer.” But when, through pride, he decided to compete against God for supremacy of the universe, and to take possession and rule from God, his name was changed to what he now was — SATAN, which in English means “adversary, rival or competitor.”

Therefore the names of Christ have always been — whether names or titles — words that describe *what He is*. Most frequently He was called *Yahweh*, erroneously translated in the American Standard Version “Jehovah.” In the Authorized Version it is rendered “LORD.”

Today we do not know either the correct spelling or pronunciation of this name — it was regarded as so sacred it was never pronounced in ancient Judah, any more than a son who properly honors his father would call him by his first name. Yet we know its MEANING — *it* means “the Eter-

He who was GOD — He *was made flesh . . .* that He might *die* for us — pay the penalty of our sins in our stead.



nal” or the One in whom is inherent LIFE. *It signifies One who possesses life inherent from eternity to eternity — life-source!* He also was called *Yahveh-rophchah* — “God your healer.” He gave His name to Moses as “I AM.” That is, the One who is — who EXISTS — who has life inherent in Himself!

He also is the Word, or Spokesman. God is Creator — but the Father created all things by and through Christ the WORD.

He (Christ) is the One who “SPOKE, and it was done.” He is the One who said, “Let there be light” — and the Holy Spirit (the spiritual essence or power that emanates from both Father and Son) moving upon the face of the water performed the command, and “there was light.”

Yet Jesus spoke, or commanded, only what the Father had commanded Him. Father, Word and Holy Spirit combined in perfect harmony in creation!

Now, the *Logos* — the WORD — was God. “The same was in

the beginning with God. All things were made by him . . . In him was LIFE . . . And the Word *was made flesh*, and dwelt among us” (John 1:2-4, 14, AV).

Christ was CONVERTED into flesh

Notice, the “WORD,” who was the ETERNAL — the EVERLIVING — in whom was LIFE — eternal life — by whom all things were made and created — the very GOD Himself — HE WAS MADE FLESH.

Notice, He did not merely enter into some mortal, fleshly body — the body of another. He was not separate from the flesh, as One inside the flesh. It says in plain language — IF we believe the Scripture — IF we believe it means what it says — *it says*

He was made flesh!

That is, He who had existed from eternity — He by whom God created the worlds and all things therein, He who *was* and *is* LIFE, He who was GOD — He *was made flesh* — converted INTO flesh, until He *became* flesh, and then He WAS flesh!

And, being flesh — being human — He divested Himself of inherent immortality for the time being that He might *die* for us — pay the penalty of our sins in our stead.

But, though human, He did have, from birth, what we *may* receive as God’s GIFT by GRACE — the indwelling of God’s Spirit — that He, even as we, might be resurrected from the DEAD, and given by the Father immortal life — that is, *converted* back into spiritual immortality so that He by the resurrection once again *became* divine spirit — or very GOD! Thus He made the same resurrection possible for us — that *we* may also become divine sons of God.

Yes, Jesus was a fleshly MAN.



The Garden Tomb, where the body of Jesus Christ was laid — and the site of Christ's resurrection. Photos show exterior and interior views of the tomb.

He was God come in human flesh. And, when converted into human flesh, the LIFE that kept Him alive resided IN THE BLOOD, as in all who are *flesh* (Lev. 17:11). The breath oxidizes the blood and is called the "breath of life" — of animal, or human, life.

Jesus was also GOD — He was both human and divine. But He was not GOD inside of, yet separate from, the body of flesh — He, God, was MADE FLESH, until He, still GOD — God *with us* — became God IN (*not* inside of) the human flesh — God manifest IN THE FLESH (I Tim. 3:16) — "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. 2:14, AV).

That is, as we humans are partakers of flesh and blood, Jesus Christ, also, in exactly the same manner, was partaker of flesh and blood.

And why? That He *might* DIE!

— "that through *death* he might destroy [annul] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. . . made LIKE unto his brethren" (verses 14, 16-17, AV).

Jesus came NOT in the nature of angels — that is, spirit nature. He was a human being. He was MADE FLESH — made HUMAN — He took on, at birth, HUMAN NATURE. He was tempted in all points like we are. He suffered as we do. He was forced to resist the pull of human nature, even as you and I. He, God, BECAME MAN — man so that He COULD DIE for us, that our sins might be erased and forgiven!

It was CHRIST who died

Jesus DIED! Jesus WAS DEAD!

And for three days and three nights the second person of the Godhead — EMMANUEL — GOD with us — GOD *made* human flesh — was DEAD!

And dead matter cannot impart life. Life can come only

FROM life. As a human, Jesus was the Son of God the Father. God was His only Father. Mary was His mother. He became the SON OF man at His human birth. And now He was DEAD — yes, DEAD! If He was not DEAD, then the penalty of *your* sins is not yet paid. You are yet in your sins. You are without hope! But Jesus was DEAD!

If there were no other person in the Godhead, then the giver of all life was dead and all hope was at an end! If there were no FATHER in heaven while Jesus Christ lay dead — His blood, in which resided His LIFE, shed from His veins, given for you and for me — then all human life everywhere had come to its doom.

But the Father still reigned in high heaven! And the FATHER had LIFE INHERENT IN HIMSELF!

Life can only come *from* life! And Christ Jesus was now DEAD! His life had gone from Him — poured out on Calvary's cross — poured out from His veins! That's

(Continued on page 24)

Do You Have A Spiritual Blind Spot?

Are you sure you see yourself — especially your faults — the way God does?

By John A. Halford

Before you read this article, hold this magazine about 12 inches in front of you so that the black dot on the opposite page is level with your right eye. Cover the other eye with your hand.

Now look straight at the dot and, keeping the page 12 inches from your face, move the page slowly around your head to the right.

Did you notice that at a certain point the black dot disappears? Then, when you move the page farther to the right, the dot reappears before finally moving completely out of your field of vision.

What happened?

There is a point in your eye where the optic nerve enters the eyeball. Because there is no retina (the inner surface of the eye) at this point, no vision can be registered. For this reason, this part of the eye is called the "blind spot." When the image of the black dot passed over the blind spot, you could not see it.

The blind-spot area is so small that normal eye movements compensate for it. In the course of your daily activity you don't even notice it. Nevertheless, it is a fact that there are two small areas,



one in each eye, where even a person with perfect vision is completely blind.

Now read on.

Spiritual blindness

The Bible commands God's begotten children to examine themselves each year at this time, so that they do not take the Pass-over unworthily (I Cor. 11:27-29). After examining yourself, when you take the symbols of Christ's sacrifice you rededicate yourselves to overcoming the many faults that you have seen are still there. But what about the ones that you have not seen?

You have just proved that you have a physical blind spot. But could you perhaps have a spiritual blind spot — an area, or areas, where you just cannot see?

The Bible tells us that this is exactly the situation. Look at Psalm 19:12. David wrote: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults." What did David mean by his "secret faults"?

King David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He did not show a hostile attitude toward God, and he tried hard to change whenever he could see that he was wrong. But notice that I said *whenever* he could see that he was wrong. He couldn't always see it.

David stole Bathsheba, another man's wife, and made her pregnant. After conniving and cheating in an attempt to avoid the consequences, he finally arranged to have Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, killed in battle.

But, incredible as it seems, David did not see how terribly wrong that whole episode was until the prophet Nathan brought him to his senses (II Samuel, chapters 11 and 12). The whole miserable episode showed King David that he had some serious blind spots in his character.

But don't judge David too harshly. For perhaps you, too, have spiritual blind spots — areas where you just can't see how, where and why you are wrong. Sometimes it is hard enough to recognize and admit the problems you *can* see. So how do you go

about overcoming those that you *cannot*?

In Psalm 139:23-24 David wrote, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In other words, you must ask God to show you the things that you cannot see.

How will God do this? Let's look at some of the ways.

Bible study

First, God can teach you through personal Bible study.

Hebrews 4:12 says that God's Word is sharper than a "two-edged sword" and can penetrate through layers of resistance to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. The stories and examples of the Bible show how God dealt with the thoughts and intents of many men and women, both righteous and unrighteous.

The great Elijah, we are told, was a man who had the same human nature that we have (Jas. 5:17). Sometimes Elijah showed great faith, but he was also, from time to time, the victim of discouragement. Moses, the meekest of all men (Num. 12:3), had moments of stubbornness and even bad temper. The prophet Jeremiah more than once felt like giving up. Paul and Barnabas quarreled. Yet all these qualified for the Kingdom of God.

Study the examples in your Bible. Ask God, through His Holy Spirit, to teach you about yourself as you read. But remember this: If you start to see something wrong, admit it. A main characteristic of a converted person is willingness to admit when he is wrong, and then repent. If you intend to justify your faults, you may as well not bother to look for them.

Do you judge others?

But Bible study is not the only way to locate your blind spots. You know the old saying, "If we could see ourselves as others see us . . ." Well, we can.

Look at Romans 2:1: "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things." We can often see our own faults more clearly in other people.

Think about this. If there is a certain type of behavior that you find especially irritating in others, you may have that same problem yourself. It's just that you can't see it when you do it.

When God sent Nathan to show David his sin with Bathsheba, Nathan reported a case in which a rich man who owned many sheep had stolen a poor

man's pet lamb and killed it for a dinner (II Sam. 12:1-4). King David was outraged that anyone should be so greedy and selfish! Such a man must be put to death, David pronounced (verse 5).

Then Nathan quietly pointed out that this was precisely what David had done when he stole the wife of Uriah and then caused Uriah's death.

What kind of behavior in others angers you most? Is it greed? Selfishness? Aloofness? Or maybe laziness, prejudice, stubbornness or gossip? Think carefully, for in your answer may well be a clue to your own blind spot — "for you who judge practice the same things."

Through circumstances

God can also reveal your blind

spot to you through circumstances.

Jesus said, "With what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matt. 7:2). In other words, God will often see to it that you are treated the way you treat other people.

Jacob was a young man of great talent and ability, but he had a serious fault: He would lie, connive and scheme to get his own way, without a thought for other people's feelings.

Jacob deceived his father Isaac into blessing him, instead of his brother Esau, with the birthright. That incident split up the family and caused much suffering and ill will (Gen. 27).

God, of course, fully intended Jacob to have the birthright and could have worked it out in a way that nobody got hurt. But this was not the first time that Jacob had used cunning to get his own way (Gen. 25:29-34). He had a blind spot and needed to be taught a lesson.

During the next few years Jacob met his match. His employer, Laban, tricked him out of his wages and the wife for whom he had labored seven years. And then, toward the end of his life, Jacob was also deceived by a dead goat, just as he had deceived his father. You remember how Jacob's sons dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in the blood of a goat to convince Jacob, that his favorite son, whom they had sold, was dead. Jacob spent many years of grief, deceived as he had deceived others.

Has God allowed hurtful or embarrassing things to be done to you? Has someone you love let you down? Have you been insulted, humiliated or made to feel an outsider, left out of things? Have others hurt your pride or your feelings by gossip? Perhaps there is a lesson in it for you. Are you being given a taste of your own medicine?

At this time of the year, when
(Continued on page 25)

Twelve Reasons Why Jesus' Trial Was Illegal

Part Two

Was Jesus legally crucified? Some would like to have you believe so! It is time you became aware of what really happened at Jesus' trial!

By Herman L. Hoeh

In the previous issue we learned of the shocking events surrounding the arrest of Jesus.

We also discovered that prominent writers have been led into believing that Jesus' arrest, trial and conviction were legal and just!

We learned the Jewish point of view — and the means by which the mob in Jesus' day brought Jesus to trial.

Then we learned the first four reasons why Jesus' arrest and

trial were absolutely illegal and a mockery of justice:

First four reasons

✓ First, *Jesus was arrested illegally*. He was arrested secretly, by night, on no formal charge of any crime, by those who were to be His judges.

✓ Second, Jesus was illegally subjected to a *secret preliminary examination by night*, contrary to the law.

✓ Third, *the indictment against Jesus was illegal* because the judges themselves brought up an unprovable charge against Jesus without any prior testimony by witnesses.

✓ Fourth, *the trial of Jesus began illegally before sunrise* in order that no one could testify on Jesus' behalf.

Now to continue with this second installment:

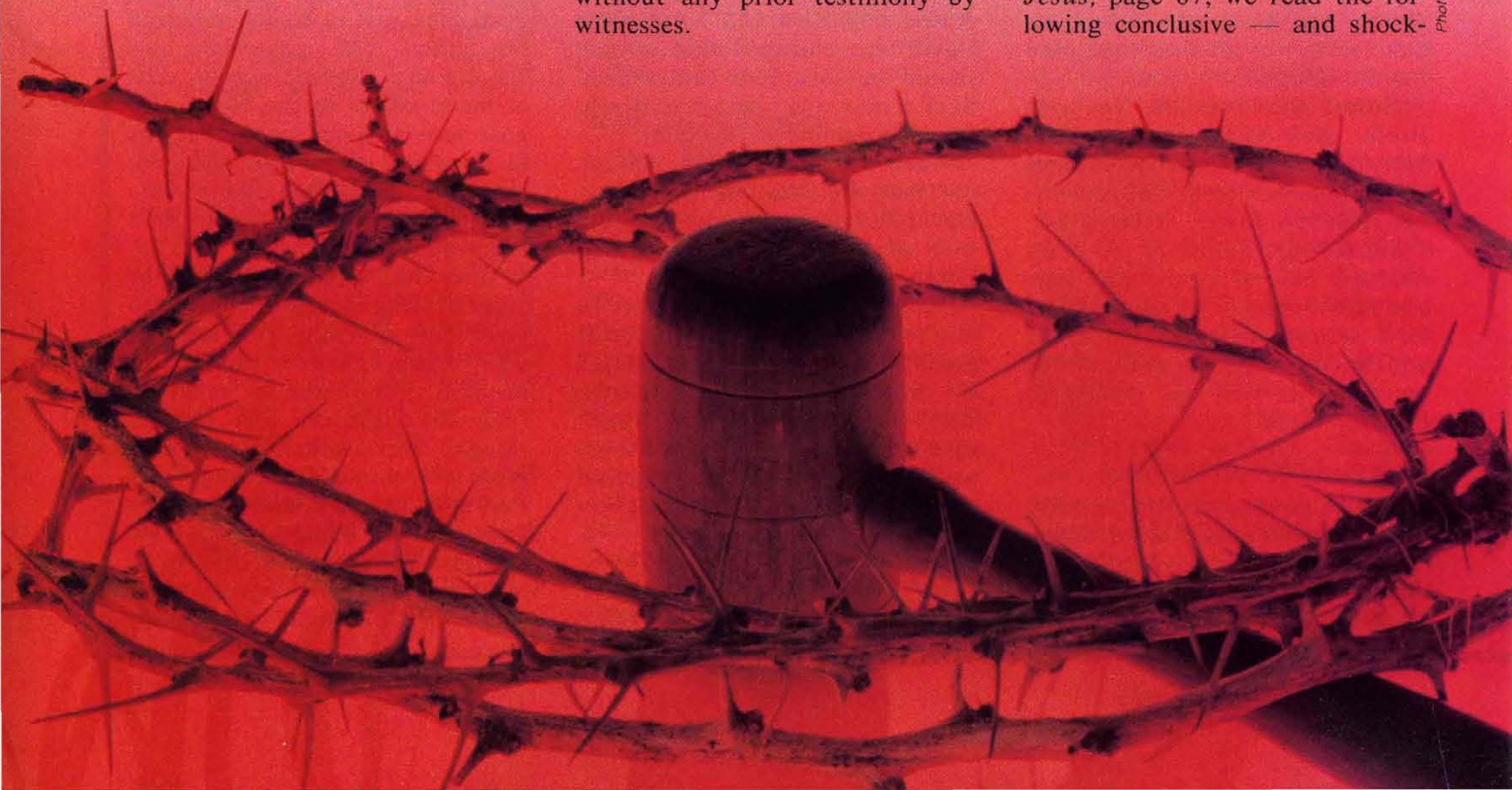
Fifth reason

In the case of Jesus, *the Sanhedrin was illegally convened to try a capital offense on a day before an annual Sabbath*.

Notice why: "They shall not judge on the eve of the Sabbath, nor on any festival," says the *Mishna*, "Sanhedrin" IV, 1.

In Wise's *Martyrdom of Jesus*, page 67, we read the following conclusive — and shock-

Photo by Hal Finch and Warren Watson



ing — evidence: “No court of justice in Israel was permitted to hold sessions on the Sabbath or on any of the seven biblical Holy Days. In cases of capital crime, no trial could be commenced on Friday or the day previous to any Holy Day, because it was not lawful either to adjourn such cases longer than overnight, or to continue them on the Sabbath or Holy Day.”

The opponents of Jesus even violated their law by arresting Jesus on the day before an annual Sabbath. They arrested Him at the beginning of Wednesday in A.D. 31; the first annual Sabbath that year was Thursday.

✓ Sixth reason

The trial of Jesus was illegal because it was concluded in one day.

We read from Jewish law: “A criminal case resulting in the acquittal of the accused may terminate the same day on which the trial began. But if a sentence of death is to be pronounced, it cannot be concluded before the following day” (*Mishna*, “Sanhedrin” IV, 1).

This was to allow sufficient opportunity for any witnesses in support of the accused to present themselves.

The court did not want to allow Jesus this opportunity.

✓ Seventh reason

The indictment against Jesus was false and its use illegal because it was founded upon Jesus' uncorroborated statement. The court pronounced sentence on Jesus with no supporting evidence whatever.

Consider: The only evidence presented by witnesses to the court was given by two false witnesses. But their testimony was not even used by the court in sentencing Jesus to death. Here is what happened:

Two false witnesses testified that Jesus said, “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands” (Mark 14:58).

The Jews used this belated

statement as an indictment against Jesus. But this piece of evidence was not what Jesus said. He never said the words *that is made with hands*. Jesus was not referring to the physical Temple of Herod erected by human hands, but to His body (John 2:19, 21), which would be raised in three days.

Then “the high priest arose and said to Him, ‘Do You answer nothing? What is it that these men testify against You?’ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God’ ” (Matt. 26:62-63).

The question the high priest asked Jesus had nothing to do with the indictment! Jesus was indicted on the false charge that He would destroy the physical Temple and rebuild it in three days’ time. But the court condemned Him on another matter altogether.

Notice the facts. They asked: “‘Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.’”

Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’

Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’

They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death’ ” (verses 63-66).

Jesus was indicted on one charge, tried on another and condemned on His own testimony.

Jesus was not condemned because He said, “Within three days I will build this temple.” He was immediately condemned on the charge of blasphemy.

Here is what the Jewish scholar Maimonides wrote in his book: “We have it as a fundamental principle of our jurisprudence, that no one can bring an accusation against himself. Should a

man make confession of guilt before a legally constituted tribunal, such confession is not to be used against him unless properly attested by two other witnesses” (“Sanhedrin” IV, 2).

Jesus was condemned on His own testimony, even though His testimony was not proved blasphemous. The court didn’t even examine Him according to the law to see whether His statement was blasphemy. They only demanded, “Are you the Son of God?” And He responded: “You’re going to see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

Was this blasphemy? Of course not!

Jesus did not even refer directly to Himself. He merely said: “the son of man.” The court did not seek to prove who the “son of man” was.

They knew, of course, that Jesus meant Himself. For all through His ministry, they came and purred in front of Him, and asked: “‘How long do you keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’” Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe.’”

But as soon as Jesus even gave an indirect statement at the trial, they did not doubt whom He meant by “son of man.”

On this testimony Jesus was condemned despite the scripture in Psalm 110.

Even Mr. Radin admits that Jesus’ testimony was not blasphemous. On pages 248 and 249 he says:

“The ‘blasphemy’ which the Pentateuch mentions is a literal cursing of God or a direct defiance of him. The only pentateuchal reference makes this clear. It is in Leviticus, chapter 24, and the incident which gave rise to the statute indicates the character of the offense of blasphemy in Jewish law. The half-Egyptian had cursed God — the Israelitish God — as under the circumstances of the quarrel there described, he would have been likely enough to do. No such thing could have been charged

against Jesus by his most inveterate enemies.”

Yet the religious leaders did this very thing!

Now consider another violation of law in extracting this testimony from Jesus:

“No attempt is ever made to lead a man on to self-incrimination. Moreover, a voluntary confession on his [the defendant’s] part is not admitted in evidence, and therefore not competent to convict him, unless a legal number of witnesses minutely corroborate his self-accusation” (Mendelsohn, *Criminal Jurisprudence of the Ancient Hebrews*, page 133).

✓ Eighth reason

The condemnation of Jesus was illegal because the merits of the defense were not considered.

When they heard Jesus’ statement, the high priest shouted, “He has spoken blasphemy!”

But the law in Deuteronomy 13:14 says, “Then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently.”

The law in the *Mishna* says, “The judges shall weigh the matter in the sincerity of their conscience” (“Sanhedrin” IV, 5).

✓ Ninth reason

The condemnation of Jesus by part of the Sanhedrin was illegal because those who would have voted against the condemnation of Jesus were not there.

Notice what took place at Jesus’ trial before dawn, according to Mark 14:64: “You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?” And they all condemned Him to be worthy of death.”

It was unanimous. There was no investigation, no examination to see if He did or did not blaspheme. They just used His testimony against Him without further investigation. They all did it immediately, instantaneously, simultaneously. It was mob spirit that condemned Jesus!

Here is what Mendelsohn states of such a procedure: “A simultaneous and unanimous verdict of guilt rendered on the day

of the trial has the effect of an acquittal.”

The verdict against Jesus was simultaneous and unanimous, although the law required at least one of the council to serve as a defense counsel.

The proper method of voting was to have “the judges each in his turn absolve or condemn” (*Mishna*, “Sanhedrin” XV, 5). “The members of the Sanhedrin were seated in the form of a semi-circle at the extremity of which a secretary was placed, whose business it was to record the votes. One of these secretaries recorded the votes in favor of the accused, the other against him,” states the *Mishna*, “Sanhedrin” IV, 3.

“In ordinary cases the judges voted according to seniority, the oldest commencing; in a capital case, the reverse order was followed. That the younger members of the Sanhedrin should not be influenced by the views or the arguments of their more mature, more experienced colleagues, the junior judge was in these cases always the first to pronounce for or against conviction,” says Benny, in *Criminal Code of the Jews*, pp. 73-74.

Furthermore, the high priest rent or tore his clothes at the trial (Mark 14:63, Matt. 26:65). In Leviticus 21:10 the high priest is forbidden to do so: “And he who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes.” See also Leviticus 10:6. He tore his outer garment to stir up emotion, to prejudice others.

The high priest should have remained calm so that no mistake in judgment would be made.

In Jesus’ trial none of these requirements were followed.

Let Wise’s book, *Martyrdom of Jesus*, page 74, explain the law on this point:

“If none of the judges defend the culprit, i.e., all pronounce him guilty, having not defender in the court, the verdict guilty was invalid and sentence of death could not be executed.”

Jesus was condemned contrary to the law!

Now notice which members of the Sanhedrin were missing during the trial.

Take the case of Joseph of Arimathea. After Jesus was crucified, we read from Luke 23:50-51, Authorized Version, “And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just.” The word *counsellor* is admitted by all hands to represent a member of the Sanhedrin. “The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them” — and neither had Nicodemus.

In Mark’s account we learn that all those present condemned Jesus instantaneously and unanimously.

But since the night meeting was illegal, Joseph of Arimathea was not present. The opponents of Jesus wanted to make sure he could not defend Jesus.

Think of the utter lack of any fairness in this trial!

Tenth reason

The sentence against Jesus was pronounced in a place forbidden by law.

After the mob seized Christ, they led Him away, after having been at Annas’, and brought Him into the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. The trial of Jesus wasn’t held in court! Read Luke 22:54: “Then, having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house.”

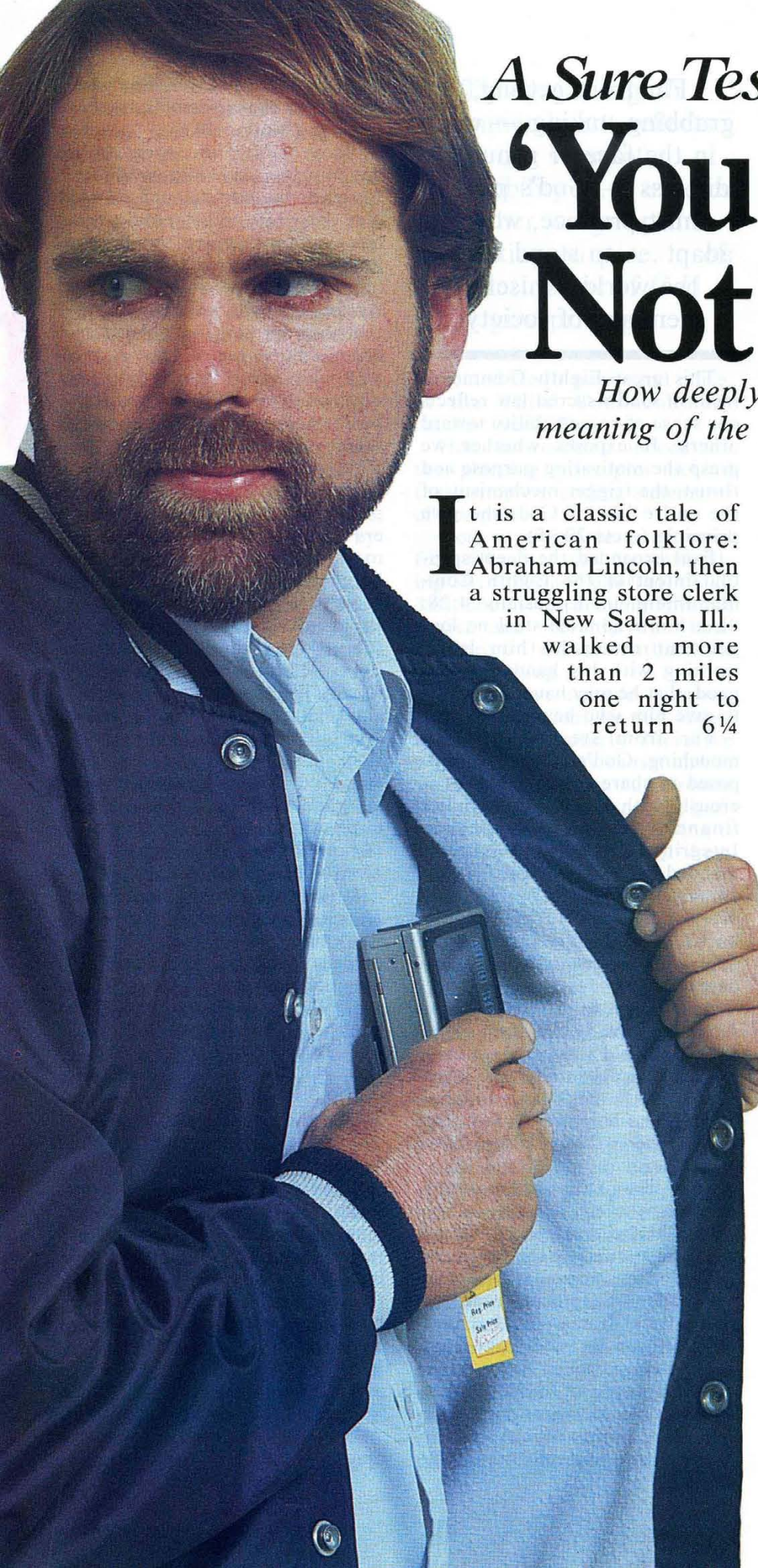
The court building wasn’t legally to be opened until after sunrise.

According to the law, “A sentence of death can be pronounced only so long as the Sanhedrin holds its sessions in the appointed place,” says Maimonides, in his book, Section XIV.

The Talmud says, “After leaving the hall Gazith [the court] no sentence of death can be passed upon anyone soever” (From Bab. Talmud, “Abodah Tarath” or “Of Idolatry,” ch. 1, fol. 8).

A sentence of death may be passed only in a legal court, not in

(Continued on page 26)



A Sure Test of Integrity!

'You Shall Not Steal'

How deeply do you understand the meaning of the Eighth Commandment?

By K. Neil Earle

It is a classic tale of American folklore: Abraham Lincoln, then a struggling store clerk in New Salem, Ill., walked more than 2 miles one night to return 6¼

cents to a lady he'd accidentally overcharged.

Interesting that this anecdote adorns the reputation of "Honest Abe" Lincoln, perhaps the most beloved of America's presidents. To this day the name "Abraham Lincoln" is synonymous with character and integrity.

Integrity — the word implies soundness, honesty, wholeness, the deep inner commitment to lasting values that inspired the same Lincoln to spend 14 difficult years paying off debts until he was totally clear. Character truly does bring rewards, ultimately.

Yet you and I live in a corrupt society that sneers at the old credo: "Honesty is the best policy"!

But honesty still *is* the best policy.

A precious statute

In this day and age of government scandals, corporate corruption, legal loopholes, payola and blurred lines of morality, we desperately need to recapture the spirit and intent of a law originally seared into sheer stone by the flaming finger of God Himself. This precept, thundered from the crags of Mt. Sinai by a booming voice that literally shook the sinews of the people who heard it, is a terse statement that, if applied, would overnight transform the rotten bedrock of our society. It is

expressed in the simple but sublime words, "You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15).

As these words reverberated across the natural amphitheatre of the Sinai region, shaking the Israelites below with fear, the eternal God already knew the fearsome penalties that the violation of just this one law would exact. Some 700 years later the same omniscient but invisible King of Israel roused His prophet Hosea to cry out: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed" (Hos. 4:1-2).

The result? "Therefore the land will mourn" (verse 3).

On His throne in the third heaven, the mighty spirit personality who searches and probes each human heart — this brilliant Superbeing — blazes with anger every day at the violations of His precious statute, "You shall not steal" (Ps. 7:11).

How does it apply?

It is not just the self-styled benefactors, the politicians who hold high office and fatten themselves at public expense, who incur God's righteous wrath, though they bear their full share of responsibility in His eyes. No, not just them.

God is concerned, too, about the shoplifters, the padders of expense accounts, the specialized accountants leeching corporations, the pilferers of vending machines that in malfunctioning spew out unpaid-for items.

Even more minutely, God scans the hearts of those who return undercharged items to supermarkets, as well as those who, instead, salve their consciences with weak-kneed excuses. Nothing escapes the exacting inspection of those eyes that are "like a flame of fire" (Rev. 2:18).

Do we grasp it? Perhaps no other commandment tests, probes and sifts our inner character as does this one, with its simple but penetrating words, "You shall not steal"!

Far from getting,
grabbing, taking — even
in the face of genuine
distress — God's people
must produce, work,
adapt . . . to stand before
the world as useful
members of society.

This great Eighth Commandment of God's sacred law reflects our sense of responsibility toward others. It exposes whether we grasp the motivating purpose and thrust, the trigger mechanism, of the entire law of God, the give principle (Acts 20:35).

Paul expanded the deep, spiritual intent of the Eighth Commandment in Ephesians 4:28: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."

Far from stealing or even mooching, God's people are supposed to share their surplus generously with others. This implies financial and career success. Integrity. A Christian is commanded to be a good, solid, steady employee (Eph. 6:5-7). Yet how often nowadays in this "laid-back" society do people sponge off friends or relatives for weeks on end?

And "borrowing" — whether record albums, books, lawn mowers, household devices or money — even this falls under the jurisdiction of the Eighth Commandment. "The borrower," God tells us in Proverbs 22:7, "is servant to the lender."

The chronically unemployed layabout who sits around waiting to "get his head together" instead of actively pounding the pavement calling on businesses or lining up corporations' numbers from the phone book dramatizes the basic deterioration in character that would have appalled some hard-working people of earlier times. Such people lack integrity. The Eighth Commandment means nothing to them (Rom. 3:18).

Even God Himself would be hard-pressed to shake them from their lethargy (Matt. 5:13).

Some self-made men (who worship their creators assiduously) enjoy lambasting such people. Yet the white-collar middle-class achievers are among the biggest crooks of all! Studies show that more than 90 percent of average Americans will admit privately that they are guilty of at least one crime calling for at least a one-year jail term! Compromising one's conscience is easy in a big-business, depersonalized, faceless society like ours.

"Shoplifters justify themselves by complaining about store overpricing (and vice versa); tax-evaders complain about the government misusing 'their money'; hotel patrons assume that the towel, silverware and Gideon Bible are part of the hotel bill (even though the Bible they take says, 'Thou shalt not steal'; they're just 'borrowing' it). Insurance claims are invariably padded (since 'it's coming to me'); inside stock tips are 'fringe benefits'; and a corporate price conspiracy is 'good business.' There is a euphemism for every crime" (*Crime Can Be Stopped — Here's How!*, pp. 14-15).

(*Crime Can Be Stopped — Here's How!*, a booklet detailing the causes and solutions to the modern curse of crime, may be obtained free upon request from the Worldwide Church of God. See the inside front cover for our mailing address nearest you.)

Far-reaching principles

Get the picture? If we aren't careful we can succumb to this seductive society with its easy, self-justifying ways and end up violating the Eighth Commandment many times a day. Far from getting, grabbing, taking, extorting and embezzling — even in the face of genuine distress — God's people must produce, work, adapt, adjust, use resourcefulness in order to stand before the world as useful members of society.

Notice II Thessalonians 3:7-8: "For we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat any-

one's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you."

Now that's integrity! The Eighth Commandment, indeed, civilizes society. It establishes the principle of respect for private property. No wonder God reacted in righteous fury to the seamy spectacle of King Ahab of ancient Israel, who ruptured all codes of decency and common sense by grabbing land through cold-blooded murder from a careful, responsible citizen named Naboth. Read God's blistering condemnation in I Kings 21:20-24!

By contrast, God blessed the generous, statesmanlike attitude of Abraham, a man untainted by materialistic greed, when Abraham offered his nephew Lot the choicest real estate as a peace-making pact (Gen. 13:1-12). In the end, as always, godly principles prevailed and steady, faithful Abraham ended up bailing out his somewhat materialistic nephew.

This should help us grasp another telling point about the Eighth Commandment: It reacts and relates to all the other of God's Ten Commandments. Stealing usually begins as covetousness, a violation of the Tenth Commandment (Ex. 20:17). Greed causes us to perpetrate physically or mentally violent actions to grab what isn't legally ours (Jas. 4:1); this shatters the principle of the Sixth Commandment (Ex. 20:13). We will easily lie to others, if not to ourselves, in covering up our real intents and motives, thus breaking the Ninth Commandment (verse 16).

Selfishly embezzling to attempt to satisfy what is, at its roots, a spiritual hunger is nothing more than spiritual adultery (verse 14) against God, our true sustainer. Following Satan's *get* way dishonors our spiritual Father in heaven, thus breaking the Fifth Commandment (verse 12), and elevates the self above the true God, thus violating the First and Second Commandments (Ex. 20:3-6). We wouldn't seriously entertain the thought of stealing at all if we deeply

This great Eighth
Commandment reflects
our sense of
responsibility . . . It exposes
whether we grasp the
motivating purpose . . . of
the entire law of God,
the give principle . . .

respected God's power and office, as the Third Commandment teaches (verse 7).

How far-reaching indeed are the piercing principles behind these simple-sounding statements of Scripture!

God says people even steal from Him, not only by withholding His tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:8), but also by denying Him the praise and worship due Him (I Chron. 16:29). Unthankfulness is stealing.

Without an attitude of reverence toward God, we can resent ceasing particularly lucrative work before Friday sunset and so steal holy time from our Creator (Ex. 20:8-11). We should be generous with the Sabbath, giving it a wide berth (Isa. 58:13). Anything else is stealing.

Two courses of action

Yes, there is far, far more to the Eighth Commandment than first meets the eye. It is a fearsome, searching spotlight that probes into the nooks and crannies of our deepest motives.

The student tempted to cheat on an exam faces the consequences of trying to evade the penalties of the Eighth Commandment. What to do? Cheat, and pass to a grade or position he's unqualified for and run the risk of failing hopelessly (that is, if he isn't caught first!), or take the tough way out. Risk failing, face the music and try harder next time.

The first way seems easy. It might be — "for a season," that is (Heb. 11:25, Authorized Version). The second way is the very essence of character — facing mistakes, confessing them, doing

better next time (I John 1:8-9). Besides, circumstances may work out better than anticipated. Transfers, moves, cancellations, human error, sickness — all may conspire to help him anyway. Remember: The blessings of obedience are as sure as the penalties for violation.

The housewife finding her bank balance in error on the credit side is also confronted by the sifting dynamics of the Eighth Commandment. "Why square it with the bank?" a voice inside urges. "They don't do you any favors!" Yet she is contemplating the erosion of some precious built inner character, the only reason for her sojourn on this earth (Eccl. 12:13). Why should a computer's error rob her of a literally irreplaceable commodity — deep, crystal-clear character? See how it works?

Be vigilant

Thankfully, most of God's people do a valiant job resisting the carnal enticements to trample over God's great Eighth Commandment. Otherwise He would never bless our increase in the service of His Work. Many of God's people already reflect the *give* way and are co-workers in an enterprise dedicated to giving.

We should never relax our vigilance. We shouldn't let this insidious society sap our commitment to the deep, inner principles behind the laws of God.

Selfish taking, in any way, shape or form, is the direct antithesis of the character of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Any fiddling with such dubious ventures as gambling, any incessant fixation with the vagaries of the stock market, cuts across the spirit and thrust of the Eighth Commandment.

Viewed positively, the Eighth Commandment guards our relationship with others, urges us to produce and accomplish, stirs us to service and usefulness. Now we should know why God Himself descended from heaven to thunder that stark, forthright sentence, "You shall not steal"! □

Fervent Prayer Avails Much!

*Elijah's faithful prayers received stupendous,
powerful answers from God! Do yours? Here's how they can.*

By Jerold W. Aust

Prayer is many things to many people in this world — a silent moment of meditation, an occasional blessing on a meal, a “thought for the day,” a few words from a clergyman at some public event or a raving, emotional torrent that pours forth from a sweating tent evangelist.

But not so for God's people!

Our glorious, merciful God has shown us the what, why and how of prayer. He has revealed the mechanics of prayer and the awesome, supernatural results available through prayer. God's Word is filled with powerful examples of how God answered the prayers of His people.

Abraham prayed for Abimelech and God healed Abimelech's family and servants (Gen. 20:17-18). Moses moved God to change His mind about destroying ancient Israel (Ex. 32:9-14). David stayed close to God through prayer and was made king over God's people (I Sam. 13:13-14, 15:28, 16:11-13).

Daniel prayed himself from a human “lion's den” into a real one, and then prayed himself out (Dan. 6:4-5, 10, 23). Daniel's three young associates, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, prayed to God and were delivered after

being cast into a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than the manufacturer's instructions said to heat it! God, for their troubles, even joined them inside the furnace (Dan. 3:14-30).

All these are remarkable examples of believing prayer!

Yet the apostle James, in James 5:16-18, highlights one specific example of prayer especially for our benefit today — for us who are helping fulfill the end-time commission of Elijah (Mal. 4:5-6). It is the example of Elijah himself!

The story of Elijah's believing, heartfelt prayer should take on much deeper meaning for us in these last days.

God prophesied of three “Elijahs.” The first was the man Elijah, who was the pattern or type of the two following. John the Baptist was the second “Elijah” (Matt. 17:12-13). And in this end time, Herbert W. Armstrong supported by God's true Church is fulfilling God's commission as the third “Elijah” (Mal. 4:5-6, Matt. 17:11).

Let's look at the powerful role prayer played in the life of the original Elijah.

Elijah of old

James capsulized the original Elijah's example in James 5:16-18: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did

not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain . . .”

At first glance, we could miss the significance of this shortened account and move on. That would be unfortunate, because when we refer to this dynamic Old Testament example, we see more deeply the importance of what James synthesized for us.

Let's watch Elijah's tremendous story unfold.

Fourteen miracles and a footrace

Would it be possible for God to perform 14 separate miracles in your life, one after the other, and still have you act as if you never knew the Almighty? That's what Elijah did. Oh yes, he did! Why?

This is an important point to remember: God wants us to know that the word *mighty* is not spelled, so to speak, *f-l-e-s-h*, but *H-o-l-y S-p-i-r-i-t* (II Cor. 10:4)! Elijah needed sleep, food, shelter and clothing, just as we do today. The statement of James 5:16-18 is set against the backdrop of normal human frailty.

No longer can we excuse ourselves from expecting mighty results through believing prayer. Elijah was no more superhuman than any of us and he received such results. Here's how.

Elijah experienced 14 distinct miracles:

1) Elijah proclaimed to King

Ahab 3½ years of drought. It came to pass (I Kings 17:1).

2) Elijah was sustained on bread and flesh by ravens (verses 2-6).

3) God sustained Elijah and the widow and her son on meal and oil (verses 8-16).

4) After Elijah prayed about the widow's deceased son, God revived the boy (verses 17-24).

Now for an interlude. King Ahab instructed his house governor, Obadiah, to search with him for this elusive Elijah. The king wanted relief from the devastating drought. This helped set the stage for God, through Elijah, to turn the people's hearts back to God (I Kings 18:1-29).

5) God glorified Himself, after a short prayer from Elijah, by consuming with fire the burnt sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust and the water in the trench.

Elijah took advantage of the situation by instructing the repentant Israelites to help him slay 850 pagan prophets. This they did (verses 30-40).

6) This miracle is the other one James mentions in James 5:16-18. Elijah prayed again, and the rains came. What an incredible sight that must have been (I Kings 18:41-45). And what a desperate need there was for the rain.

7) Elijah, no longer a young man, outran King Ahab's royal steeds to Jezreel, a distance of about 16 miles (verse 46). Take heart, joggers.

In I Kings 19, Jezebel enters as the primary protagonist in the story, threatening Elijah with death (verse 2). Pay careful attention, now: "And when he [Elijah] saw that, he arose and ran for his life" (verse 3). Elijah feared for his very life!

This is, in part, what God inspired James to excerpt for our encouragement — not to gloat over Elijah's weaknesses, but to show us we all are built alike and that God works through weak human instruments to show Himself mighty through us. God's

strength is made perfect in our weakness (II Cor. 12:9).

So we read, "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions [that is, similar experiences of suffering and trials] as we are" (Jas. 5:17, Authorized Version). That fundamental point is now established. Let's move on:

8-9) Twice God supernaturally provided food for Elijah to eat, not to mention an angel to tell Elijah to eat it (I Kings 19:4-8).

10) Elijah "went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb [Sinai], the mountain of God" (verse 8). Incredible!

Bible students know that the number 40 in Scripture signifies trial or testing. Elijah was about to receive his final exam from the Eternal, likely precipitated by his flight from Jezebel. Running from Jezebel (the woman who would be king!) exposed his momentary lack of faith in God, which evidently resulted from Elijah's growing idea of self-importance (compare I Kings 19:10 with Deuteronomy 8:10-20).

Elijah's vision blurred. He forgot who performed these marvelous miracles through him. That's why Elijah presumptuously avoided God's incisive questions that followed.

God "said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' So he said, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life'" (verses 9-10).

God did not argue with Elijah, but instructed him to stand upon the mount. God intended to pass by while creating cataclysmic phenomena, hoping, in His mercy, to clear Elijah's accumulating carnal cobwebs (verses 11-12). For God loved Elijah.

These phenomena — a strong wind, an earthquake and a fire — constituted miracles 11, 12 and 13.

God then repeated His question, asking Elijah why he was there. Perhaps because of Elijah's embarrassment, or maybe because he was still momentarily blinded by his own importance, Elijah answered God exactly as before (verses 13-14).

Again, God did not argue with Elijah. He simply directed Elijah to go anoint Hazael as the king of Syria, Jehu as the king of Israel and Elisha as prophet in his own office. These three would finish the commission God effectively started through Elijah (verses 15-17).

This likely was a mighty test for Elijah to perform.

14) This miracle helps show God's thoroughness. All along, though Elijah didn't realize it, God left nothing to chance. God said, "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (verse 18).

God provided Himself these 7,000 to begin restoring His ways to Israel. The people would be protected by two heads of state, Hazael and Jehu, and the religious head, Elisha. Let us give a little more credit to our omniscient Sustainer.

Elijah's prayers answered

Please do not misunderstand: Elijah's faithful prayers were answered. The apostle James highlights only two of Elijah's prayers. There were more. We've seen them.

Why were they answered? For the same reasons yours will be answered.

You, if you are a true Christian, obey God's will, as Elijah did (I John 5:14-15). Like Elijah, you keep God's commandments (I John 3:22). Obedience proves one's faith in God (Jas. 2:18). "But without faith it is impossible to please Him [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb.

(Continued on page 25)

Are You Practicing Pure

This article is for widows and about widows. But it is also for everyone else, because everyone needs to know how to better fulfill a vitally important responsibility.

By Ronald D. Kelly

Almost 2,000 years ago a very old woman, a widow well past 100 years of age, became an encouraging example for all generations that would follow. Her name was Anna.

Let's read about her in Luke 2:36-38:

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Notice the emphasis: She "served God with *fastings* and *prayers*." At first, that might not seem like much — but it actually is one of the most important ways to serve God.

Stop and think: Through the fasting and prayers of all God's people, God could well be moved to add to His Work hundreds or thousands of co-workers and tithe payers. The amount of money we each have may be small, but God can call those who can give more — or call so many that even small contributions, added together, total the millions of dollars needed to do God's Work today.

Older people like Anna, whose families are grown, whose physical strength may have waned, whose incomes do not permit large financial contributions, are

a vital part of God's Work today.

The poor widow whose story is recorded in Mark 12:41-44 — the lady who gave the "widow's mite" — is another prime example of attitude and service. This widow had her heart so much in God's Work that she was willing to sacrifice and go without so she could be a part of it. When a widow, or anyone, gives of his or her need, it is pleasing to God and He will reward this kind of serving, humble attitude.

Never underestimate the power and might of God. He is able to take the smallest offering and accomplish the greatest possible amount of work. As Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong has written, when one dollar is contributed to God's Work, it reaches many hundreds of people when it is used to purchase radio and television time. So, although your offerings may be small, a *tremendous amount* is being accomplished through them.

Tabitha's example

Another fine example of a widow's service is found in Acts 9:36-40: "At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and

went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up."

Here was a zealous widow who was so well-known and loved because of her service that God saw fit to resurrect her from the dead! This was a powerful witness and many believed because of it. Dorcas spent her time serving others. She saw to it that the needy were well clothed.

Dorcas was not as old and infirm as Anna. She was still able to spend much of her time sewing clothing and caring for others. Because of her tremendous zeal and her attitude, her story is preserved in the Word of God. It is an example all widows today can follow!

Many widows can teach

Notice, in Titus 2:4-5, another important function a widow can serve: "That they [the older women] admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."

You widows or older women have a responsibility to teach teenage girls as well as newly married young wives. This is not the kind of teaching that a minister would do from the pulpit. But

Religion?



Widows can contribute much to God's Work through prayer and personal service. The Bible instructs older women to give the benefits of their skills to younger women by teaching.



this is the kind of personal instruction, encouragement, inspiration and example that a widow can give right in her own home or as she visits with younger women.

Service a two-way street

Service, of course, works two ways. As we have seen, widows can make a significant contribution to the Work and to individuals. But God also wants us to know there is a great deal to be done *for* the widows.

Some of us have grandmothers or mothers who are widows. But even if we have no widows in our immediate families, there are dozens or scores of mothers and grandmothers "in Christ."

The very heart and core of a Christian life is summed up in James 1:27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to

keep oneself unspotted from the world."

Yes, each one of us has a particular responsibility toward the widows, just as the widows have their responsibility to serve.

The whole reason for living a Christian life is to be of service!

Acts 6:1-4 relates how the office of deacon in God's Church was actually inspired because of the need to serve widows.

Care within families

Those of us who have in our families elderly widows who are members of God's Church have much to be thankful for. Extra effort should be taken to insure proper care is given to the elderly.

The apostle Paul said we should treat "the elder women as mothers" and "honor widows that are widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:2-3, Authorized Version). "Widows indeed" refers to widows who

don't have any means of support. In many cases families are able to provide financial aid for members of their own families, thus allowing the Church more opportunity to take care of those who have no one to help.

If you have a widow in your family, give special thanks for her and honor to her. Be certain she has financial resources to meet her needs. Check to see that her appliances are properly working, that her furnace is properly vented, that her air conditioner or fan will meet cooling needs during hot summer months. If she has a car, see that it is kept in proper repair.

Even though it may not always be necessary to provide substantial monthly financial support, there are scores of "little" things that family members can do. A grandson can mow the lawn. A granddaughter can keep up the washing and ironing. Working

together draws the family closer. Visiting is important.

The Church plan to help

God gives much instruction about support for the needy in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Special financial provision for the elderly, the widows, the injured, the fatherless and other needy persons was incorporated into the civil statutes of Old Testament Israel, in the tithing system. Let's read about it in Deuteronomy 14:28-29, AV:

"At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."

This is what we today call the *third tithe*. The *first tithe*, or 10 percent of one's income or increase, is God's, which He uses for His Work. There is also what we call the *second tithe*. Second tithe enables families to observe God's annual festivals, including a marvelous trip each year to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Here in Deuteronomy we see a special or third tithe, which is neither for the Work of the Church nor for the festivals, but for a special class of people — the needy, especially the widows and orphans.

How does the third tithe work?

How is this tithe paid or collected? It is not an annual tithe as the first and second tithes are. Rather, it is a tithe collected two years out of every seven.

When God led Israel to the promised land, He gave them not only the Ten Commandments by which they should live, but also an entire set of laws about health, family, farming, finance — every facet of life.

As the Israelites were to be a basically agricultural society that would use the land to graze cattle, plant orchards and vineyards and produce food crops, God instructed them in the best care of the land. Israel was to plant and take produce from the land for a period of six years. But every seventh year was to be a Sabbath of rest for the land. The land was to lie fallow with a cover crop to replenish the nutrients taken out by six years of farming.

This third tithe to help the needy was to come from the increase of the third and sixth years during each seven-year cycle.

But how does that work today? In ancient Israel, the civil law set the same seven-year cycle for everyone. All kept a Sabbath of the land, and after seven such Sabbaths for the land (a period of 49 years), a jubilee year was proclaimed — the 50th year.

In God's Church today, people have been converted at different times. And the Church is not a civil government having control of or title to the land. Mr. Armstrong has, therefore, established for all members today a consistent policy for the payment of third tithe.

Here is how it should be done: Since the knowledge of tithing and the willingness to obey God's law should come together, the starting point for counting the seven-year cycles should be when the knowledge of this truth on tithing comes to one's attention. For some it is at the time of baptism, for others it is long before.

The third tithe was customarily saved from Feast of Tabernacles to Feast of Tabernacles in the third and sixth years. Of course, in the Southern Hemisphere, where the agricultural seasons are reversed, it might be more convenient to count from the Passover season.

So when the knowledge comes or when a person is baptized, he or she should count from the nearest Feast of Tabernacles. The first and second years would pass and then, beginning from the Feast in year three, third tithe

should be paid. And again in year six. The seventh year is a year of release, so from year six it would then be four years until the next third-tithe year.

God's people are able to plan in advance to properly budget for these times. In so doing God's Church is always able to care for the truly needy, and we all share together in the keeping of God's law and the blessing of caring for the widows and needy.

Special service possible

Widows who are supported by the third tithe are many times able to be of service to members. During the time of the apostle Paul there was a special enrollment of widows who were of great help to the Work of the Church in that age.

Notice the qualifications for serving in this special enrollment: "Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work" (I Tim. 5:9-10).

Not every widow in the Church could serve in this special enrollment; she had to, first of all, be 60 years of age. All her children would have been grown and perhaps married or away from home. Also, an elderly widow would present no kind of inappropriate appearance as she traveled in a small group to serve the brethren of the Church.

But notice the other qualifications! She had to be a dedicated and sincere woman. She couldn't show concern only for herself. She needed to enjoy having company and serving in the home. She had to have a sincere desire to diligently follow all God's laws.

In the Church of God today, we do not have this special role of widows to travel with the ministry. Most of God's ministers are married and have their own fami-



lies. Ministers' wives today travel with them to visit in the local churches. But this does not mean there is no need for special services widows can perform.

A widow's service should not be restricted to the ministry alone. Widows who have these qualifications can be of great service in each local congregation. In fact, every widow ought to try to live up to the standards and requirements of the special early New Testament class of widows.

What about younger widows?

There are times when a younger woman with children will be widowed as a result of the untimely death of her mate. Naturally, for some period of time a young widow must go through an adjustment. She will probably have to return to the job market if she has not been employed outside the home. There are literally thousands of women who have

had to do just that and have been successful in rearing their children and providing a proper living for them.

However, there are times when a young widow realizes the need for children to have a father. And she may certainly have a desire to have a husband. It is not wrong for these young widows to want to marry. The apostle Paul said: "Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after Satan" (verses 14-15).

A young widow who is thoroughly converted will put her situation in God's hands. Far too often, a widow will simply "seek a husband." Sometimes she will pay no attention to the advice of God's ministers and consequently will find herself in a very unhappy second marriage.

Every young widow should do all within her power to make provisions for herself and her children. If she is diligent and faithful to God's Word, God will supply all her needs. If she stays close to God by patient and constant prayer, and if it is God's will, God will supply the proper head of the family to be a husband and stepfather.

The goal of a young widow should not be marriage — it should be to qualify herself for the Kingdom of God! Her goal is the same as for any Christian. In this physical life she must grow and overcome, which may mean simply, as much as she can, fulfilling the needs of her children.

An active and important part

God has a great deal to say in His Word about concern and care for widows, but He also gives instruction on special help the widows can offer in their families, in God's Church and to God's Work in fasting and prayer.

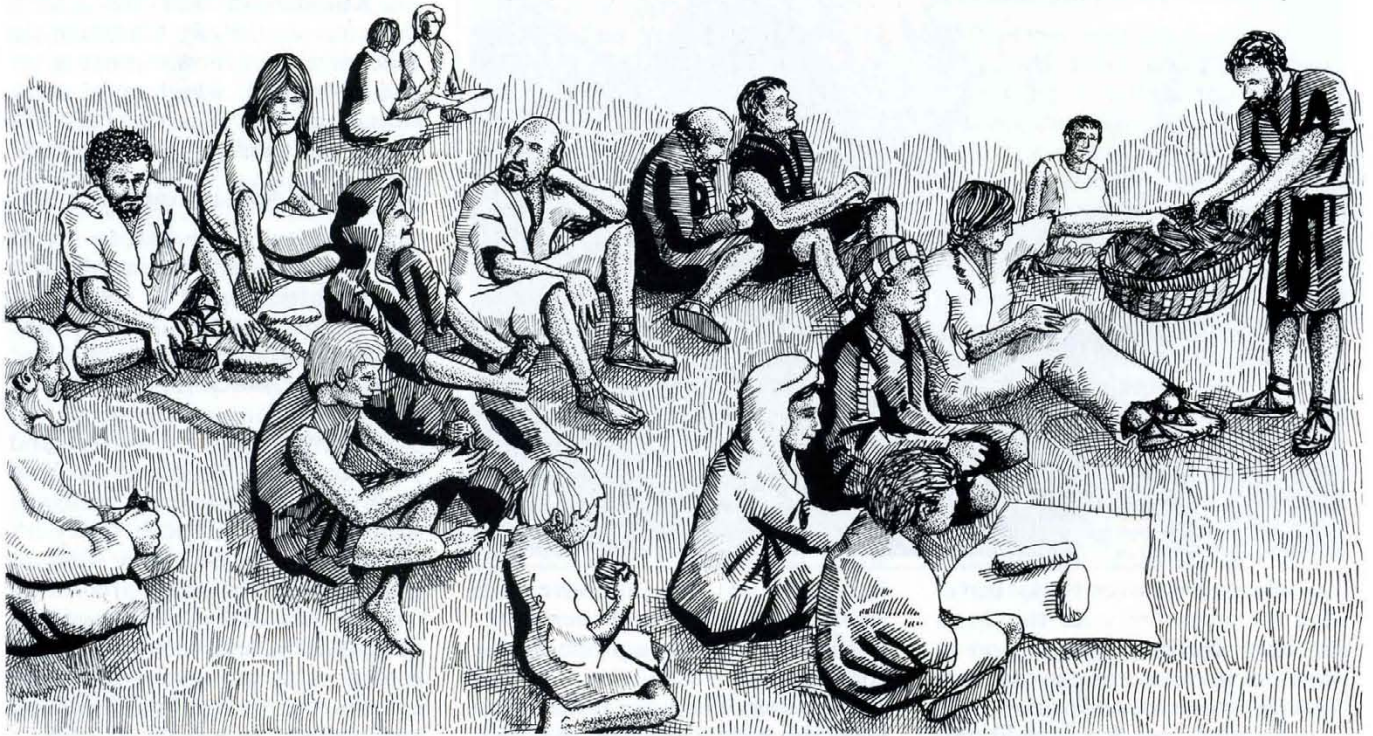
Widows play an active and important part in the Church of God. There are several thousand widows in the Church today. A few are young and may want to remarry. A majority are older, past 60 years of age, but are still able to serve in a variety of ways. A few who are even older can continue to serve through fasting and prayer.

The main point is that all widows are special to God! Members of God's Church should make every effort to serve and help the widows, whether by third tithe to help support them, by visiting to encourage them or by serving their physical needs.

And if you are a widow, realize how important you are in God's plan. You may only be able to give your widow's mite, but you can cook and sew for others who have need or you can always serve God with your heartfelt prayers.

When Christ returns, widows, too, will be transformed into powerful spirit beings, members of God's very Family, and will rule and reign with Christ in the government of God on earth. □

STORIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT



Chapter 15

Feeding the 4,000

By Shirley King Johnson

The gospel accounts do not tell us all the details of the tours that Jesus made as He took the Gospel to mankind, or of the regular trips He made to Jerusalem to keep the Holy Days.

We next pick up events of His ministry with mention of a tour into the area of Tyre and Sidon.

While He was staying in a private home near Tyre, a Canaanite woman came to

Him and asked Him to cast a demon out of her daughter (Matt. 15:21-22, Mark 7:24-26).

A gentile shows her faith

“Lord, son of David, take pity on me!” she cried, kneeling at His feet. Jesus

Sitting in orderly ranks on the ground, 4,000 men and their families were fed, thanks to a miracle by Jesus, from only seven loaves of bread and a few dried fish.

Jesus sighed. "Why does this wicked generation constantly request a sign? . . . you'll be given no sign except one . . . the sign of Jonah." Rising, He nodded to the apostles and they left . . .

seemed reluctant at first to grant her petition, but the woman humbly worshiped Him and continued to plead for His intervention. Some of the apostles stepped forward to remove her from the house because of the scene she was making.

Motioning away the apostles, Jesus spoke to her at last. "I'm sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," He said, testing her faith.

Refusing to give up, she flung herself on the floor at His feet. "Help me!" she cried. "Please! Please!"

"Is it right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs?" Jesus asked. He may have posed this question with a smile. He knew that the woman was acquainted with the term *dog*, which many Jews used when referring to gentiles. Christ knew, and the woman must have sensed, that God's mercy included all mankind.

The woman raised her tear-stained face. "No, Lord, it is not." Then, suddenly, hope came into her eyes. "But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

Jesus gave a little laugh. "You made a good reply." He took both her hands and raised her to her feet. "You are a woman of great faith. Your request is granted."

"Thank you, Lord!" She went away and found that at the very moment Jesus had spoken those words, her daughter had been delivered from the demon and made well.

Another multitude gathers

Leaving that region, Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee, where He boarded a boat with the 12 apostles. They crossed to the region of Decapolis, a federation of 10 gentile cities.

A crowd of hundreds began to

accumulate when news of Jesus' presence was made known. They brought suffering friends and relatives to Jesus, laying at His feet the lame, blind, dumb and those ill with many diseases. He healed them all. The crowd praised the God of Israel.

The people continued to come by the hundreds until a multitude of thousands had gathered before Him in the plain. At the end of three days Jesus summoned the apostles to Him and asked where they could get enough food to feed the throng, who by now had run out of provisions.

The apostles produced seven loaves of bread and a few dried fish. Jesus prayed over the food and gave it to them to distribute. Four thousand men and their families were fed (Matt. 15:32-38, Mark 8:1-9). When everyone had finished, the apostles gathered seven baskets of leftovers.

Religious adversaries arrive

After the meal on the plain was over, Jesus dismissed the multitude and He and the apostles boarded the boat and crossed the Sea of Galilee to Magdala on the western shore.

When Jesus had been there a few days an august group of Pharisees and Sadducees arrived from Jerusalem to confront Him (Matt. 16:1-4, Mark 8:11-12). The Sadducees differed from the Pharisees in that they rejected the traditional interpretations of the law and would not accept any oral law as a supplement to the written law. They denied the doctrine of the resurrections, however.

Christ faced both these groups with calm dignity as they gathered before the platform in the synagogue to address

“You should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
Then they understood that He meant they must not be deceived
by the doctrines of the religious parties of the day.

Him. “Give us a miracle,” their spokesman said. “Show us a sign from heaven.”

Jesus sighed. “Why does this wicked generation constantly request a sign? I can tell you this — you’ll be given no sign except one, and that is the sign of Jonah.” Rising, He nodded to the apostles and they left the synagogue.

Beware the leaven of the Pharisees

Heading to the seashore, they boarded the boat and set sail for Bethsaida.

As they relaxed in the boat the apostles grew hungry. They had no food on board except for one loaf of bread that Simon had brought along (Mark 8:14). It had been a gift of an admiring follower and, small though it was, Simon shared it with Thomas and Matthew, who were sitting beside him.

“Some of us are getting hungry,” Judas said accusingly to Simon as they prepared to land near Bethsaida.

“There wasn’t enough for all of us,” replied Simon, his face flushing crimson.

When everyone was ashore Jesus said: “Gather around, please. I have something to say. I want you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herod.” His tone meant that all was not well.

“Now we’re going to get it!” someone whispered.

“We sure are,” said another. “It’s because we didn’t bring any bread.”

Jesus looked from face to face. “You men of little faith! Why are you concerned about food? Don’t you remember the five loaves that fed 5,000 men? How many baskets were left over afterward?”

“Twelve,” several voices responded (Matt. 16:5-12, Mark 8:13-21).

“When I divided seven loaves and fed

4,000, how many baskets did you gather afterward?”

“Seven.”

“Why do you not understand? You should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Then they understood that He meant they must not be deceived by the doctrines of the religious parties of the day.

A blind man is healed

Moving on into the village of Bethsaida, they bought food and stopped for a meal. As they were eating, a trio of men came up the dusty road; the men led a blind man. They inquired uncertainly for Jesus of Nazareth and He stepped forward.

“Lord, will you heal his blindness?” asked one. “Please be merciful to him” (Mark 8:22).

Jesus took the blind man’s hand. “Certainly. Let’s move out of the village.” Leading the man along, they came to the last house on the road.

Jesus spit lightly on His fingertips and touched the man’s eyelids. “What do you see?” Jesus asked.

The man looked straight ahead in a troubled stare. “I see trees walking.”

Glancing back, Jesus saw that the man’s friends, who had followed at a discreet distance, now approached. He touched the eyelids again. “Now, what do you see?”

“I see men walking! I can see! Thank you, Lord!”

“I must ask you to go to your home and not tell anyone about this,” Jesus said.

“Yes, sir. Whatever you say.” But as his friends arrived the man shouted: “I can see! I can see!” It was apparent he could not contain his happiness and that the miracle would become widely known. □

The Feast of Unleavened Bread— Our Part in God's Master Plan

Prepared by Richard H. Sedliacik

Last month we learned that the Passover, the first of God's commanded annual festivals (Lev. 23), is the beginning, the very first step, in God's great master plan of salvation for mankind. It was Jesus Christ, "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7), who died for our past sins. But accepting Christ's sacrifice to pay for our sins is not enough.

Once we have repented of our sins and been forgiven by God, we must strive to forsake sin completely. We must come out of this world's ways of sin (Rev. 18:4) — just as Israel left Egypt, a type of sin (Heb. 11:25-26) — and stay out. We must be putting all sin away from us. That is our part in God's master plan.

To help keep us in the knowledge of the second step in His plan, God gave His Church the annual Feast of Unleavened Bread. The observance of this Feast impresses upon us that we must strive not to return to the sins Christ paid for with His shed blood. Let's understand.

1. What Feast did God command the Israelites to keep immediately after the Passover? Ex. 12:17, Lev. 23:6. Were they to keep the Feast just this one time? Ex. 12:17, 13:10.

Notice that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was given by God before the people reached Mt. Sinai — before they even left the land of Egypt. It was also to be kept by all their succeeding generations forever.

2. For how many days is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to continue? Compare Exodus 12:15 with Exodus 34:18 and Numbers 28:16-17. Read also Deuteronomy 16:3-4. Were the first and seventh days set apart as "holy" days on which the people were to assemble themselves, much the same as they would on a weekly Sabbath day? Ex. 12:16, Lev. 23:3, 7-8.

The first month of the Hebrew calendar, which God inspired the Jews to preserve for

New Testament Christians today, was called Abib or Nisan in Hebrew. It corresponds to the time that will fall variously during the months of March and April of the Roman calendar today. The Feast of Unleavened Bread therefore begins on the 15th of Abib, immediately after the Passover. It continues for seven days until the 21st of Abib. Both the 15th and the 21st are special Sabbaths — annual "holy convocations" — days of rest and worship of God.

3. Were the Israelites to put all leaven and leavened food out of their homes and property during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread? Ex. 12:15, 13:7, Deut. 16:4.

A leavening agent is any substance used to puff up — to produce fermentation, causing dough to rise. Yeast, baking soda and baking powder are leavening agents.

4. Is leaven clearly a symbol for sin? Matt. 16:6, 11-12, Luke 12:1, 1 Cor. 5:8.

Leaven is often referred to in the Bible as a type of sin. Leaven puffs up, and so does sin. Unleavened bread is a flat bread that contains no leavening agent, and therefore typifies the absence of sin. And since 7 is God's special number signifying completion or perfection, God wants His people to strive to put sin completely out of their lives.

5. Does God specifically command His people to eat unleavened bread during this Festival? Ex. 12:15, 19-20, Lev. 23:6.

The Israelites were not merely to expunge all leavening and leavened foods from their property. That would have only symbolized putting away sin. They were commanded to eat unleavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This act of eating unleavened bread symbolizes the opposite of sin — obedience to God.

6. Upon one's repentance, Christ's sacrifice blots out all his past sins. When Paul asked if we should continue in sin, what did he answer? Rom. 6:15-16. What was

MINISTUDY

his apostolic command? Verses 11-13.

Christ died so that we would not have to pay the penalty of eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Now God expects us to obey His law — to “unleaven” our lives. God does not want us to continue in sin, for Christ is not the minister of sin (Gal. 2:17).

7. Did Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, say New Testament Christians should keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? I Cor. 5:8.

Here is a direct command to keep these Days of Unleavened Bread! Notice what Paul teaches New Testament Christians about becoming “unleavened.”

8. Were the Corinthians permitting a person who was openly practicing sin to fellowship with God’s Church? Verse 1.

9. Was this sin in their midst causing them to feel guilty, or was it rather causing them to become *vain* — to be “puffed up”? Verse 2. Did they think that they could be more forgiving and therefore more righteous than God by allowing this fornicator to remain in the Church? Same verse.

10. Paul, knowing that this sin was causing foolish members to swell with vanity and become puffed up, gave them specific instructions. What were those instructions? I Cor. 5:3-5.

11. Does the apostle Paul compare this sinning member to a little bit of leaven? Verse 6. Again, what is his instruction? Verses 7-8.

Paul explains that just a small amount of leaven — a sinful person, by analogy — can cause the whole lump of dough — the whole Church, again by analogy — to become saturated with sin. Permitting sin to continue unabated and openly before all the congregation would, in time, have caused others to gradually let down and begin slipping back into former sins. Sin would thus spread in the lives of other Christians by the bad example of just one, as certainly as a little leavening in bread dough eventually causes the whole loaf to rise — to become puffed up.

Paul therefore commanded the Corinthian church members to put out the sinful, spiritually “leavened” member of their congregation (verse 7) so the Church might be spiritually “unleavened.”

12. What did Paul say that clearly shows the Church was, at the moment he wrote, keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Verse 7. Notice the words “since you truly are unleavened.”

The apostle Paul was telling them to put out this spiritual leaven just as they had already put out all physical leaven in preparation for this Festival. They were to keep the Feast not only with unleavened flat bread, but with the spiritually “unleavened” attitude of sincerity and truth.

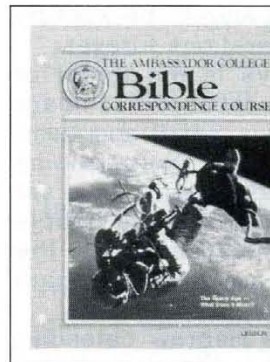
13. Was Moses faced with choosing between the licentious sins of Egypt and serving God? Heb. 11:24-26. Did this mean he would suffer with God’s people? Verse 25. Why was Moses willing to make such a choice? Verse 26.

Moses knew that to inherit eternal life in God’s Kingdom he had to utterly forsake the ways of sin.

14. Does God want Christians to forsake this world’s ways of sin as Moses did? Rev. 18:4, Heb. 12:1-4. Are we to continually “strive” — to expend effort and energy — to put sin out of our lives as it crops up? Heb. 12:1, 4.

If we are to receive the gift of eternal life and become members of God’s Family, we must prove our willingness to obey God here and now by striving to get the spiritual leaven of sin out of our lives. This is our part in God’s great master plan, as pictured by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thus at this time every spring, we are to renew our resolve to live in harmony with God’s laws henceforth — to rededicate our lives to continual spiritual growth.

But God knows that to overcome and obey Him we need His spiritual help. Therefore He promises to give us the power of His Holy Spirit. In the following Ministudy we’ll learn about the third festival, picturing the next step in God’s master plan for our spiritual creation. □



ENROLL IN FREE BIBLE COURSE

The short study you’ve just completed is a sample of the study method used in each monthly lesson of the newly expanded Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. You can enroll in this free course by writing to the *Good News* office nearest you. See inside front cover for addresses.

Letters

(Continued from inside front cover)

I just finished reading the two articles on tithing. They really made me think!

You see, God first opened my mind to tithing more than two years ago, through your wonderful magazines, of course. At that time, I had been married about one year. I had a low-paying job working in a gas station. My wife and I were on the brink of divorce.

So I began paying tithes. I also turned to God for guidance. I stayed in almost constant contact with God. I studied His Word daily.

In about a month God had given me a better job than I had ever dreamed of. By the end of the next month my wife and I were getting along better than ever. God also healed me of a medical problem that had prevented us from having children. Then God blessed us with a beautiful baby girl.

You would think, after all that, it would be impossible for me to turn from God. Oh, how quickly we forget how good God is to us. Soon, I found myself turning from my generous, loving God. I couldn't seem to make myself stop. It wasn't long before I had stopped tithing, praying, studying.

And it wasn't long before... First, I began to hate myself again. I didn't enjoy my life anymore. Then, I was laid off from work. That was six months ago. I'm still not working. My wife gave me a son about two months ago. He wasn't healthy like our daughter was. And the doctor bills are really piling up. Our only form of transportation is in bad need of repair. And we are way behind on the payments.

I think I have finally learned my lesson. And I hope God will forgive me for what I have done in the past. I have almost \$11. I am sending \$2 as a tithe and small offering. And I pray that God will be my partner in life again.

Tony D.
Newton, Kan.

Although not a member, I am a firm believer in the Church. Here are my tithes for this pay period. I read the recent articles on tithing and was convinced. Please send me some envelopes to send in my tenth.

Sidney H.B.
Campbellsville, Ky.

The articles on tithing have inspired me to start paying God His share of my income. I'm requesting envelopes to send in my tithes.

Thomas D.
San Diego, Calif.

My husband is not baptized. He doesn't even go to church, except during the Feast of Tabernacles, but he has decided he wants to give God His tenth of what he makes, after reading, in the October-November issue of *The Good News*, "Should a Nonmember Tithe?" So here is his first first tithe. I am just so happy that he wants to do this and in such a good attitude about it.

Mrs. John D.P.
Shreveport, La.

I must say I was very impressed with your two articles on tithing. They really made me stop and think that perhaps I have been disobeying God's law on tithing, that is why I have been unemployed for over a year and my financial situation is so meager. At any rate, I realize just how wrong it is of me not to give God what is rightfully His.

I realize my tithe right now is small, but please accept it and use it to continue spreading the good news of the world tomorrow. Perhaps others have not heard of this wonderful idea and are looking for something to give their life new meaning, like I am.

Carol S.
Wichita, Kan.

I just read your article on "Should a Nonmember Tithe?", by Herman L. Hoeh, and I have given a tithe for a long time. But for the last few months I haven't been tithing.

After reading, I realize how unfair I have been to God, but most of all how unfair I have been to myself. Thank you for the article. I really needed it.

Audrey B.
Worcester, Mass.

I have started my tithes as of the last two paychecks. The article about Mr. Ed Smith in the *Good News* magazine made me realize that I had been robbing God of His part of my salary.

Fred K.B.
Jonesville, N.C.

Here is my tithe for this week. We haven't been paying ours, but after we got the *Good News*, we saw how wrong it was not to. Thank you very much for helping us to see the light again.

Lu E.
Walnut Cove, N.C.

This is my first tithe and the biggest bet that I, a non-Christian, have ever made. He said to prove Him!

Dennis J.M.
Huron, Ohio

Received first issue

I just finished reading the *Good News*

magazine. It was the first issue I ever read.

I thought *The Plain Truth* was wonderful, and words cannot begin to describe the wonderful, joyous and spiritual guidance I received from beginning to end just reading *The Good News*.

When I first wrote you I was of a different faith. Now... I practice the Sabbath according to God's law. I am now following God's laws instead of man's law.

Thank you for helping me to open my eyes to the truth.

Gloria Ackerman
Camp Verde, Ariz.

October-November issue

The issue of *The Good News* for October-November arrived today and it has already had a potent effect. The article on real Christianity is underlined for me because of all the important insights I received from it.

Your articles on tithing also have had a profound effect. In one of your other publications you had an article on tithes. I tried it for the first time and did see an increase in a number of ways.

Unfortunately, I did not continue and my resources have dwindled to the point when I first decided to challenge.

Fortunately, your message has stepped in again and made me question my faith. It is no fun being apart from God.

Steve L.
Fort Edward, N.Y.

I want to take the opportunity of thanking you again for all of the work and dedication that goes into this fine tool for our spiritual growth.

I look forward each month to the *Ministudy*. It is a good review and an excellent reinforcer.

After reading Mr. Neil Earle's article, "What is Real Christianity?", in the October-November issue, I went back to the beginning and repeated it, using it for an in-depth Bible study. It made an excellent study.

Barbra Fisher
Veneta, Ore.

"This Is Real Repentance"

Thank you for the article on real repentance (December). It is indeed a continual process. Thank God, or the first would not be enough, and we would drop away.

God's most comforting words to us, "Call, and I will answer," are so dramatic that one must pause and digest the ultimate kindness being offered. It's stupendous!

Thank God He is there.

Rita Ries
Fullerton, Calif.

Christ Died

(Continued from page 3)

where His life resided — in His BLOOD, not in spirit! He did not shed a *spirit* to save us from our sins; He shed His BLOOD, and in so doing GAVE His LIFE.

But, “as the Father has life in *Himself*, so He has granted the Son to have life in *Himself*” (John 5:26). *God the Father raised Jesus from the dead!*

Not resurrected in same body

Now notice carefully: God the Father did not cause Jesus Christ to get back into the body that had died. Some seem to believe that it was only the *body* that died — that Jesus Christ never died — that Christ was alive, and preached to “spirits in prison” during the three days and nights HIS BODY was dead. What they believe is that a BODY Christ lived in died, but CHRIST HIMSELF never died. Christ was God and, they argue, God could not die!

They do not realize that Christ had given up His immortal life inherent in divine glory and been converted into human mortality for the purpose of DEATH.

If they are right, they are lost and doomed to eternal punishment! *If Christ* did not die for their sins — if it was only a mortal *body* that died — then we have no Savior, and are LOST.

What happened is that the *Logos* — the WORD — the Eternal — was MADE FLESH. He was converted into, CHANGED INTO, *flesh*. Now He was FLESH AND BLOOD, exactly as you and I.

His *life* was in His blood, and He gave His LIFE by the fact His blood poured out while He was on the cross! He had taken on a HUMAN nature. He was God — but now God changed INTO flesh and blood — God WITH US — Emmanuel!

Yes, the Word was MADE FLESH, and He WAS flesh and blood, not just an immortal spirit IN a body of flesh and blood.

We may argue that God is immortal and could not die. But

the Scriptures reveal that GOD SO LOVED us *that while* we were yet sinners, the Eternal, the *Logos*, who was with God and who *was* God in the second person, permitted Himself voluntarily to be CHANGED INTO a flesh-and-blood MAN, until He BECAME a human who could and did DIE. But God the Father — God in the first person — still reigned in high heaven, and HE RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD, not from life.

It was CHRIST HIMSELF who was DEAD. He was REVIVED. Nowhere does the Scripture say He was alive and active, or that God had Him get back into the human BODY that had died and was now resurrected.

Jesus Christ was DEAD. He was as much “out” as a boxer knocked senseless — much *more*, for the boxer usually is not dead but only unconscious. Jesus was DEAD — but was REVIVED!

And the resurrected body was no longer human — it was the Christ resurrected IMMORTAL, once *again* CHANGED! As He had been changed, converted INTO mortal, human flesh and blood, subject to death, and for the PURPOSE OF DYING FOR OUR SINS; now by a RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD, HE WAS AGAIN CHANGED, CONVERTED, INTO IMMORTALITY — and He is alive forevermore! Now a LIVING Savior, not a DEAD Savior. He *was* dead — but only for three days and three nights.

Now, how about YOU?

Do you realize WHAT a tremendous price was paid that you might be released from the death penalty of YOUR SINS? The very Eternal — the Spokesman of the Godhead, and very GOD Himself — permitted Himself to be changed into a mortal human — stepped down, descended to the human plane, suffered, was tempted, persecuted, despised, rejected of men, crucified!

If Jesus had been *only* human, His death could have paid the penalty for but *one* other human being who had incurred that penalty by transgression of God’s spiritual law (Rom. 6:23). Since God the Father created all things

by Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16), and since all things, including man, were made by Jesus Christ, He is our Maker and therefore God, and His life that He gave was of *greater value* than the total of all human beings (John 1:1-3).

He died and for three days and nights WAS DEAD! He who was IN THE BEGINNING, and WAS GOD! He stooped to human level, submitted to DEATH — trusted the Father to restore Him to life! *That* is the PRICE paid for you and for me. He GAVE Himself for YOU — and in so doing bought and paid for you! And therefore YOU BELONG TO HIM! Will you GIVE YOURSELF to Him?

That is the only way of salvation — the only way this GREATEST PRICE EVER PAID IN THE UNIVERSE FROM ETERNITY can save you, great as it was.

You must GIVE YOURSELF up! GIVE yourself TO HIM! Give Him your life — YOURSELF. Let HIM come into your mind and heart, through His Spirit, and live HIS LIFE IN YOU!

It means full, complete, utter, unconditional SURRENDER. You are no longer your own, you are HIS. Give your life to HIM, and see what great usefulness and accomplishment He will put it to! See what great joys will be yours as a result of the great GOOD He can and will do through you — IF you are His, wholly IN HIS POWER, wholly subjected to HIS WILL! Yes, Jesus Christ died and was dead! But God the Father RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD. HE LIVES FOREVERMORE!

You are already dead in trespasses and sins unless, or until, you REPENT of sins, surrender to God, GIVE YOURSELF to the LIVING SAVIOR who died for you, but was RAISED to become your High Priest and coming King! We have to DIE in order to LIVE. Give YOURSELF to Christ, and He will give you ETERNAL LIFE!

“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this LIFE is *in* His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (I John 5:11-12)! □

Blind Spot

(Continued from page 5)

we think about putting sin out of our lives, it is good to consider what the Bible calls the "leaven" of the Pharisees — hypocrisy (Luke 12:1).

Beware hypocrisy

Christ had much to say to the religious leaders of the first century. In Matthew 23:16, He called them "blind guides," for, in their self-righteousness, they had indeed become blinded to the real needs of those they should have been serving. Time and again, Christ hit the blind spot of these men. When we read about it today, their mistakes are obvious. But they could not see them.

Christ needs to be certain that those He is training to be leaders in the world tomorrow do not make the same mistake. The leaven of hypocrisy did not die with the Pharisees. Does Christ see some of it in you today?

Are you beginning to see that you may indeed have a spiritual blind spot? But when you see it and you realize that others have seen it (and perhaps have suffered because of it) all along, it is embarrassing.

Perhaps you finally begin to understand something that your family and friends have been trying to tell you for years. The natural reaction is to hide it again quickly — just like you can make the little black dot "disappear" by moving it back over your blind spot. But don't give in to that temptation. Keep the problem in the open, where you can fight it.

David, when showed his sin, told God, "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). Although David never forgot that he was capable of such behavior. He never made a mistake like that again (I Kings 15:5).

This Passover, don't just be content with a quick review of the faults you know you have. Ask God for help in seeing your "secret" sins as well. □

Prayer

(Continued from page 13)

11:6). Elijah believed in God. You can, too.

Elijah prayed according to God's will. Your prayers will be answered if you will, also. Jesus instructed us to pray, "Your will be done on earth" (Matt. 6:10). James warns us to avoid asking "wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (Jas. 4:3, Revised Standard Version).

And John writes of the godly confidence we may have "that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (I John 5:14-15).

It follows that we should study God's Word to come to know God's will (II Tim. 2:15, Eph. 5:17). Elijah knew from God's Word that God's curse of drought would follow Israel's worship of false gods (Deut. 11:16-17).

The same blessings and cursings apply in this end age. During the 3½-year Great Tribulation, God's two witnesses will "have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy" (Rev. 11:3, 6).

End-time Elijah

This end-time Work, of which you as a member or co-worker are part, functions in the "power of Elijah" (Mal. 4:5-6, Matt. 17:11). We today have the greatest commission in man's history. Yes, much greater than the original Elijah's commission!

Mighty miracles are being done through this Work, using the mass media to warn modern Israel about her wayward ways and proclaim the glorious good news that a repaired, peaceful and prosperous world tomorrow is imminent (Matt. 28:18-20, Ezek. 33:7-16, Isa. 58:1).

The world is being warned! Lives are being changed! God has provided the open doors of the media to this Philadelphia era of God's true Church to get the job done (Rev. 3:7-8). God has raised

up this era through Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong, and uses him as head spokesman. We are called to support him and this end-time Work of a third and final Elijah!

So recognize your high calling and approach God with both humility and boldness (Isa. 66:2, Heb. 4:16). Design your prayers to serve others (Eph. 6:18-19). Know that your fellowship is with God, and that your fellowship with God is fostered and promoted through prayer (I John 1:3, Ps. 55:17).

Recall, too, that Jesus exhorts us, "... *when* you pray ..." and not, "... *if* you pray ..." (Matt. 6:5-13).

Our prayers will make a great difference, both now and during the Great Tribulation just ahead of us (Rev. 8:3-5)! Our prayers can help others learn of God now, and God may move them to join us in fulfilling this holy commission.

Isaiah 58 depicts modern-day Israel — our people today — complaining to God because it alleges that it "fasts" (verse 3). Israel does so "to make your voice heard on high" (verse 4). That's an attempt to compel God to do Israel's will — Israel wants to continue rejecting God's laws and yet appear to be righteous and acceptable to God.

We must not be of that number. We know better. God directs that our motive should be to draw closer to Him, to free ourselves of inhibiting selfish pursuits (verses 6-7).

If we do, this will be the result: "Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am'" (verse 9).

God promises that this kind of prayer will result in blessings for you now and will help you qualify for the wonderful world tomorrow (verses 11-12). What a glorious guarantee!

So take heart when you read the inspired yet abbreviated example of Elijah's prayer in James 5:16-18. The fervent prayer of a righteous man will, indeed, avail much! □

Jesus' Trial

(Continued from page 8)

some private home, as occurred in Jesus' case.

Eleventh reason

Most Sanhedrin members themselves were legally disqualified to try Jesus.

According to Mendelsohn, *Hebrew Maxims and Rules*, page 182, "The robe of the unfairly elected judge is to be respected not more than the blanket of the ass."

Some of the judges were elected unfairly. We have the names from the Bible and from Josephus of most of the men who were on the Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus.

Such men as Caiaphas, Eleazar, Jonathon, Theophilus, Matthias, Ishmael, Simon, John, Alexander, Ananias and many others were, according to Josephus, recipients of bribes and appointed by members of the family who themselves had no right to sit on it, bought their offices and were disrespected by their people.

There were 12 ex-high priests living at this one time, all part of the Sanhedrin. The Bible expressly requires a man to be high priest throughout his lifetime, at the end of which another took his place. But under the Romans, high priests could be voted into office year by year.

The whole official arrangement — the whole choice of offices — was wrong.

But there was another reason that disqualified almost all Jesus' judges. It is this: "Nor must there be on the judicial bench either a relation, or a particular friend, or an enemy of either the accused or the accuser," writes Mendelsohn, page 108.

Many of the judges were Jesus' enemies. They even paid bribe money to betray Him.

In Benny's work, *Criminal Code of the Jews*, page 37, this surprising statement is found: "Nor under any circumstances was a man known to be at enmity

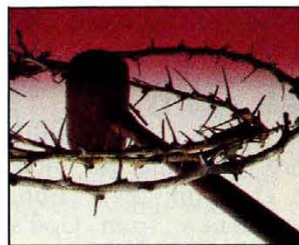
with the accused person permitted to occupy a position among his judges."

Everybody knew that the Sadducees and Pharisees were at outs with Jesus. Yet they were permitted to try Him.

Twelfth reason

The court illegally switched the charges against Jesus from blasphemy to sedition and treason before Pilate. Observe how it was done!

The next step in Jesus' trial was to take Him to the legal court for a mock, private trial at sunrise.



Pilate began to see . . . trouble brewing. He had a mob on his hands. This was trial by mob rule!

"As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council" — now that they had already condemned Him of blasphemy, they were going to take Him to court for a mock trial! — "saying, 'If You are the Christ, tell us.'"

Notice that they repeated the same questions over again.

"But He [Jesus] said to them, 'If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.'"

They had to make this trial look legal.

So "they all said 'Are You then the Son of God?' And He said to them, 'You rightly say that I am.' And they said, 'What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.' Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate" (Luke 22:66-71, 23:1).

This meeting probably didn't last any more than a few minutes! Now their trial, which was illegally conducted in the private

home of Caiaphas, was outwardly legalized.

But instead of taking Jesus out to be stoned for blasphemy, they switched the charges after the court was dismissed!

They took Him to Pilate, and here is what we read in John 18:28-31:

"Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium [hall of judgment], and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out to them and said, 'What accusation do

you bring against this Man?' They answered and said to him, 'If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.' Then Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and judge Him according to your law.'"

Pilate was difficult to convince. He didn't want to be bothered at this hour in the morning. But the enemies of Jesus replied, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." Why wasn't it lawful? Let Luke give the surprising answer:

"And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King' (Luke 23:2).

Notice that the Jews did not charge Jesus with blasphemy. Had they done so, Pilate would have told the Jews not to bother him, but to deal with Jesus according to their own law by stoning. The religious leaders were afraid of their own people! So they trumped up other and new charges against Jesus before Pilate.

Pilate now had reason to be surprised. The only cases for

which the Jews could not try a man involved sedition or treason.

"Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you speaking for yourself on this, or did others tell you this about Me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew?' He didn't like the Jews, did he? "Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?" "

"Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants [the disciples] would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here' — not of this time, not of this world order.

"Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?' " Jesus chose not to answer that.

Pilate finds Jesus innocent

"And when he had said this, he [Pilate] went out again to the Jews, and said to them, 'I find no fault in Him at all' " (John 18:33-38).

When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he told the Jews to take Him to Herod: "And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time" for the Passover (Luke 23:7).

After an interview with Jesus, Herod sent Him back to Pilate. To frighten the Roman governor, the opponents of Jesus stirred up the mob outside.

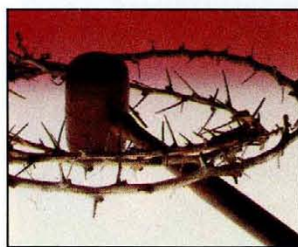
Pilate began to see that there was trouble brewing. He had a mob on his hands.

This was trial by mob rule!

So Pilate took Jesus, terribly scourged Him, let the soldiers plait on Him a crown of thorns and array Him in purple.

Pilate brought Jesus out again and shouted to the mob: "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him. . . . when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.' "

The opponents answered and said, "We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die" — and now for the first time they reveal to Pilate why they condemned Him — "because He made Himself the Son of God"



No justice here! An innocent man condemned by mob violence! The . . . act of crucifixion followed.

(John 19:4-7). They were getting very angry.

Pilate became frightened. He didn't want to have anything happen for which he would be held responsible by the Roman gods. Upon this, Pilate definitely sought to release Him (John 19:12), for there were no witnesses whatever in this trial before Pilate. The mob had commenced accusing Jesus without proof, without witnesses, without testimony.

Then the ignorant mob cried out: "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend." They were threatening Pilate with loss of his office.

Matthew 27:24-26 picks the story up:

"When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.' "

The ignorant mob responded: "His blood be on us and on our children."

What they were really saying is: "You execute Him. We don't

want to stone Him; we want you to execute Him."

Then Pilate "scourged Jesus, [and] he delivered Him to be crucified." The purpose of scourging was to prepare a criminal for death.

But notice — Pilate did not even give a formal decision against Jesus Christ. He just turned Him over to the soldiers to do what the mob wanted.

Jesus crucified though found innocent by Pilate

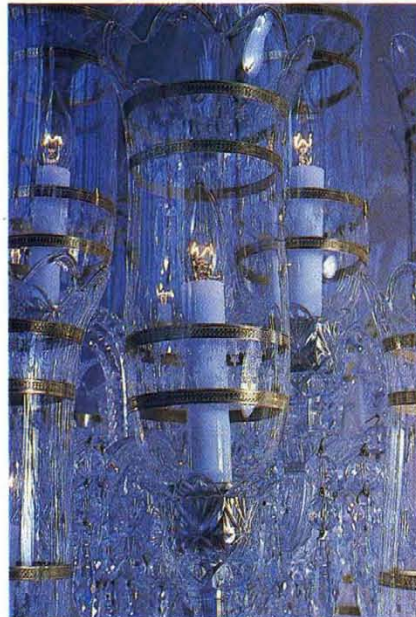
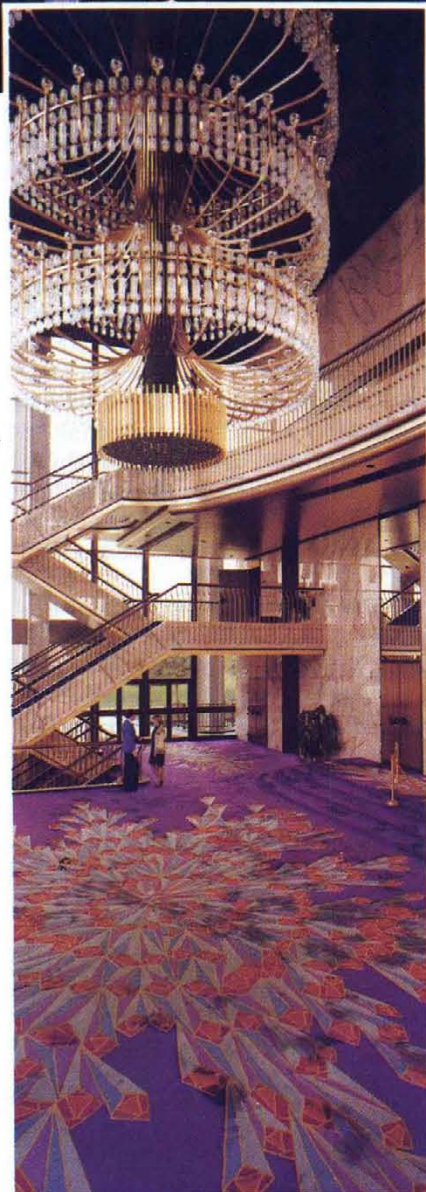
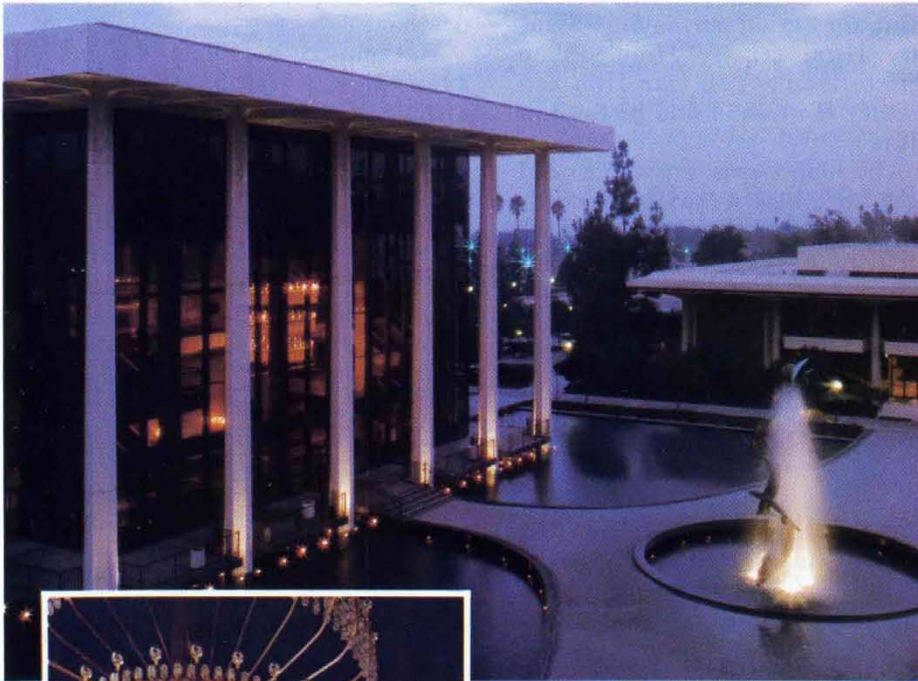
That is where the trial of Jesus abruptly broke off. No justice here! An innocent man con-

demned by mob violence! The dastardly act of crucifixion followed. Yet some today would still falsely claim, in the face of all this evidence, that Jesus' trial was legal, and His crucifixion justified.

Most of us have not really examined the trial of Jesus before. Just look at this trial. What a mockery of justice it was! Can you imagine what it would be like if you had been on trial, to be spitefully treated as these thrill-seeking soldiers treated Jesus? What consideration, what fairness would have been given you?

All this suffering Jesus endured to pay the penalty of sin for you! Yet not you only, but to pay the penalty of the sin of the whole world. It is time you personally were made to look at the last hours of Jesus in mortal flesh to see what a miscarriage of justice led up to the crucifixion — what a mockery was made of trial — and to understand the reasons why the conviction of Jesus was an utter fraud — all voluntarily endured by Christ to pay the penalty of your sin in your stead! □

By David Hulme



The Ambassador Auditorium is an outstanding example of expert planning, high-quality materials and excellent craftsmanship. The building, dedicated to God's honor and glory, has justifiably been called "the finest building of its type on earth."

"Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort, the will to produce a superior thing." So said a Scottish writer a century ago.

And it's true. Given enough time and talent, man can deal with physical matter and produce superior work — architectural masterpieces, great art, haute cuisine, technological marvels.

But did you ever stop to think that God is *inherently* that way? "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Eccl. 3:11). God is always in pursuit of excellence — always producing fantastic, positive achievements. And He does not have to be taught. Quality is a natural product of His mind, of His Spirit at work.

Look at God's creation. What part of it is not in fine taste, perfectly suited for its purpose? Consider the wingspan of a soaring eagle, the filigree of a spider's web, the tranquility and beauty of a pine forest, the infinitely complicated but supremely useful human hand. "Then God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good," says Genesis 1:31, describing the earth's renewal. Everything was excellent. God wins all the design awards. He is Creator and Builder, and He always builds to high, exacting standards.

The tabernacle and the Temple

When God commanded Moses to construct the tabernacle in the wilderness, God gave him a detailed blueprint (Heb. 8:5). Moses and the team God gave him followed that blueprint exactly. When they had finished, "Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so had they done it. And Moses blessed them" (Ex. 39:43).

One of the key ingredients in their success can be seen in all of God's creations — the presence of God's Spirit, the evidence of

Good News photos

His mind at work. God made that awesome power available to some of the children of Israel.

Building the tabernacle in a remote, nomadic community was not simple. Yet through God's inspiration and leadership, the finest materials were made available to the finest craftsmen. Many objects were made of pure gold (Ex. 25). The veil that set off the holy of holies was an exquisite fabric — a work of art (Ex. 26:31).

This magnificent dwelling place for Christ was constructed by artisans drawing on an indispensable and unusual tool — God's own mind. Speaking of the leading craftsman, Bezaleel, God said: "And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. To design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship" (Ex. 31:3-5). Together with Aholiab, Bezaleel was inspired to teach others how to fashion the components of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:34-35).

The result was precisely as God planned — the highest quality.

Many generations later, King David wanted to build a house for God. God allowed David's son Solomon to build the house, and it, too, was based on a God-inspired blueprint (I Chron. 28:11-12). Notice David's emphasis on the fact of God Almighty's inspiration (verse 19).

The Temple was seven years in construction; the number 7 in God's Word signifies perfection. When completed, the house of God stood as an architectural wonder of the world. The Queen of Sheba was awestruck by what had been accomplished (II Chron. 9:2-4). As in the earlier tabernacle, gold predominated in the Temple, and the highest quality imported woods and materials were fashioned by specialists (II Chron. 2:3-10). Again, the result was testimony to God's Spirit at work.

God's spiritual building

Today God is building a new

temple. This temple has a blueprint, is to be fashioned of the finest materials and will be the product of God's mind at work.

This temple is God's Church.

Speaking of the Church, God's household, Paul wrote that we are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22).

This building is still under construction, still being refined and finished. We, as God's children, are to cooperate with God in the creation of the highest quality material that can exist — godly character. God encourages us to build with the best materials, and even gives us that same indispensable and unusual tool — His own Spirit — to complete the job.

Notice I Corinthians 3:10-13: "But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is."

The creation of righteous, godly character requires the best materials. Our responses to life's experiences and tests have to be fashioned from gold, silver and precious stones — wood, hay and stubble will be consumed by fire. When testing comes, if our character is forged from the precious, then our response to trials will be likewise precious.

Trials test our faith, and Peter encourages us, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:7). If our character is poorly built of the cheapest materials, then our reaction to pressure will be weak.

A common element in the construction of both the tabernacle and Solomon's Temple was the willingness of the people (Ex. 35:29, 36:2, I Chron. 29:6-7, 9). The construction project we are involved in demands great willingness on our part, too. We have to be sure we are allowing God to fashion us. He is building "this latter temple" (Hag. 2:9) through the working of His Spirit in our lives.

But we are not inanimate blocks of stone. We can react positively or negatively. We can yield to God's shaping and fashioning, or we can reject it. Christ, too, was "a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious" (I Pet. 2:4). The next verse tells us that we, too, "as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

A magnificent edifice

Christ has already become the cornerstone in God's spiritual temple (verse 7, Eph. 2:20), and now God the Father is offering to those truly called the rarest of privileges — that of becoming a building block placed on top of that foundation in God's house. How responsive we should be to Paul's words about the calling of the God "whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Heb. 3:6).

We can be thankful that our Father is a God of quality. God is building, to rigorous standards, something that will last forever — perfect, righteous character, our Father's greatest creation. To build this character, God is fashioning our minds to be like His.

Just like Bezaleel, you and I are at work with God, creating a magnificent edifice. And as with Bezaleel, God offers to fill us with "the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge" so that we can complete the task.

We should be sure that we are building according to the pattern, "as the Lord had commanded." □

CRACKS IN THE EASTER LEGACY



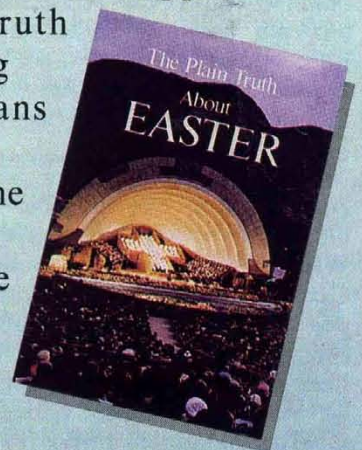
Just what do Easter eggs, sunrise services and Lent have to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Millions of professing Christians do not realize that they keep Easter traditions that were actually found in pagan mystery religions flourishing 2,000 years before Christ!

Our free booklet *The Plain Truth About Easter* offers facts you need to know. You may have a copy by writing to our office nearest you (see inside front cover for a list of our addresses).

You may also request a copy of our article reprint "How Often Should We Partake of the Lord's Supper?" It offers the biblical truth about the true spring observance Christians are commanded by God to carry out. The reprint is also free.

Don't delay! Write today for your free copies. You need this knowledge now!



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Pasadena, Calif.
Permit No. 703