

What Kind of Example Are You Setting?

By David Carley

Isaw a humorous little sign once that read, "Don't feel useless — you can always serve as a bad example!" Unfortunately, this observation describes precisely the good that came out of ancient Israel's existence.

Beginning at the Red Sea, Israel failed in their first of many opportunities to build faith in God's ability to lead them safely into the promised land. The thought of the threat from the Egyptian pharaoh's army as being an opportunity to build faith in God seemingly never crossed their minds. Yet that's exactly what that trial was for them. Rather, they looked at the approaching army on one side and at the Red Sea on the other and began to bitterly attack Moses.

In spite of this rebellion, God delivered Israel. Many more opportunities to build faith, rather than doubt, came upon them in the form of more trials. But they persisted in seeing the hardships as the fulfillment of the worst of their fears. It was not until Israel refused to enter the promised land that God sentenced them to wander and eventually die in the wilderness. Their lives were spent in doubt, confusion, despair and all the other bitter fruits of faithlessness.

For our admonition

The apostle Paul said that "all these things happened unto them [Israel] for ensamples [lessons]" (I Cor. 10:11) and that the trials they suffered "did not profit them" (Heb. 4:20). Well, if their lessons did not profit them, whom did they profit? Paul answers, "And they [Israel's mistakes] are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

The end did not come during Paul's life, as he thought it would when he wrote this. Nor has the end come yet. Jesus revealed that the

"end of time," meaning the end of Satan's rule over the earth and the establishment of God's Kingdom, would be near when two special conditions were met simultaneously.

The first condition became a reality when the newly developed atom bomb was exploded shortly before the middle of this century. Mankind has since rapidly developed the nuclear arsenal needed to fulfill the prophecy of Jesus Christ that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matt. 24:22).

It was at this juncture that another event would be taking place to pinpoint the approaching end of the age. Christ described it this way, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (verse 14). The Worldwide Church of God is now doing that Work of announcing Christ's coming rule — the second event to mark the end of this age.

The survival of mankind hinges upon the existence of a group faithful to God. Christ said that unless there was an "elect [God's Church] there should no flesh be saved" (Matt. 24:22) alive upon the earth.

Not only must there be an "elect" group of God's people on earth so God will intervene and prevent mankind from destroying himself, but that faithful "few" must be preaching the Gospel just before "the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Otherwise God will "come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6) — or utter destruction.

The responsibility resting upon our shoulders as God's people is staggering. Whereas Israel's failure meant the temporary physical death of a single nation, the failure of God's

Church now would mean the eternal death of its people and the destruction of the entire world.

To help insure that the Church does not fail, God built in ancient Israel a prototype or working model of God's Church and Work today. In short, Israel's experience shows us what we must *not* do if we hope to finish the Work and complete our journey to the Kingdom of God.

Israel, as a type of God's Church today, was set free from slavery (sin) and was baptized unto Moses "in the cloud and in the sea" (I Cor. 10:2). Stephen called Israel "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). They had a human leader as we do today. And, as a "church," Israel followed after God (Jesus Christ) through the wilderness toward the promised land (I Cor. 10:4).

Today God is once again leading a "modern Israel" through the wilderness of this world of sin toward the promised Kingdom of God.

God's people, though scattered around the world, are united in that journey by doing the Work of God. The wilderness God's Church collectively travels today is just as difficult as it was for the Israelites of old.

Our journey is filled with its problems, trials and attacks from enemies. But, as He did for ancient Israel, God has chosen another man, Herbert W. Armstrong, to lead us under Christ through these many perils.

In Israel's story lies a vital message for God's Work today.

Need for faith

The greatest danger we face in God's Church is the same as it was to Israel. Paul exposes this danger by stating, "Let us labour [do the Work of God] . . . lest any man fall after the same example [of Israel] of unbe-

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Women

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And Susanna? And Sarah and Deborah and Ruth and Lydia and all the other great women of the Bible? They are all certainly going to be in God's Kingdom, ruling with Christ.

The apostles are the only ones named to rule in a specific area. You and I, men and women, are only told we will become rulers over one, two, five or 10 cities or more based on how we utilize our talents and abilities. We will receive responsibility in proportion to how much we overcome. Multimillion dollar decisions and corporate presidencies have little to do with it.

So how do women enter God's Kingdom?

Exactly like men do!

We must all come to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then everyone has to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ. After baptism we receive the Holy Spirit. Then we must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And remain faithful. And overcome to the end.

It's the same for everyone — no shortcuts. It doesn't matter whether you're male or female. It isn't better to be one or the other. We are all in this together.

There is a crown of righteousness laid up for all Christians. Christ has gone to prepare a place for us, and He will come again (John 14:3). When He comes again, we will all be caught up together to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:17). And then both men and women will be changed to spirit — given immortal life.

So the course of life you pursue in career, homemaking, whatever, only makes a contribution to your overall character development process. It is not the end, but a means to the end.

"But could you be a little more specific?" you might ask.

Are there ways women do develop skills to qualify for rulership in a specific manner, especially when they are homemakers?

Certainly. And in coming issues of *The Good News* we will be covering that very subject — the homemaker as executive manager. We hope you will look forward to this information. □

Example

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lief" (Heb. 4:11). Paul specifically says that it was "because of unbelief" that Israel could not enter the promised land (Heb. 3:19).

Paul then shows Israel's warning message to God's people: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest [God's Kingdom], any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [Israel], not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:1-2).

Faith was the missing element needed in their lives to enter the promised land. And faith is what we need to develop in order to succeed where they failed.

Doubt is deadly to us, for it will open the door to all the terrible attitudes and sins of ancient Israel.

Israel's warning message is simple, yet far reaching. The greatest single danger to those of us (modern-day Israel) journeying toward the promised Kingdom of God is doubting God! It's doubting that Christ can lead His Church through Mr. Armstrong, His leader today. The movements of God's Church are not being decided by a man, but by God.

How do we grow in this thing called faith? It is simple. We just do what Israel did not. Whenever trials come upon us, we face them as opportunities to build faith, rather than as calamities to be feared.

We know that although the physical circumstances may look disastrous, we look to an invisible circumstance that can affect the outcome. God is that invisible reality standing beside us ready to make "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Though scattered around the world, God's people are marching, united by the Spirit and Work of God, toward the Kingdom of God. Mr. Armstrong has stated that this Work is a work of faith.

We see this faith demonstrated daily by our Church leaders to challenge all the trials that come upon the Work, but do we as individual members realize we too should be

challenging our personal troubles with that same kind of faith?

Our daily troubles are opportunities to build faith. Problems intrude into all our lives. Our trials can come from almost any area of life — school, work, home or play.

We also have Satan's influence and the pull of the world to continually cope with. We have to contend with our own human nature. Unless we fearlessly approach these trials as opportunities to build faith in God, life can become a tremendous burden.

None of us enjoy adverse circumstances in our lives, but if we can accept them as necessary in building faith, then we can at least approach our trials with a positive rather than negative attitude. Peter said "the trial of your faith" is "much more precious than . . . gold" (I Pet. 1:7). Why? Because faith is the essential element we must build in order to do the Work and enter the Kingdom of God. Without faith we would all fail.

At times life seems filled with many "Red Seas," some little and some so big they look impossible for us to cross. But let us learn the beautiful truth that ancient Israel did not — that there is no "Red Sea" too big to cross with God.

Let's view each day of our lives, with all its joys and sorrows, as just another step toward the Kingdom of God. We should expect trials to come upon us in our journey, as they did on ancient Israel. We can learn from Israel's wrong examples and determine to refuse to face our troubles with useless doubt and fear. Rather, we can choose to challenge life with a positive attitude of faith.

When we do this, we will see our lives transformed into an exciting, happy journey. We will be able to understand how Paul was able to say, "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (II Cor. 7:4).

God is with us each step of the way and will deliver us. Choosing to challenge life — with all its troubles — with faith will give us the pleasant fruits of hope, strength, peace and joy.

We will succeed where ancient Israel failed. And then their message will not have been delivered in vain unto us "upon whom the ends of the world are come." □