MARCH 1986

The Good News
OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



The Divine Hand Writes Again!

The Good News
OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

MARCH 1986 CIRCULATION: 800,000 VOL. XXXIII, NO. 3

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Building Coordination in Your Children
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COVER: An unprecedented time of world trouble is just ahead! Artist's conception shows the hand writing on the wall in the days of King Belshazzar of Babylon (Daniel 5). Will we read the handwriting on the wall for our day? See the article beginning on page 3. Illustration by Blair Taylor.

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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.

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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 Alaska, call 818-304-6111 collect.
Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C., V6C 2M2. For literature requests you may call toll free 1-800-663-2345.
Australia: P.O. Box 202, Burleigh Heads, Queensland 4220
Bahamas: P.O. Box N3934, Nassau NP
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PERSONAL FROM Herbert W. Armstrong

The Great Purpose for YOUR Life!

How did you come to be on earth? Did you just happen, an accident of blind, unintelligent, lifeless EVOLUTION?

Or were you put here and given life by an all-knowing, all-intelligent, purposeful, *living,* supreme God, who designed and created the human mind and body?

Let me tell you — and I can prove it, and so can you if you are willing — that the great Creator brought YOU into existence on this earth FOR A GREAT AND MIGHTY *PURPOSE!*

You were born into a world that has developed a certain type civilization. The instant you were born you knew — NOTHING! But your eyes opened, you looked about and knowledge of what you saw began registering in your memory — began putting knowledge into your mind. Your ears heard sounds, and thus additional knowledge entered through the sense of hearing. Very elementary at first, but gradually, each bit of new knowledge, entering your mind through your senses of taste, smell, feel, sight and hearing, was *added* to what had previously been stored there.

Gradually you came to know, and take up with, the customs, ways, generally accepted ideas and beliefs of this world. You accepted them, took them for granted without question. Some of them were good — many of them were BAD. But you took them for granted without realizing they were bad.

Human nature, you see, wants to *BE* good — that is, to *believe* it is good — to be *considered* good. It just doesn't want to *DO* good. Because GOOD is the WAY of God's invisible, inexorable, spiritual LAW. That LAW is, simply, LOVE.

It is love toward God in the form of trusting and willing OBEDIENCE to God's every command and direction, knowing it is for our highest good. It is love toward God in the form of being GOD-centered — having the mind *continually* (consciously or subconsciously) in contact with God, *relying* on God, seeking guidance from God, worshipful in the sense of gratitude, obedience, faith and trust. It is love toward fellowMAN — in the sense of outgoing concern, *equal to* love and concern for self.

NOW NO MAN exercises *that kind* of love *naturally.* You simply were not born with that kind of love.

YOU DON'T HAVE IT!

That is, not unless you have received it from God through His GIFT of His Holy Spirit.

THAT love — God's love — that of His Holy Spirit — travels a certain road. It is the road that leads to peace, to happiness, to confident assurance, security, well-being, ENJOYMENT without kickbacks, prosperity — every good thing the heart desires. Everyone wants that *result.*

That is to say, everyone wants to have the RESULT of doing good.

But no one, it seems, *naturally* wants to GO that way — to DO good.

That WAY — *doing* good — is the WAY of God's law.

This world is *not* FULL of happiness, peace, joy and universal prosperity. It is pretty well filled with strife — in the home, in business, in politics, in war between nations. It is pretty well filled with unhappiness, frustrations, insecurity. It is pretty well filled with crime and violence, with broken homes and unhappy, quarreling homes, with sickness and disease, with frustrations, failures, tragedies.

Now God is *not* the author of all these troubles in the world.

God has, FOR A GREAT PURPOSE, made humans free moral agents, and allotted 6,000 years for mankind to *make a choice* — whether to accept God's government over him, to be ruled by God's law of LOVE, or whether to set up his own ideas of man-made government, following what comes *naturally* — HUMAN NATURE. That 6,000 years is about up. When it is — a *very* few more years, perhaps less than 10 — God Almighty is going to step in, intervene supernaturally and in divine POWER abolish governments and ways of society — rule all nations with GOD'S laws —

and BRING PEACE AND HAPPINESS TO HUMANITY!

HOW can that be done?

It's simple!

There is A WAY of personal, group and organized living that will automatically produce that utopia. And there is A WAY that has, for 6,000 years, produced curses, war, strife and violence, frustration, failure — everything this world has. God is simply going to *enforce,* with divine power, HIS WAY. He is going to take over all governments, in a super WORLD GOVERNMENT ruled by the very CREATOR. It will rule by GOD'S LAWS — the WAY of love!

YOU can *have a part* in actually bringing PEACE, happiness, joy and abundance to humanity. God Almighty is *going to do it* — whether or not you have a part in it! But He is not going to do it alone. He is going to take certain human beings, born in the very LIKENESS of God, who REPENT of their carnal human nature — who cry out to God to CHANGE that nature — and *give* them the matchless supreme GIFT of His divine LOVE that will travel THE WAY toward peace, happiness and joy. These are they who, through real repentance of what they *are* as well as what they have done, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as well as in His resurrected LIFE and POWER, are forgiven their guilty past, given contact with God, *changed, converted,* receiving HIS HOLY SPIRIT, being begotten as HIS CHILDREN, receiving the DIVINE nature.

In other words, they REPENT of human nature — they REPENT of hostility to authority — of resentment against God's law. They SURRENDER unconditionally to GOD, and wholeheartedly WANT Him to rule in their lives.

They CHANGE (through God's power given by His grace) from rebellion to submission — from SELF-centeredness to GOD-centeredness. They let Jesus Christ (in spirit) come into their lives and actually live their lives for them (Galatians 2:20).

They change from THE WAY that has brought all the curses upon this world to THE WAY that will bring a brilliant, joyous UTOPIA to earth in a very few years when God sends the *living* Jesus Christ in power and glory to RULE ALL NATIONS and bring the happy WORLD TOMORROW!

This CHANGE is conversion. This is what it means to *become* a Christian.

A Christian is NOT merely one who PROFESSES Christ. God's own instruction to us — the Bible — says that if one has not received God's Holy Spirit, he is NONE of His — he is NOT a Christian (Romans 8:9). God gives His Holy Spirit ONLY to them who OBEY Him (Acts 5:32). This implants within the mind the *divine nature* — it means a CHANGED MIND!

But it does *not* remove the HUMAN nature. The *mind* governs whether the converted Christian now *follows* the pulls and desires of human nature, or whether he resists them and is LED BY the newly received divine nature. "As many as are LED BY the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). But one's *human* nature cries out to be satisfied — does not like to be repressed.

Just *receiving* God's Spirit is not enough. One must be LED by God's Spirit. His Spirit opens the mind to UNDERSTANDING of spiritual truth, and the KNOWLEDGE of God's law. It opens the mind to THE WAY one should follow. God's Spirit also is the love of God — God's own divine love — flooding into the human heart, and flowing on out in love to God and love to neighbor.

One must therefore GROW in spiritual knowledge and in God's grace (II Peter 3:18). He must become a DOER of God's law — actually LIVING in THE WAY of peace and happiness and joy.

This means he must OVERCOME his own carnal nature, his old habits, the temptations of the world — HE MUST BE CHANGED! He must develop toward perfect spiritual CHARACTER. The real Christian is undergoing a life of TRAINING to become a RULER in God's Kingdom — in the happy, peaceful WORLD TOMORROW. One cannot learn everything in a minute, a day or a year. One does not become perfect at one jump. It is a continuous PROCESS. No Christian becomes perfect at the very beginning. He does not overcome or root out all the sins, the wrong habits, all at once. He must do it little by little.

But, "He who overcomes, and keeps MY WORKS until the end," says Jesus Christ, "to him I will give power over THE NATIONS — 'HE SHALL *RULE* THEM' " (Revelation 2:26-27).

WHY do THE NATIONS of this earth need ruling by Christ and those trained under a Christian life? Because all the unhappiness — everything WRONG with this world — has come from living THE WAY of hostility to God's law and GOD'S government. Because the only way this world can have PEACE, PROSPERITY, HAPPINESS is to be forced to build a society based on THE WAY that *produces* these desired blessings.

If you have started on THAT RIGHT WAY, don't get discouraged because you have slipped and fallen down along the road a few times. Get up and KEEP GOING. Even if you have sinned and are truly sorry, you can repent and Christ is your High Priest to forgive. Read and study I John 1:7-10 and 2:1-2. This is written to converted CHRISTIANS.

At the time of Christ's coming, the dead in Christ will be resurrected and rise to meet the descending Christ in the air. At that instant those *living* who have been thus *changed,* begotten by God's Spirit, will be changed in composition, from mortal to immortal — from matter to spirit — from human to divine.

THEY are then to RULE with and under the all-powerful, living Christ, until ALL NATIONS beat their swords into plowshares and PEACE shines forth on this war-weary earth!

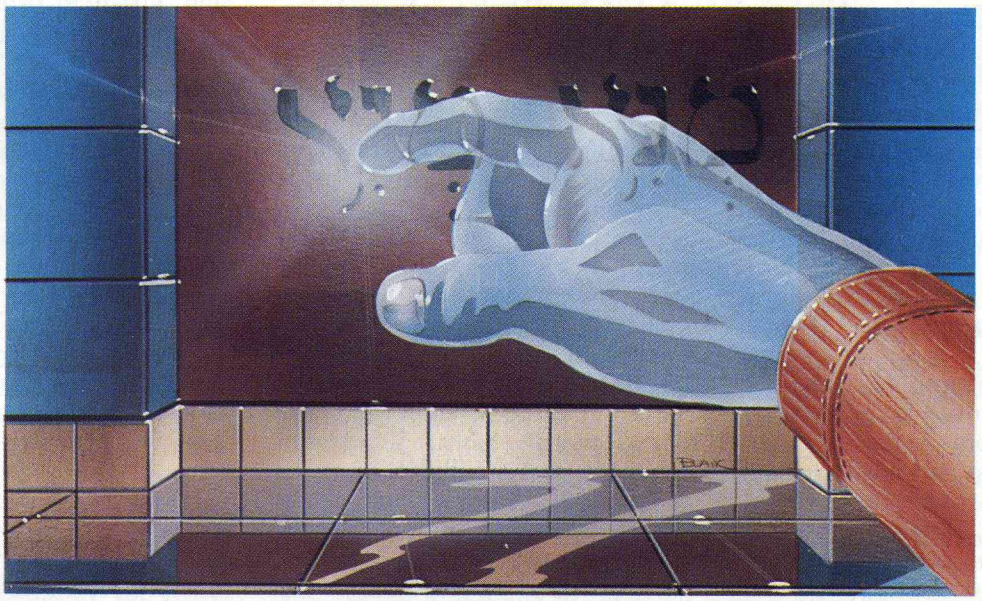
Jesus Christ taught His followers to PRAY: "YOUR KINGDOM COME. *YOUR* WILL BE DONE ON EARTH" (Matthew 6:10)! How about it? Shall we pray that prayer?

I DO! □

The Handwriting's on the Wall

We are now in a brief calm before the storm — an unprecedented time of trouble that will engulf the whole world! Will we heed the handwriting on the wall?

By Jerold W. Aust



He gulped his wine, carelessly spurting the overflow out the side of his mouth. His face was flushed, colored like the red wine he inhaled.

His glassy eyes darted about the room, sizing up the drunken partygoers. He reveled in their boisterous, sometimes profane comments and especially perked up when they directed flattering remarks toward him.

Again he lifted the golden bowl, attempting, in a single gulp, to empty it.

Wait a minute, he thought. There's something moving on that far wall!

He lowered the bowl, not observing that he was pouring its contents in his lap. The bowl dropped to the floor, but he didn't notice its sound. He couldn't have cared less. He began wiping his red-streaked eyes with nervous, shaking hands.

The movement continued. Why, that's a man's hand, or at least his fingers, he thought. And his index finger is moving on the wall!

Is it writing? What is it writ-

Illustration by Blair Taylor

ing? Something — can't make it out.

The king was no longer alone in his observation. A deafening hush fell over the gathering. Now all eyes were riveted to the far wall, watching, staring, wondering, eyes full of fear.

The hand kept moving ever so deliberately, forming large, easily readable letters and words. Eyes widened, hearts raced and breath shortened among the guests at the feast.

The king's face went white. His stomach churned and began to shake. His mouth became dry. He wanted to speak, but he just couldn't. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity to him, he blurted out a high-pitched scream: "Guards! Guards! Bring me the astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers! Quickly! I said *quickly!*" (Daniel 5:7).

It was the beginning of the end of a proud gentile king, Belshazzar of Babylon. And it was the end of the first and most glorious of four world-ruling gentile kingdoms (Daniel 2:36-40).

Belshazzar's demise was just. He *knew* better. He simply refused *to do* better. But then, we humans often learn the hard way, don't we?

Do *you* know better?

History repeats itself

Like grandfather, like grandson. The stories of King Nebuchadnezzar and his grandson, King Belshazzar, are alike in one major characteristic: pride.

Pride does funny things to the mind. It causes one to think far more of himself than he actually should. As well, God's greatness is reduced in his eyes. The vast chasm between God's infinite power and man's finite weakness is not seen. Next step? Straight down.

God set Nebuchadnezzar in office — made him king over Babylon, represented as a head of gold, showing superior intellectual and cultural accomplishments over those kingdoms to follow (verse 38). But his God-given accomplishments went to his head. He became proud (Daniel 4:37).

People do strange and evil things when pride controls them; Nebuchadnezzar did. He especially expressed his great pride through temper.

Example: When he couldn't remember his dreams, he threatened to kill not only his magicians, but vented his unbridled temper against all the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:12-13). This included Daniel and the three young Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.

Example: A little later, King Nebuchadnezzar built a golden image and ordered that it was to be worshiped (Daniel 3:1, 4-6). When some refused, he again flew into a murderous rage (verse 19). Source? Pride.

Example: Still later, he dreamed that he would be abased. A great tree symbolizing the king was chopped down, representing his great fall (Daniel 4:22-27). Daniel warned that he would be humbled for his great pride, yet Nebuchadnezzar was so proud he would not change himself.

Sure enough, he responded to Satan, the present ruler of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). Down he went, becoming like a common wild animal (Daniel 4:28-33). For seven long years he foraged his existence in the wild.

When God raised him up, he extolled the great King of heaven rather than himself (verses 34-37). He finally learned the lesson of humility.

But his grandson forgot that lesson!

Belshazzar didn't remember

Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, King Belshazzar, knew what happened to his grandfather (Daniel 5:22). Regardless, Belshazzar followed in his grandfather's sandals and in his pride. It was his undoing. Belshazzar lost his life for his pride!

Notice why:

1) God's plan allowed for the fall of the Babylonian kingdom and the establishment of the second, although inferior, kingdom, Medo-Persia (Daniel 2:39, 8:20). Belshazzar's death marked the end of the Babylonian Empire.

2) Belshazzar would not learn from his grandfather's experience. God will sometimes terminate a family line when it becomes shot through with pride and rebellion, as He did in the case of King Saul of Israel.

3) The king, in an act of supreme presumptuousness, drank from the gold vessels from God's holy Temple in Jerusalem. This was absolutely unacceptable to God.

There is a prophetic significance to this last point: Belshazzar's drinking of wine from God's Temple vessels can be considered a type of an end-time beast power (ridden by a great religion), which will be drunk with the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:1-6). God's New Testament saints are vessels of God's glorious Gospel (II Corinthians 4:6-7). God promises to avenge the deaths of His saints at the hands of the beast, false prophet and beast power (Revelation 6:9-11, 19:19-21).

You need to understand what this coming beast power is and

Belshazzar's act of drinking wine from God's Temple vessels can be considered a type of an end-time beast power (ridden by a great religion), which will be drunk with the blood of the saints.

how you can avoid God's imminent wrath on Satan's system of worldly government. Write for our free booklet *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?*

Contemptuous King Belshazzar was humbled by Almighty God on the very night Daniel translated his obituary — in the form of the handwriting on the wall. Proud Belshazzar was slain and his kingdom captured by the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:30-31)!

That handwriting's for us

Now understand what the handwriting on the wall said:

"And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (verses 25-28).

The king's astrologers and soothsayers could not read the writing, but God revealed the meaning to His servant Daniel. These words literally mean "numbered," "weighed" and "dividers" (*upharsin* is a singular form of *peres*).

God righteously judged this man and his kingdom.

Babylon's fall prefigured the judgment of the final revival of the fourth and final great gentile kingdom, the Holy Roman Empire, now just ahead of us. That is the time when Jesus Christ will return to put down all human authority and to set up the Kingdom of God on earth (Daniel 2:40-44, Revelation 19:1-2, 11-21).

Belshazzar's feasting on that night was intended to show contempt for King Cyrus' armies outside his city's walls, since Babylon was situated with the Euphrates River surrounding it. However, Cyrus managed to divert the water from the river and march his army by the dry bed into the city, while the Babylonians were carousing and partying. Belshazzar's pride caused his downfall.

What happened to ancient Babylon was a type for our generation. History is about to repeat itself!

Will you heed?

God's handwriting for Belshazzar is also a dire warning of His judgment on modern Babylon the great. Will you heed it and be spared the tribulation that is now just ahead of us? Some will. Most will not.

The modern Babylonians will also be feasting immediately preceding Christ's conquering advance (Revelation 11:10). They, too, will experience the Euphrates being dried up so punishing armies can overcome them (Revelation 16:12). And modern Babylon, the fourth and final beast power in its seventh and final revival (as the Holy Roman Empire), will be utterly destroyed (Revelation 18:1-2).

The wording in Revelation 18:2 — "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" — refers first to the physical, original kingdom of Babylon, and second to the end of the gentile kingdoms in their entirety, along with the modern-day, universal Babylonish system.

This world's economic, political, social and military systems will surely go down with a mighty fall — just as suddenly as did Belshazzar's kingdom. Belshazzar and Babylon met doom in just one night, which may be why the apostle Paul warns that we can be overcome by Christ as a thief in the night: "The day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they [the people of this world] say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them . . . And they shall not escape" (I Thessalonians 5:2-3).

Belshazzar's guards did bring the astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers. But they could not read the handwriting on the wall, because God had to reveal it. And God did reveal it, to Daniel His servant.

Daniel was spared that Babylonian downfall. He was also placed next to the king in the victorious Persian kingdom (Daniel 6:1-3). Before honor comes humility (Proverbs 15:33, 18:12), but pride comes before destruction (Proverbs 16:18).

God is revealing the handwriting on the wall to those in this end time who will listen. Through this great Work and His servant, Herbert W. Armstrong, God is trumpeting a last, dire warning of imminent doom for the proud — but a glorious picture of great hope just beyond, with Christ's glorious return to this earth, to the humble.

Which category will you be in?

God cries out to those in modern Babylon, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

The handwriting is indeed on the wall — for you to understand and heed! God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29)! It is time we all humbled ourselves before Him (I Peter 5:6), so that we may qualify to reap the blessings God promises to those who repent and are meek — becoming part of God's glorious Kingdom here on earth (Matthew 5:5). □

God's handwriting for Belshazzar is a warning of his judgment on modern Babylon. Will you heed and be spared the tribulation just ahead? Most will not. This world will go down with a mighty fall.

4,000 Years of Easter!



Believe it or not, Easter was being observed 4,000 years ago! It was still being observed when the Christ-child was born. Christ did not institute it — Christ never observed it — the apostles never observed it.

By Herman L. Hoeh

Easter was observed 4,000 years ago among the pagans!

But you can't find one word in the entire Bible that Jesus or the apostles ever observed it!

Where did you ever find in your Bible that Peter and Paul held Easter sunrise services? That the early Christian women in apostolic days dressed up for an Easter parade? That Christians baked hot-cross buns? That the children of Christians dyed Easter eggs and ate chocolate Easter rabbits in honor of Christ's resurrection?

You never found these practices taught by the inspired apostolic Church, did you? Yet these or similar customs were being celebrated in pagan lands long before apostolic days!

Origin of Easter Sunday

In the booklet *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* is proof from Scripture that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave did not occur on Sunday morning. Write to us for a free copy.

Then when did the celebration of Easter Sunday enter the Church calendar?

Here is what Kurtz's *Church*

Photo by Hal Finch

Easter sunrise service: *An ancient pagan rite misapplied to worship Christ, who did not rise from the dead on Sunday at all!*

History states about Easter: "The Saxon name Easter is derived from the old German festival of Ostara, the goddess of spring, which was celebrated at the same season" (vol. 1, page 356).

"The English *Easter,* Anglo-Saxon *Oster,* German *Ostern,* is at all events connected with the *East* and sunrise," says the Protestant historian Schaff, who wrote that "the transfer of the celebration of Ostara . . . to the Christian Easter festival" took place years after the death of Paul (from a footnote in Schaff's *History of the Church,* vol. I, page 373).

Easter came from pagan sun worship, not from Jesus Christ or the apostles.

What God says about Easter sunrise services

About 600 years before Christ, the prophet Ezekiel saw, in vision, an Easter celebration:

"Then He said to me [God was speaking to Ezekiel] . . . 'Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.' So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east" (Ezekiel 8:15-16).

Notice this abomination Ezekiel saw — the Easter sunrise service. This is what professing Christians are doing today — celebrating pagan customs on Easter Sunday supposedly in honor of Christ, who did not rise from the dead on Sunday at all!

Surely the people today are sincere — but so were the pagans! They didn't know better.

Jesus Christ forbids Easter celebrations

Observe what God says He will do to those who refuse to repent of this abomination: "Is it a trivial thing . . . to commit the abominations which they commit here? . . . Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice [of course they pray to God], I will not hear them" (verses 17-18).

But what if Easter *is* an ancient pagan festival? Isn't it *still* all right, if we use it to honor Christ? That's the way people reason today. Let God answer that question.

Jesus Christ — the Word of God — spoke to Moses to warn the people not to follow these customs of the heathen. Here is what Jesus Christ said: "Take heed . . . that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods" (Deuteronomy 12:30-31).

Here is what God says. It doesn't matter what we think, but it does matter what God thinks. He calls these pagan Easter customs abominations.

Catholics testify to the origin of Easter

The Catholic scholar Hefele writes concerning Easter: "All the churches of the West, the South and the North had adopted this practice [celebrating Easter], particularly Rome, the whole of Italy, Africa, Egypt, Spain, Gaul [France], Britain, Lybia [Libya], Achaia [Greece]; it has even been adopted in the dioceses of Asia, Pontus and Cilicia" (*History of the Councils,* vol. I, pages 306-307).

Notice that Easter celebrations were adopted, not from the Bible, but from the heathen, long after the death of Jesus Christ!

But from what sources did the scholar Hefele obtain this amazing information?

He obtained it from ancient church history written shortly after the time Easter was adopted! Here is what Socrates Scholasticus wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History* not long after the time of Emperor Constantine, in the fourth century:

"Neither the apostles, therefore, nor the Gospels, have anywhere imposed . . . Easter . . . Wherefore, inasmuch as men love festivals, because they afford them cessation from labor: each individual in every place, according to his own pleasure, has by a prevalent custom celebrated [Easter] . . . The Saviour and his apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast . . . just as many other customs have been established in individual localities according to usage, so also the feast of Easter came to be observed in each place according to the individual peculiarities of the peoples inasmuch as none of the apostles legislated on the matter. And that the observance originated not by legislation, but as a custom, the facts themselves indicate" (chapter 22).

So says the ancient church historian in the fourth century. Now let us understand exactly how Easter was introduced.

The first historical records

The practice of the New Testament Church of God was to observe an annual memorial of the death of Jesus Christ. This memorial was called the *Passover* — commonly known as the "Lord's Supper."

There is not sufficient space in this article to mention the many scriptures that clarify this little-understood practice of the apostles. If you want the whole story, send for the free booklet *How Often Should We Partake of the Lord's Supper?* It explains the New Testament practice in its entirety.

The Lord's Supper on Saturday!

Remember that up to this point the Church of God understood that Jesus rose from the dead after three days — on Saturday late afternoon, shortly before sunset.

But in the professing Christian world, the many began to do what seemed right to them. They began to observe the Passover weekly on Saturday, the Sabbath, believe it or not!

For more than 200 years this

custom was a universal practice of the Eastern churches. The church historian Socrates wrote: "While therefore some in Asia Minor observed the day abovementioned [he means that some continued to observe the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, as the apostles did], others in the East kept this feast on the Sabbath indeed." By "sabbath" all early writers meant Saturday!

So universal was the custom of observing the "Lord's Supper" on Saturday that he continued to write: "For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this."

You may find this amazing testimony in volume II of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* pages 131-132, from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates, book V, chapter 22.

Did you catch the real significance of this quotation?

The Passover was transformed by many false teachers from an annual memorial in memory of the death of Jesus Christ into a weekly memorial in honor of His resurrection, which occurred on Saturday.

Yet others were introducing for the first time the idea of a Sunday resurrection. Now observe what happened.

Easter Sunday begins earlier at Rome

In commenting on those who did not observe the Passover either in accordance with the practice of the apostles or on a weekly Sabbath, Irenaeus (who lived toward the close of the second century) wrote to Bishop Victor of Rome: "We mean Anicetus, and Pius, and Hyginus, and Telesphorus, and Xystus. They neither observed it [the true Passover on the 14th of Nisan] nor did they permit those after them to do so."

Who were these men? Bishops of the church at Rome! Here is the first record, by a Catholic, that the Roman bishops no longer observed the Passover at the correct God-given time or on a weekly Sabbath, but instead on a Sunday!

It was Bishop Xystus (his name is also spelled Sixtus) who was the first recorded individual to prevent the proper observance of the Passover, and to celebrate the "sacred mysteries" annually on a Sunday. Irenaeus speaks further of him, declaring that his doctrine was in direct "opposition" to the practice of the remainder of the churches. Bishop Sixtus was living at the beginning of the second century, just after the apostle John died.

Notice, too, that Easter Sunday did not begin with Peter or Paul in the A.D. 60s, but with Sixtus in the second century!

Here you have the astounding origin of Easter Sunday in the Western churches. Together with this practice, the "sacred mysteries" were also observed every Sunday.

The Romans divided

The introduction of this custom naturally divided the Christians at Rome. The Catholic historian Abbe Duchesne wrote: "There were many Christians of Asia in Rome at that time [remember that the Church of God at Rome was founded by those who came from Asia Minor where Paul preached] and the very early Popes, Xystus and Telesphorus, saw them every year keep their Pasch [the true Passover] the same day as did the Jews. They maintained that was correct. It was allowed to pass . . . though the rest of Rome observed a different use" (*The Early History of the Church,* Vol. I, page 210).

These are startling facts, but they are true! It is time we knew about them.

Irenaeus wrote even more regarding the observance of Easter at Rome and elsewhere as follows: "But Polycarp also was not only instructed by the apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church of Smyrna . . . He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus [bishop of Rome around A.D. 154], caused many to turn away from the . . . heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles."

While at Rome, Polycarp discussed the matter of Easter with the Roman bishop.

Irenaeus continued: "For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe it [the Passover] because he had always observed it with John the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated; and neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, who said that he was bound to follow the customs of the presbyters before him" (Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History,* book V, chapter 24, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 1).

Counterfeit vision

Shortly after Polycarp left, there appeared an amazing letter, said by many scholars to have been a deliberate forgery. This letter states: "Pope Pius, who lived about 147, had made a decree, that the annual solemnity of the *Pasch* [*Pasch* is the Greek word for *Passover*] should be kept on the Lord's day [Sunday], and in confirmation of this he pretended that Hermes, his brother, who was then an eminent teacher among them, had received instruction from an angel, who commanded that all men should keep the *Pasch* on the Lord's day" (Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church,* pages 1148-1149).

Of this same hoax, we read in *Apostolical Fathers,* by Donaldson, page 324: "One of the letters forged in the name of Pius, where one Hermas is mentioned as the author; and it is stated that in his book a commandment was given through an angel to observe the Passover on a Sunday."

But the Easter controversy did not end here. Within 35 years

(Continued on page 12)

An Unknown Soldier Identified!

The soldier who stabbed Jesus Christ as He hung on the cross has now been positively identified!

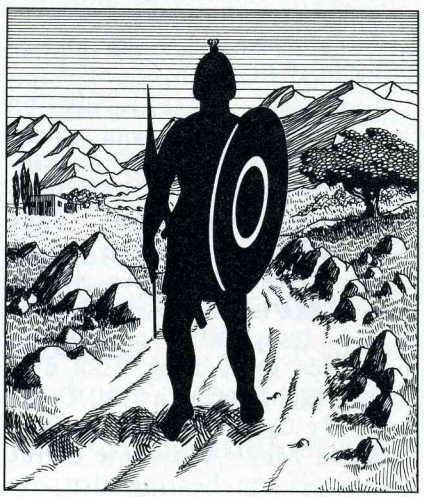
By Robert C. Smith

This *Good News* article is actually more like an expose. It concerns an unknown soldier about whom little has been written — until now!

This individual's daring and brutality played a most significant role in human history. He was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ!

And yet, not much has been mentioned about him.

But now, after more than 19 centuries, we have the clear facts to identify exactly who this soldier was. Prepare yourself for a shocking revelation!



The mystery unraveled

To begin to unravel the mystery of this unknown soldier, we must turn to the apostle John's account of the savagery surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus Christ almost 2,000 years ago.

You may already know some of the story. Christ had been arrested outside the Garden of Gethsemane and tried in a kangaroo court. Let us pick up the story in verses 16-18 of John 19, after Pilate reluctantly submitted to the wishes of the angry mob outside his quarters:

"So he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center."

And in verses 23-24: "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,' that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: 'They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.' Therefore the soldiers did these things."

Continue in verses 28-34: "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out."

How Christ died

A very matter-of-fact account of the death of the Savior of mankind — even to the piercing of His side with a spear! No particular fanfare for that soldier. Very little comment.

But let's consider that one who pierced the side of the God-man hanging grotesquely upon the stake.

He was, obviously, very much like the others — dashing in his Roman garb, cocky, brash, daring, perhaps proud of his exploits, maybe laughing with the others, all of them marching to the same drummer.

What significance was there to his action? Was not Christ already dead? Why did the soldiers not break Jesus' legs? Did, as many suppose, Jesus Christ die of a "broken heart"?

Let's get the answers.

It is commonly taught today that Jesus died of a broken heart;

this idea was introduced by a Dr. Stroud about the year 1847, in the book *On the Physiological Cause of the Death of Christ.*

Dr. Stroud claimed that Christ died of "laceration or rupture of the heart." This idea has since been perpetuated by many Protestants. But is this idea true? Did Christ shed His blood only *after* He died?

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* in the article "Blood and Water," states: "It is well attested that usually the suffering on the cross was very prolonged. It often lasted two or three days, when death would supervene from exhaustion. There were no physical reasons why Christ should not have lived very much longer on the cross than He did."

The question is: Why did Christ die so soon?

Why was Jesus not able to suffer longer than He did? Was He a weakling? If Jesus died of a broken heart, because He was weak and was suffering the penalty of sin, then He died for His own sins! But Jesus was strong. He obeyed God's laws — the physical laws as well as the spiritual laws.

Jesus Christ is our Passover. In I Corinthians 5:7, we read, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." Unless Christ was sacrificed — actually shed His own blood — you have no Savior. Unless the original Passover lamb had been sacrificed or slain, had its own blood shed, the Israelites in Egypt could never have been delivered out of Egypt.

Jesus bled to death

In Hebrews 9:22 we read that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. It does *not* say, "Without a broken heart, there is no remission of sins"! If Jesus died of a broken heart, then He didn't die for your sins. (Send for our free article "Did Christ Die of a Broken Heart?" for more information.)

Jesus Christ was brought as a Lamb to the slaughter. When a lamb is slaughtered, its blood is shed. It doesn't die of itself. Neither did Christ. Leviticus 17:11 tells us that the life of the flesh is in the blood. Therefore, Jesus poured out His life.

This brings us back to the question: Why didn't the soldiers break the legs of Jesus Christ? Because He was already dead! If He died any other way than by the shedding of blood, He could not be our Savior. And why did the soldier decide — almost as an afterthought, seemingly — to pierce the side of the already deceased victim?

He didn't! The soldier stabbed Jesus *before* Jesus died. The piercing with the spear was actually the cause of Jesus' death! Jesus bled to death.

A strategic verse is missing from many translations of the account of the crucifixion. According to Matthew 27:45-49 from the Fenton translation: "Then from mid-day until three o'clock in the afternoon darkness spread over all the land; and about three o'clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, exclaiming, 'Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'O My God! My God! to what have You forsaken Me?' And some of the bystanders, on hearing that, remarked, 'He seems to call for Elijah.' And at once one from among them ran, and taking a sponge, filled it with sour wine; and placing it upon a cane, gave Him a drink. But the others called out, 'Let Him alone! Let us see whether Elijah will come and save Him!' "

Now notice carefully verse 50 from the Fenton translation: "But another taking a spear pierced His side, when blood and water came out. Jesus, however, having again called out with a loud voice, resigned His spirit."

Also, from the Moffatt translation, beginning at verse 48: "One of them ran off at once and took a sponge, which he soaked in vinegar and put on the end of a stick, to give him a drink. But the others said, 'Stop, let us see if Elijah does come to save him!' (Seizing a lance, another pricked [the Greek root is *nussoo,* which should be translated "pierced" here] his side, and out came water and blood.)"

Why haven't we been reading that the reason Christ died is that one of the soldiers came with a lance or spear and pierced His side and out came water and blood? Commentaries would have us envision a limp, weak Jesus hanging from the cross with a trickle of blood oozing from a tiny penetration of the skin on His side. But the fact is that gaping wound in Jesus Christ's side was large enough for a man to literally thrust his hand into (John 20:27)!

The sharp weapon wielded by the soldier ripped open and lacerated the bowels of Jesus Christ!

That soldier killed the Son of God! He plunged that lance or spear into the very entrails of the Creator of mankind!

That same soldier, whose name might just as well have been etched into the base of the cross under the heading, "Sentenced to eternal death," was responsible for the ignominious death of his only hope for avoiding that penalty.

Hope for this soldier

Imagine, at the time of that young soldier's resurrection, the grief, the sorrow, the shame he will feel at what he did. He could succumb to the burden of guilt and feel that all is lost.

But there is good news — even for this soldier.

Revelation 20 tells about a future time when, as Jesus mentioned in John 5:28-29, all who are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth. That is a time that should excite every human being, for it will be the time of righteous judgment and mercy for all. It is a time that will without doubt excite the unknown soldier, who will recognize his part in the death of Christ!

Read Revelation 20:12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead [then brought back to life] were judged according to their works, by the things

which were written in the books."

The unknown soldier will recognize those things written in the books — the *biblios* — the Old and New Testaments. And he will languish as he reads I John 3:4, which reveals that sin is the transgression of God's law. He will further lament at Romans 6:23, which states that the wages of sin is death. He will despair at the revelation in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

But his spirits will begin to soar as he reads that even he — the actual murderer at Golgotha — can be justified by the blood of that hapless, defenseless victim who hung on the cross (Romans 5:9). He will tearfully and shamefully reflect upon the warm blood of the Savior that poured slowly down His legs and over the myriad names that could have been etched in the base of the cross. And he will cry tears of gratitude and deep love for the God who is big enough to be willing to die for His own creation, in order that that creation might be able to live forever. He will watch fearfully and humbly as the flowing blood, in his mind's eye, begins to cover long rows of names representing every human who has ever lived — until, finally, his own name will have been totally covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, thus removing the penalty of the second death, which all have incurred.

Then the young soldier will realize the Bible reveals that by the resurrected life of Christ, he can be saved and have access to eternity with the very God he killed (verse 10).

He will read, study and learn what he must do — carry out the three-part command of the apostle Peter: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

And it will not be difficult for him to heed the admonition. His recollections will be a nightmare, vivid, haunting, crushing, until he recognizes fully the enormity of his deed — killing the Christ — and accepts the awesome, unmerited sacrifice of that same Christ.

Then he can be at peace!

The scene at the cross

The only difference between this unknown soldier and the others is that this soldier can be identified now. He doesn't have to wait for a resurrection, as do the others.

Let's take a look at the group gathered at the cross. Let's especially focus on the soldiers.

They all look the same — squatting before the cross, parting the garments, laughing, perhaps, at what transpired that day. But we want to zero in on the soldier who wielded the spear. We are able to pick him out quite easily, for he is the one with the blood on his breastplate and on his bare arms.

Let's zoom in on him. He has his back to us — but he is starting to turn toward us. The focus is clearing — and we suddenly see the spear-bearer, the killer of Jesus Christ, full face.

You gasp sharply, hard pressed to look at the image peering back at you, and as you point incredulously at the familiar face, you flush with terror as you see dripping from your own outstretched hand — the blood of Jesus Christ!

The unknown soldier has been identified — and it is you!

Just as Peter said, it is you! And me! *We* took the spear — just as surely as if we were there — and jammed it into the side of the very one to whom we owe our every breath of life.

That realization should pale into insignificance everything else in our lives. The sudden, startling jolt — the recognition of our personal responsibility in causing the need for the very Creator of mankind to die — demands that we determine what is expected of us by that now-resurrected Savior.

Why Christ had to die

Sin demands the death penalty (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ tasted death — literally, ignominiously died — for the sins of all humans. John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Listen! "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:9-10).

Because of that marvelous love, the very being who breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of our first parents "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:6-8).

Do you see? God became man — so that man could become

Consider that one who pierced the side of the God-man upon the stake. He was dashing in his Roman garb, cocky, daring, perhaps proud of his exploits, maybe laughing. That soldier killed the Son of God!

God! Except the death penalty, which each of us has incurred, were paid by someone else, the opportunity to live forever would no longer be possible for any of us. Jesus Christ, the Maker of mankind, is the only being able to die for that entire creation! His love is so great that He willingly emptied Himself of His divinity for you and me.

When Peter gave his inspired sermon to the throngs gathered in Jerusalem, following Christ's ascension, he said, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

With that recognition, how should we feel?

Listen!

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' " (verse 37).

They felt tremendous anguish at the enormous personal sins that caused the death of their Creator. They knew immediate action was demanded. They wanted to know what they should do next.

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' " (verse 38).

What must you do? The very same thing. Repent, be baptized and receive the down payment on eternity — "the guarantee of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14) — the gift of God's Holy Spirit.

Each of us — as the "unknown soldier" — wielded the heavy spear that caused the death of Jesus Christ. But today, He sits alive and well at the right hand of the Father, looking forward to that time when each of us may inherit our portion in eternity. Don't allow that sacrifice — *for you* — to be in vain.

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

What will you do with *your* gift? □

Easter!

(Continued from page 8)

it broke out vehemently between Polycrates of Asia Minor and Victor of Rome, who attempted to "cut off whole churches of God, who observed the tradition of an ancient custom" — the true Passover.

Here is a part of the forthright answer given by Polycrates to Victor, vindicating the truth of God: "As for us, then, we scrupulously observe the exact day, neither adding nor taking away. For in Asia great luminaries have gone to their rest, who shall rise again in the day of the coming of the Lord . . . I speak of Philip, one of the twelve apostles . . . John moreover, who reclined on the Lord's bosom . . . Then there is Polycarp . . . these all kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in accordance with the gospel, without ever deviating from it, but keeping to the rule of faith."

This remarkable letter is preserved in volume 8 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers,* pages 772-773.

Polycrates came from that area in which Paul spent most of his time — in Asia Minor, near Ephesus. This is also where John spent his last days. Here there were many Christians still remaining true to the faith!

Here is proof that both the apostles to the circumcision and Paul, the special apostle to the gentiles, taught the observance of the Passover on the 14th of the first month of God's sacred calendar. Chrysostom, who wrote several centuries after the apostles, admitted that "formerly it [the Passover] prevailed also at Antioch" from where Paul began many of his apostolic journeys.

Now, what happened to stamp out the true observance of the Passover from the popular churches?

Constantine — the man of power

Constantine then convoked the first general council of the Christian-professing world. The Council of Nicaea decided, under his authority, that Easter must be celebrated on Sunday and that the Passover must be forbidden.

Without regard to these decisions, many continued faithful. For this reason Constantine issued an edict declaring: "We have directed, accordingly, that you be deprived of all houses in which you are accustomed to hold your assemblies . . . public or private" (*Life of Constantine,* book III).

Though everyone was now forced to observe Easter or flee the urban areas of the Roman Empire, the churches were still divided over the exact Sunday for Easter. Here is how confusing matters became:

"But notwithstanding any endeavours that could be used then, or afterwards, there remained great differences in the church about it for many ages. For the churches of Great Britain and Ireland did not accord with the Roman church in keeping Easter on the same Sunday, till about the year 800. Nor was the Roman way fully received in France, till it was settled there by the authority of Charles the Great" (*ibid.,* page 1151).

Does it make any difference?

Listen! Your eternity depends on the answer! Here are the authentic facts of history.

Here is God's word to you — here is why it *does make a difference* what you believe — and what you do about it!

You are soon — very soon — going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ! Don't say carelessly, "Well, here's the way I look at it," or, "I don't think it makes any difference." God says it does make a difference. God says there is a way that seems right to a man — to anyone, to *you* — but that seemingly right way ends in death (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25)!

You will be judged by what God says — not by what you think! God says this whole world today is deceived! Now heed what history says — heed what God says! □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What did Jesus mean when He said, "This generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34)? Was He referring to His own generation — or ours?

Jesus was not speaking of His own day and age. He was answering a question His disciples posed about the last days of Satan's rule on this earth: "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (verse 3).

In this important prophecy of Matthew 24, Jesus gave the disciples a point-by-point description of what would occur in these last days before His Second Coming. He prophesied that, before His coming, wars, famines, disease epidemics and great earthquakes would ravage the world (verse 7).

Then Jesus foretold a final persecution inflicted on His true followers (verses 9-11), with the rise of false ministers who would deceive the world. He foretold an age of lawlessness — rampant iniquity — a wholesale breakdown in morality (verse 12). But, Jesus said, in the midst of this travail and grief, the Gospel — good news — of the Kingdom of God would be thundered to all nations, "and then the end will come" (verse 14).

Jesus was speaking of the smashing climax at the close of this age of Satan's rule — actually misrule — over the earth! He was speaking of the crisis facing this very generation.

He said: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved" (verses 21-22).

Not until our generation has the entire population of the earth faced stark annihilation. This is the end time of which Jesus Christ spoke! This is the generation He had in mind when He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled" (verse 34).

We are living in the prophesied generation immediately preceding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Notice that Jesus did not tell His disciples "your generation." He spoke of "this generation" — the generation He had just described.

He earlier told Peter: "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes" (Luke 12:42-43).

Jesus' prophecy was directed toward His true disciples in our generation who would be doing God's Work when Jesus comes the second time to take over the reins of world government.

Is the "Great Tribulation" the same event as the "Day of the Lord"?

No. They are totally different. For proof, turn to Matthew 24.

The disciples asked Jesus when His coming and "the end of the age" would occur (verse 3). Christ then explained the time order of events that would lead to His Second Coming.

The first event would be false prophets (verses 4-5); the second, wars and rumors of wars (verse 6); third, famine (verse 7); fourth, disease epidemics (verse 7); fifth, climaxing in the Great Tribulation, martyrdom of saints (verses 9-10, 21).

The Great Tribulation is not the time of God's wrath, but rather the time of the wrath of Satan the devil. Satan at this time realizes he has but a short time left, so he persecutes and martyrs God's people.

Occurring sixth in time sequence is God's supernatural intervention: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (verse 29).

But Joel records, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and the terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31).

The Day of the Lord, spoken of in more than 30 prophecies, is clearly shown here to come after the heavenly signs. The time order is: first, the Tribulation — Satan's wrath; second, the heavenly signs; third, the Day of the Lord — God's intervention.

The same time sequence is revealed in Revelation 6, speaking of the seven seals. The fifth seal represents the Great Tribulation, followed by the heavenly signs, then the Day of the Lord or God's wrath (verses 9-17).

What is the "abomination of desolation" mentioned in Matthew 24:15?

Historically, the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 11:31) occurred when Antiochus Epiphanes assaulted Jerusalem with his army in 168 B.C. Antiochus set up the image of Jupiter Olympus, a Greek and Roman god, in the Temple.

The immediate abomination of desolation to which Jesus referred was the desecration of the Temple and destruction of Jerusalem by Roman armies in A.D. 70.

However, Jesus' prophecy is dual and has an end-time fulfillment. There is coming a time when armies will once again surround Jerusalem and an abomination will be set up in the city. When this occurs, those in Jerusalem are told to flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:16).

You need to understand the march of end-time events now occurring around you! For more information, request our free booklets *Are We in the Last Days?* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last!* □



KEEP MOVING!

A 1914 disaster on the icy Labrador Sea points up many lessons about our spiritual survival as Christians.

By Ford Burden

Every spring tens of thousands of square miles of ice cover the frigid Labrador Sea.

This ice field, known as the "Front," is made up of floating ice pans that vary in size and thickness. The pans can be several feet thick and can hold a few dozen men.

Each year the Front flows southward with the current toward the island of Newfoundland. Beginning in the latter years of the 17th century, men hunted on this ice. They were mostly Newfoundland fishermen struggling to make money to feed their families. It was rough and dangerous, but a berth on a ship bound for the Front was much sought after.

To adventurous young men it was always an exciting trip. To the older men the trip was more serious. They had a sober respect for the ice, knowing full well its dangers.

A shift in the wind could loosen the ice pack and separate the men from their ship. Ice pans could sink under a man's weight. Some of the old wooden steamships could be crushed by

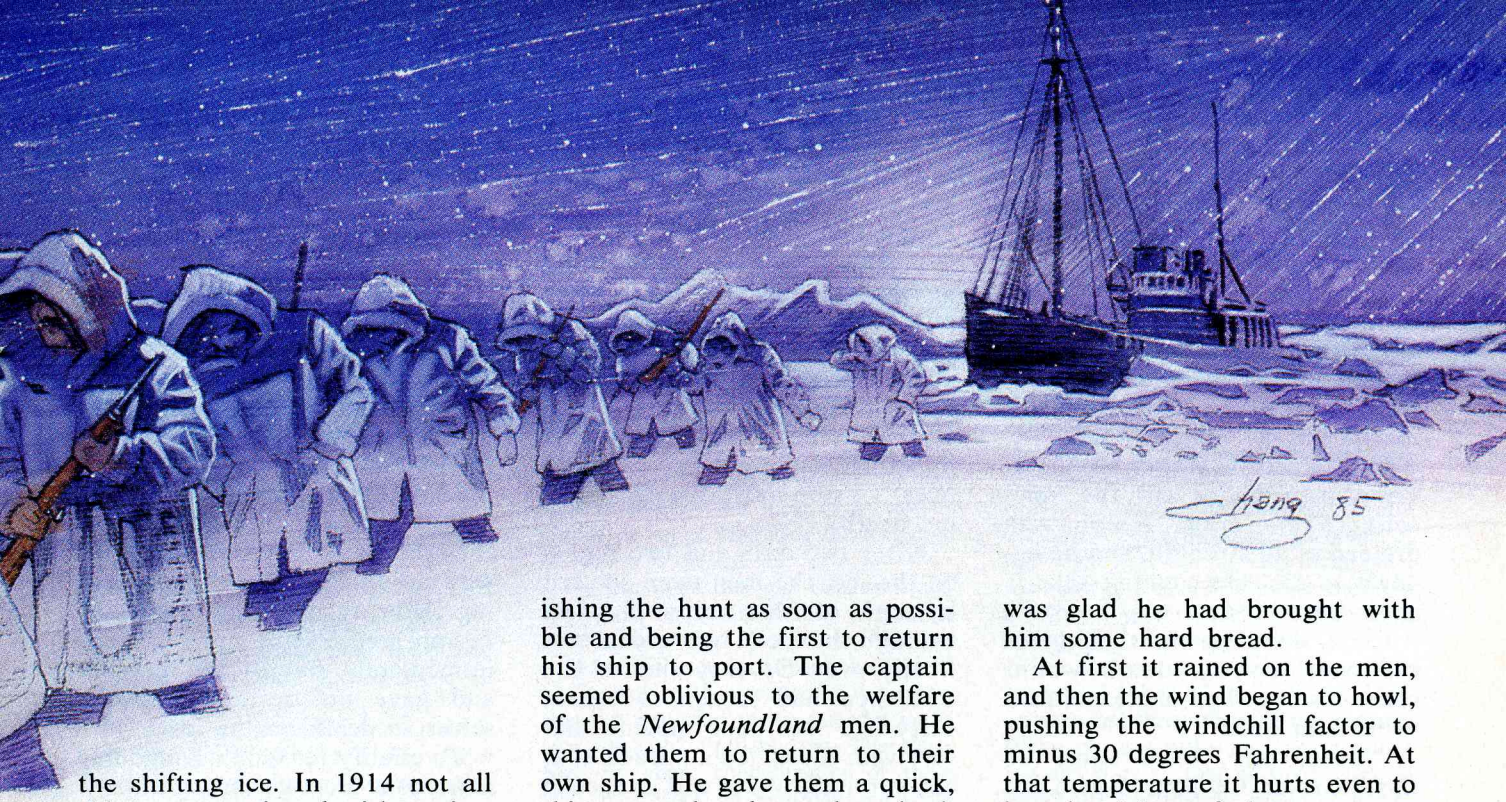


Illustration by Warren Chang

the shifting ice. In 1914 not all ships were equipped with a wireless (the early radio equipment). Without one, a ship could not communicate with other ships in emergencies.

That year, one of the worst disasters in Newfoundland's history occurred on the ice. The men involved left an incredible story of endurance and heroism. We as Christians can draw many lessons from their experience.

Stuck on the ice

Seventy-two years ago, on March 30, 1914, the *Newfoundland,* one of three wooden steamships on an expedition in the area, became stuck in the ice. The captain of the *Newfoundland* ordered 134 of his men over the side of his ship. Their orders were to hike about six miles over the rolling, jagged ice field to reach another steamship, the *Stephano.*

Walking through the ice field was an unenviable task. It took five hours to make it to the *Stephano.* When the exhausted men arrived there at noon, they expected to stay for the rest of the day and night, especially since the weather was getting bad and a storm was brewing.

But the captain of the *Stephano* made a fateful mistake. His mind was absorbed with finishing the hunt as soon as possible and being the first to return his ship to port. The captain seemed oblivious to the welfare of the *Newfoundland* men. He wanted them to return to their own ship. He gave them a quick, skimpy meal and put them back on the ice.

It was a decision he would live to regret.

After only 40 minutes of rest before being put back on the ice, the men were still exhausted. To make matters worse, the sky grew dull and gray, and the freezing air blew more and more snow over the ice. A storm was definitely coming, so the men quickly decided to head back to their own ship.

Many of the men were upset with the captain's decision, but they obeyed. They wished they had stayed back on board the *Stephano,* but it was too late. Soon the drifting snow covered their trail, and they became lost.

The older and more experienced men quickly realized the danger they were in. They knew that if they had to spend a night on the ice, their lives would be at stake.

Cecil Mouland, who was at the Front for the first time, suddenly remembered his grandfather's advice: "My son, if ye get caught out on the ice, always keep your jaw movin'. It'll keep ye from gettin' frostbitten." Cecil had a girl friend at home waiting for him. He intended to marry her, and had no intention of returning to her with a frostbitten face. He was glad he had brought with him some hard bread.

At first it rained on the men, and then the wind began to howl, pushing the windchill factor to minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit. At that temperature it hurts even to breathe. Most of the men were ill-clad, wearing only cotton clothing, without their waterproof oilskins. Their soaking clothes froze to their flesh. Hypothermia, a term the men probably had never even heard, was the deadly condition they faced. When a person is exposed to excessive cold for a long time, he becomes numb, movement is difficult and irresistible drowsiness overtakes him. He staggers. His eyesight fails, he falls and may become unconscious.

Keep the blood flowing!

"We gotta keep warm! Keep the blood flowin' in your veins!" shouted Jesse Collins, a veteran at the Front. He knew from his many years of experience that if they stopped moving, stopped the blood from flowing, they would freeze to death.

He emerged as a leader, pushing, shouting, motivating the weaker and younger men to keep moving. He got them to sing, dance lively jigs and march around the ice pans — anything to keep them moving. In a physical way he fulfilled the apostle Paul's admonition: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1, Authorized Version). Many men

had ice over their eyes, freezing them shut. Jesse sucked the ice off many of the men's eyes, causing his lips to freeze badly. But he kept moving and motivating others to do the same.

Cecil Mouland refused to die. At home in Doting Cove was his sweetheart Jessie. She was a teacher at a small school, and he was determined to return to marry her, no matter what.

Cecil's cousin, Ralph Mouland, was also on the ice with the *Newfoundland's* crew. Ralph was drained of all strength, and he lay down to die. He couldn't take it anymore.

Cecil, dreading the thought of the pain Ralph's death would cause his aunt and uncle, refused to let him quit.

"Here, boy, have some of this," coaxed Cecil, trying to get Ralph to eat some hard bread. But Ralph had no energy to eat it, so Cecil put the chunk of hard bread in his own mouth to soften it up and gave it back to Ralph. Then Ralph slowly and painfully struggled up from the ice, and began to move again.

For some it was all too easy to let numbness creep up their limbs, arms, legs and into their brains. Some kneeled down to pray, and were found frozen to death in that position.

Many men gave in to drowsiness. Wanting to rest for just a few minutes, they sat hunched together to keep warm. But most of these men collapsed into unconsciousness and died within minutes.

Others kept moving.

One man was at the Front with his two sons. During the night he put his arms around them, and they tightly embraced each other. The next day they were found frozen to death in that position. They stood like solid pieces of sculpture with snow drifting around them. They had stopped moving.

Spiritual hypothermia

What does the word *survival* mean to a Christian? To these men on the ice, it meant saving their physical lives. To a Christian, survival means qualifying for the gift of eternal life, rather than incurring the penalty of eternal death.

Spiritual survival means overcoming temptations, personal problems and Satan's persecution in a cold, cold world. To survive and be rescued at the return of Jesus Christ is akin to surviving hypothermia on the ice. But Christians have to fight spiritual hypothermia every day of their lives. To stop moving means eternal death.

After two days and two nights on the ice, the men were spotted by one of the ships plowing through the ice. Their ordeal was finally over. Seventy-nine of the 134 men had frozen to death. Fifty-five had kept moving and survived. It seemed a miracle that any survived. What was so special about those who did? What kept them alive?

The men who survived the *Newfoundland* disaster did so only because they displayed a blend of strength and perseverance. This blend is called stamina. Those who died were unable to exercise this quality.

Christians need the same spiritual stamina to qualify for the Kingdom of God.

Surviving spiritually

Most of the men who died on the ice were ordinary men with ordinary stamina. They had little chance of surviving.

Most of the people in God's Church are ordinary people with ordinary stamina. Of themselves, they have little chance of surviving spiritual hypothermia and enduring until Christ returns. We are the "weak" and "base" things of the world, with no strength of ourselves (I Corinthians 1:26-28).

But Christians have an incredibly powerful advantage that unconverted people don't have. Christians have God's promise that He will rescue us from every trial. The men of the *Newfoundland* did not know if their ship would come to their aid. Christians know that God always will (Psalm 37:23-24). God knows our spiritual weaknesses, and He has promised to rescue us when our trials are more than we can take: "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

Once, during the second day on the ice, the men of the *Newfoundland* could see a ship coming toward them, several miles away. Joy and relief warmed their blood as the ship made its way closer. But the ship, not seeing them, turned away and soon disappeared. Some men almost immediately fell to the ground and gave up, resigning themselves to death on the ice.

To qualify for God's Kingdom, Christians must go through many trials (Acts 14:22). Unfortunately, some Christians lose faith and give up fighting the problems that confront them. They are like the seed that fell on stony ground: "He has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matthew 13:21).

Even with God's promise, some Christians lie down on the ice and condemn themselves to spiritual death. They refuse to keep moving. Making it to the marriage supper of Jesus Christ doesn't excite them anymore.

Cecil Mouland was kept alive by his determination to marry his sweetheart Jessie. True Christians, too, are determined to endure and be married at the greatest marriage ever: "The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. . . . 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " (Revelation 19:7-9).

Cecil Mouland returned to Doting Cove and married Jessie. He, Jesse Collins and 53 other men lived to tell the tale, but only because they refused to give up.

God's people must likewise refuse to give up. We must avoid spiritual hypothermia. We must keep moving! □

LETTERS

"Personal" hit home

I just read your "Personal From Herbert W. Armstrong" in the December, 1985, *Good News*. It really hit home. I have not been pleasant, cheerful, happy, joyful or warm and affectionate, as I should be. I have given my family love and material possessions galore, but my wife calls me a tyrant and seems not to be thankful for anything. Maybe it is me, that I cannot see myself as others do and as God does.

Reader
Neenah, Wis.

Christmas

I'd like to take a minute to thank you for all of your caring. Your books and TV shows have truly opened my eyes, and my heart.

I look forward to your next magazines, both *The Good News* and *The Plain Truth*. I've received many of your books, also. I was so surprised to hear of your reasoning about Christmas and all of the hoopla that goes with it.

I never could understand why every November I dreaded the whole idea of buying presents for people in my husband's family (which is getting larger in leaps and bounds), going to my mother-in-law's for a Christmas party when she and the children were the only ones smiling, stringing flashy (fake is more to the point) ornaments on our beams, fighting traffic and knowing three quarters of the people out there are beyond the point of safely driving home. It never ends.

Reader
Gorham, Maine

I had been in a terrible state of anxiety on the issue of celebrating Christmas. I no longer have any doubts about *not* celebrating! My husband and three kids are torn.

I have lent my December issue to several different people who have asked if I could get some copies for them. There are three people so far from different churches who are going to raise the issue at church and Bible study.

Linda B. Brown
Hoquiam, Wash.

The true Sabbath

To the sublime babbling idiot Clayton D. Steep: Concerning your article on "Is That Really the Best They Can Do?" (December): How do you know that the Sabbath is Saturday? Did God Almighty come to you and tell you that our calendar Saturday is the true Sabbath? And also that anyone who works on our calendar Saturday will suffer everlasting death? Probably not. Only an idiot would dream up such [expletive deleted].

We do not know what day the true Sabbath falls on. Most of us who work must follow the rules of our employers and take our holidays off as directed by the people who hire (and fire) us. For you or Mr. Armstrong to say that anyone who does not take off work and worship on Saturday instead of any other day such as Sunday (for most of us, not by choice) is out of inheriting the Kingdom of heaven is absurd.

Do you think that just because someone works on Saturday they will suffer everlasting death? If you do, you are retarded. Did you count back the days all of the way to the creation to determine that this Saturday on the calendar is the true Sabbath? Probably not. Therefore: Shut up about condemnation of those who must work on Saturday and write something with a little more intelligence.

Hume L. Neumann
New Jersey

Our free booklets Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath? *and* Has Time Been Lost? *prove the truth about God's Sabbath. Interested readers may obtain copies by mailing the literature request card in this issue or by writing to our address nearest them (see inside front cover of this magazine for a list of our addresses).*

Halloween

I read your article about Halloween (October-November) about two weeks before Halloween and something stirred in me as I had my eyes opened to this fact. I have a 7-year-old who had been looking forward to Halloween with anticipation for over a month. We had already picked out his costume and the traditional Halloween pictures were hanging in our windows awaiting this night.

After reading your article, I wanted to withdraw from the celebration, but my son's excitement and enthusiasm about this coming event made me push my newfound belief aside and I went along with the world.

That night of October 31 was one that I will never forget. Your article made me see and hear the dark side of the spirit world that I never noticed before. I could no longer see the fun and excitement of that night. I felt guilt and extreme shame for allowing my child to participate with the other children dressed as creatures of the dark side, running to and fro from house to house *getting* candy with the greedy shout of "Trick or treat!" I suddenly saw Satan in every movement and act of that night.

Here I am, thought I, professing to be a good Christian, and I'm celebrating Satan's holiday!

I could no longer use the excuse of not knowing, because the Lord had pointed this fact out to me when He had me read your article. I felt fear!

When I went to bed that night, I did not have a peaceful sleep. The events of that night kept coming into focus and I felt more guilt than I have ever known in my life. I cried myself to sleep after asking the Lord's forgiveness.

The next morning, my guilt turned to anger, and I took all the Halloween decorations and threw them in the garbage. When my son woke up, I gave him a 364-day warning that he would have to accept the fact that we would no longer anticipate or participate in Halloween from this time on. I explained the origin of that dreadful night, and after he cried for approximately three minutes, he accepted my decision and is also spreading the truth to his fellow playmates.

Thank you for helping me to open my eyes to that heathen holiday.

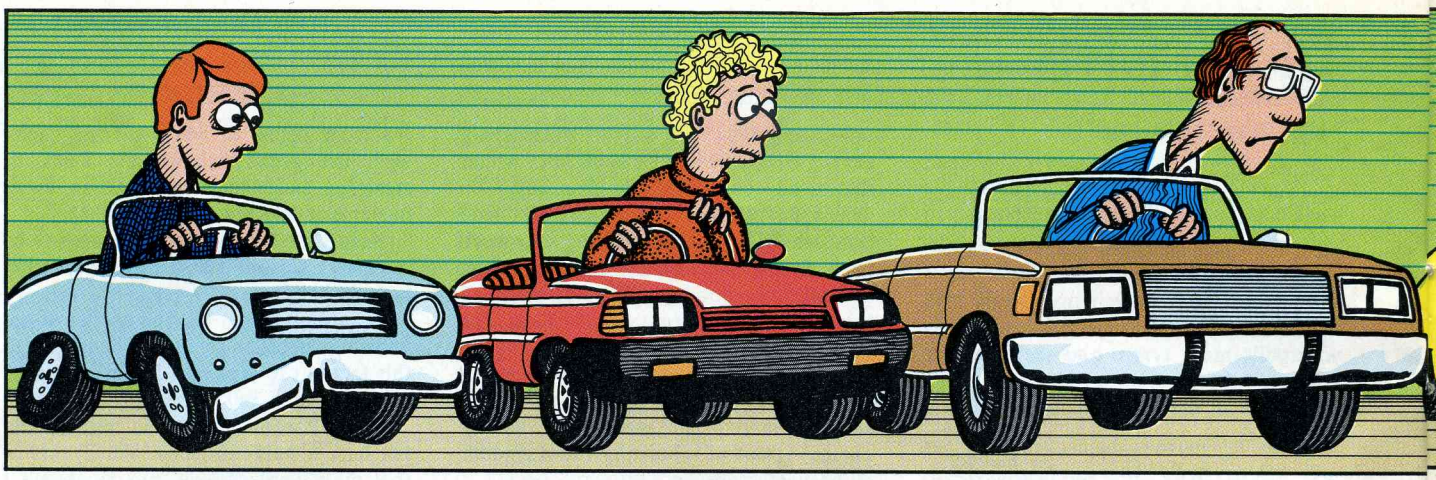
Shirley J. Beaudin
Detroit, Mich.

Inaccuracy clarified

I was interested to read in *The Good News* ("Before the Sun Sets," October-November) that people are encouraged to cook meat until it is "almost but not quite done" on a Friday, then reheat it the next day. Such advice is positively dangerous, as any public health inspector or doctor will confirm. The danger of food poisoning from partly cooking meat or poultry is very real.

W.F. Kerswell
Shropshire, England

Thank you for your letter. We apologize for the inaccuracy. Meat that is not cooked to doneness the first time could be a good place for bacteria to grow. Registered dieticians recommend cooking the meat until completely done the first time. Cool quickly. If the meat was cooked in liquid, remove the liquid before cooling. Then, on the Sabbath, slice the meat and reheat in the liquid. Slicing the meat allows for quicker reheating time. As another reader suggested, it would also be fine to put the roast in the oven on Saturday and set the timer for shortly before desired dinner time.



But Why Isn't G

Have you asked that question? If so, are you sure God really is not *blessing you? And if He is not, what can you do about it?*

By Clayton D. Steep

There is no doubt about it. God has promised to richly bless those who submit their lives to His precepts and laws.

The Bible is filled with such promises.

Take Malachi 3:10, for example, where God says to those who render to Him the part of their income He claims as His (a tithe, or 10 percent): " 'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this,' says the Lord of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.' "

Not room enough to receive all the blessing? Do you think that describes your situation?

Again, in Job 36:11 we read that if any obey and serve God, "They shall spend their days in prosperity." And Psalm 1:3 says of the righteous, "Whatever he does shall prosper." What about that? Can you say that depicts you?

Some Christians have looked at these and similar promises in God's Word and then looked at their own lives and become discouraged. "But why isn't God blessing *me?*" they have asked.

They have looked around them and seen what the Bible calls the "prosperity of the wicked." Like the writer of Psalm 73, they know God promises to bless the righteous (verse 1). But then when they observe how some of the wicked prosper, they are perplexed and come close to stumbling spiritually (verses 2-3).

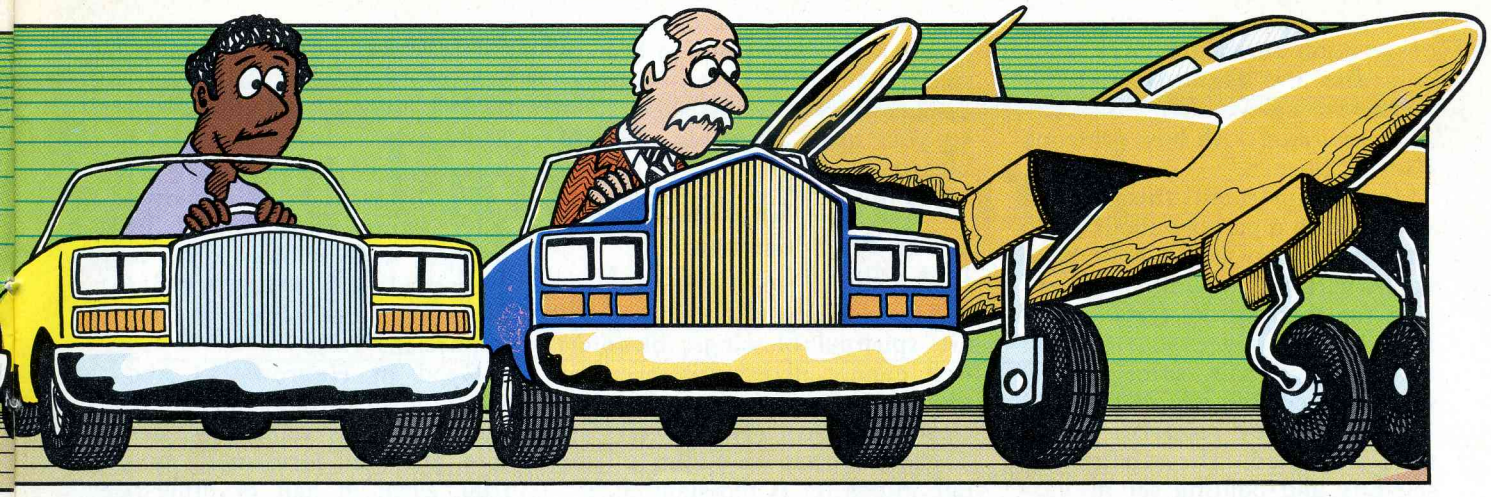
And what is perhaps even harder to endure, they may look at other Christians — maybe Christians who haven't been converted anywhere near as long as they have — and they see how some of them have prospered in a very visible way.

Oh, yes, they are aware they should not make such comparisons. Still, they have a difficult time rising above such thoughts. These thoughts are especially hard to deal with when one is faced with a pile of unpaid bills, unexpected major automobile or home repairs, sickness or just the desire to purchase something one cannot afford.

Does that sound familiar to you?

Not being blessed?

Let us consider the possibility that you truly are *not* being



-od Blessing Me?

blessed as you could be. That can happen. If that is the case, there is a reason. There are causes, and some profound self-examination is certainly called for.

Are you habitually disobeying God in some respect? Disregarding one point in God's laws is, in God's eyes, the same as disregarding them all (James 2:10).

Are you faithful in following the financial laws found in the Bible? If you don't know what they are, write for our free booklets *Ending Your Financial Worries* and *Managing Your Personal Finances*. Are you applying the seven laws of success in your life? (You may have our free booklet on this subject, also — *The Seven Laws of Success.*) Are you aware of the needs of others — especially the poor? God says He will bless those who generously share what they have with others (Proverbs 28:27).

This may seem too fundamental to even mention, but have you *asked* God to bless you? And more important yet, do you give at least equal time to praying for God's blessing on others? Including your enemies?

God doesn't expect us to be perfect before He will bless us materially. But He does want us to be sincerely trying to put into practice the truth we know. He wants us to be working toward perfection. That's the goal of the Christian life (Matthew 5:48).

But let's say you are fulfilling all these considerations, that you are really growing spiritually, but you still sometimes feel you are not being blessed as you should be.

In that case we have to ask by what standard you are measuring blessings. What gauge are you using? Is the quantity of material goods a person possesses the Christian standard? Are physical objects the primary measure of how much a Christian is blessed?

Not according to the Bible!

The true perspective

Let's get the true perspective on this. Let's go back to the beginning of our existence.

Each of us was conceived and then born at some point in time. Had we done anything to deserve conception and birth? Did we earn childhood? Did we do something to merit adolescence and adulthood? No, we did not! It was given to us.

However long any of us has lived to this moment, we have outlived countless other persons whose lives were cut short before they reached our age.

Think of it! The gift of life itself is an enormous undeserved blessing. Anything worthwhile we have in addition to being alive is a bonus. It is more than we deserve.

Oh, some may feel they have labored for various acquisitions. But they couldn't have done so without the gift of being able to labor. All the good things that are part of our lives are unmerited gifts — blessings.

What would make any of us think we deserve still more?

If God gives us more, that's wonderful. But if He doesn't, we must be careful lest we lose the blessings we have, for if we are so blind to our blessings that we don't know we have them — that we aren't deeply thankful for them — God may have to take them from us in order to make us realize and appreciate, perhaps too late, what they were (Psalm 39:11).

First things first

What is it that makes a person feel not "blessed"? More often than not such a feeling is a direct result of making the mistake warned against in II Corinthians 10:12 — the mistake of comparing oneself with other humans.

It is a common blunder. "So and so has more than I have" is the first thought in a rapid-fire mental process that sees casual

Illustration by Monte Wolverton

observation turn into envy, covetousness and dissatisfaction.

The person feels not "blessed" *in comparison* with how someone else is "blessed."

Jesus illustrated this human weakness in a parable about some employees who would have been happy with the amount they were paid for their work. They *would have* been happy except for one thing: They saw some fellow workers receiving a higher hourly wage than they received. Gratitude vanished. Dissatisfaction, self-pity and pouting set in.

The employer, representing God in the parable, sternly corrected them for their wrong attitudes. "Is it not lawful," he asked, "for me to do what I wish with my own things?" (Matthew 20:1-16).

All blessings — all good gifts — belong to God and come from Him (James 1:17). Who are we to ever question how He chooses to distribute them?

It must displease God greatly to see a person pouting for lack of a better TV set or automobile or house or standard of living. If that person's heart is so set on physical things that he or she carries on like a spoiled child for not having more, one of the most harmful things that could happen to that person would be to be blessed with still more material goods.

Such an increase could become a snare, causing that person to even lose out on salvation. Believe it or not, it can be harder for a rich person to stay close to God than for a person who has little in the way of this world's goods (Luke 18:25).

Consider the disastrous effect wealth had on King Solomon. He had lavish wealth, but it helped to ruin him spiritually because he didn't use it properly. If it happened to a man of such great wisdom, it could certainly happen to any of us.

"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses," Jesus said (Luke 12:15). That is well worth memorizing. Never were those words more important to bear in mind than in this over-commercialized, materialistic age. Don't set your heart on visible, physical blessings. Instead, seek to be "rich toward God" (verse 21).

Count the blessings that count

The blessings that really count are spiritual blessings, blessings that cannot necessarily even be physically seen, but can be perceived by faith (Hebrews 11:1). These are what we ought to have our minds on (Colossians 3:2).

All this is not to say God doesn't physically, materially and financially bless those who submit their lives to Him and seek the right way to better their circumstances. He certainly does.

But the point is, if He doesn't do it in the way, to the extent or at the precise time we think He ought to, we should nevertheless give thanks unceasingly for what we do have (Ephesians 5:20).

There is, after all, no promise in the Bible that a person who becomes a Christian will automatically gain great material wealth. The apostle Paul wrote against the notion that "godliness is a means of gain." Rather, he specified, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Timothy 6:5-6).

When you get right down to it, what is it that makes an object or an experience a blessing? Is it not that the object or experience promotes well-being and happiness?

The more situations a person can be happy in, the greater that person is blessed. It is not therefore the physical circumstances that count most; being blessed is primarily a state of mind, because the mind is where a person decides what it is he or she considers enjoyable.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness," Paul penned on another occasion, "and be content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5).

Paul knew what he was talking about. Read in II Corinthians 11:23-28 about events that dominated so much of his Christian life — being beaten, stoned, imprisoned, shipwrecked, in constant danger, subjected to hunger, thirst, sleeplessness, to name a few of the trials and deprivations he faced.

Hardly what some would consider being blessed! But Paul thought he was blessed — very blessed "with every spiritual blessing" available in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Read in Hebrews 11 about saints down through history who were homeless wanderers, destitute, afflicted, tormented, put on trial, sawn in half or otherwise executed (verses 36-38). These were some of God's very own people, His chosen and called ones, individuals whom He loved and richly blessed — if you have the eye of faith to see it.

Blessed? By what standard? By the standard that counts most. They had a personal relationship with Almighty God. They had the priceless promise of eternal life. They received inner strength, comfort, joy (even in adversity), hope and all the other fruits of God's Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Nothing else a person can possess in this physical existence really matters. Anything else is expendable, and they knew it.

Wealth? God was their gold and their precious silver (Job 22:23-26). They were indeed blessed. They sought God's Kingdom first and trusted in Him to add the physical and material blessings when and how it pleased Him (Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 11:13). They knew that if they sought to do the will of God before all else, they would someday become inheritors with Jesus Christ of all wealth (Hebrews 10:36, James 2:5, Romans 8:17).

Have you been looking too much at what can be seen — the things that are temporary — rather than the things that are eternal (II Corinthians 4:18)? It's easy to do.

Perhaps a freshened perspective combined with a recount of your blessings is in order. You may be surprised at how much more blessed you are than you had imagined! □

Prepared by Richard H. Sedliacik

The Faith Required for Salvation!

What is the biblical definition of faith? Exactly what kind of faith do we need to please God — to live the obedient, overcoming Christian life outlined in the Bible and be born as glorified members of God's great, universe-ruling Family?

First, we must understand that this faith is not the power of positive thinking — trying to improve and overcome by just thinking positive thoughts.

Many people also make the mistake of confusing faith with emotions. They try to work up faith, which to them means an emotional feeling. But these feelings are not the evidence of having faith. They are in the class of what can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled or felt — in other words, they are physical.

Faith is a *spiritual* matter — not physical. Let's understand God's definition of the kind of faith required for salvation.

1. Are Christians to "walk" — live their lives — by faith? II Corinthians 5:7, Romans 1:17.

2. Should they seek and look forward to obtaining promises and rewards that are not seen? Colossians 3:1-2. Did Paul elsewhere verify that Christians seek after the real, but unseen, eternal rewards and promises of God? II Corinthians 4:18.

3. Do the above scriptures confirm God's definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1?

Faith is the "substance" — or more accurately, the assurance or confidence — "of things hoped for." Before you receive what you hope for, you already have it in substance, and that substance — that assurance or confidence that you shall possess it — is faith. Faith is your evidence that you shall have what you do not yet see. This faith is based on the sure promises of God, which are recorded in the Bible.

4. Is it possible to please God without this kind of faith? Verse 6.

As this verse explains, faith toward God is our absolute recognition that He exists, and our belief that He blesses us according to His promises as long as we sincerely strive to serve and obey Him. This faith is *acquired*. You cannot cause yourself to have this kind of faith through autosuggestion or any other self-help technique! (More about the source of this faith a little later.)

5. Must obedience to God accompany one's faith to make it alive and acceptable to Him? Romans 3:31, James 2:14-26.

6. How does one demonstrate his faith? James 2:18. What does one's faith become if not accompanied by works? Verses 17, 20, 26.

Many professing Christians have a dead faith. Faith to them is merely belief in Christ's existence and His sacrifice for the sins of mankind. They do not understand that there is something God requires them to *do* to make their faith alive and active!

Traditional Christianity believes that Jesus lived a good life for us — that He obeyed God's law in our stead. However, the Bible makes it crystal clear that having faith does not excuse us from obedience to God.

This is a great mystery to those who do not understand. God requires us to follow His law of love — His way of life as spelled out by the Ten Commandments — to be saved (Matthew 19:16-19). Yet we are unable to do so of ourselves. So, many have concluded that God sent Jesus to obey Him for us and thereby excuse us from obedience to God. Nothing could be further from the truth!

7. Did Noah express living faith when he obeyed God's command to build the ark? Hebrews 11:7. Was there any physical evidence that a great Flood would come? Same verse. (Notice the words "things not yet seen.")

Noah had trust and confidence that the invisible God would perform what He promised. And he proved his faith by his works. Faith and obedience went hand in hand to produce living faith.

8. Did God find Abraham to be "faithful" — full of faith? Nehemiah 9:7-8. Did Abraham have living faith? Genesis 26:5, Hebrews 11:8-10, James 2:21-24.

Abraham proved his faith by his works. Therefore God promised to greatly bless him and his descendants (Genesis 22:15-18). Abraham is an outstanding example of the kind of faithful obedience God requires.

One of the most thrilling examples of living

faith recorded in the Bible is that of Daniel's three young friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had erected a great golden image and ordered everyone to worship his idol at certain designated times. Those who refused were to be thrown alive into a fiery furnace (Daniel 3:3-6).

9. What did Nebuchadnezzar do when Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego informed him that they would not worship his idol? Verses 19-23.

What would you have done had you been in their shoes? Would you have said, "Well, I have no choice but to bow down to this image — I have to do it or be killed"? Or perhaps you might have excused yourself thus: "I don't think God would be fair if He punished me for bowing down before this idol when He knows I'm forced to do it."

Yes, it's easy to use human reasoning to excuse disobedience to God. But God isn't looking for chances to punish us. He is, rather, looking for opportunities to save us through faith in His power.

These three young men knew that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). By faith they knew God makes it possible for us to obey Him.

Notice that God allowed them to go beyond the point of human help. No one could help now but God. He had to see that they would not only be willing to say they would go all the way, but He allowed them to go all the way before He saved them from the trial. God expected them to go that one step further — to back up their words by their actions.

10. To his amazement, what did the king find when he looked into the furnace? Daniel 3:24-25. What did Nebuchadnezzar say to the three men when he saw them and an angel from God walking around in the midst of the fire? Verses 26-28. Notice the words "delivered His servants who trusted in Him" in verse 28.

This is an astounding example of living faith — a faith that trusted God to make it possible to obey His law.

God tells us through Paul that He will never test us beyond what we are able to bear (I Corinthians 10:13). Yet it would seem that if anybody ever came close to the breaking point, these men probably did. But they did not break in this trial because they had absolute faith in God. And the God they faithfully obeyed did intervene to save them!

11. Is the faith through which we are to please God and receive salvation a *gift* from God? Ephesians 2:8. Is this faith an attribute of God's Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22. Whose faith, in reality, is it? Revelation 14:12.

In Revelation 14:12 is a description of the true Church of God. Those in God's Church have the "faith *of* Jesus." It is not just *their* faith *in* Him, but *His* faith placed in them and acting in them!

12. Did Paul plainly state that Christ lived in him? Galatians 2:20. How did Christ live in him? Philippians 2:5, Romans 8:9-10.

Jesus Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God from Christ implanted in Paul's mind the faith *of* Christ — the same faith that can be in your mind. That faith — the very faith of Jesus Christ — will enable you to live a life of obedience to God as did the apostle Paul and all the other righteous men and women of God.

If we were able, of ourselves, to supply the faith to obey God, our obedience would be self-righteousness, which to God is but "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Our righteousness must be through the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith, not our own!

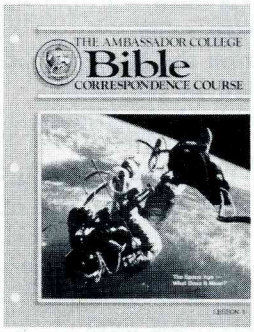
13. What must one do to receive the Holy Spirit and very faith of Jesus Christ? Acts 2:38. Must one be willing to obey God? Acts 5:32. And must a person first show faith toward Christ before he or she can receive His faith? Acts 20:21, Romans 1:17.

God will give His Spirit and the resulting faith of Christ only to those who meet these prior conditions.

Yes, it does take our own faith to believe in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. But that faith does not save us. It is only when the Spirit of God comes into our minds that we receive the saving faith of Christ. And it all comes as a free gift from God. We could never earn it.

Jesus is the source of living, active, dynamic faith. And if Christ is in us through God's Spirit, He imparts His own faith to us, which makes our spiritual obedience and ultimate salvation possible.

(For an in-depth study of the kind of faith required for salvation and how to receive it, request a copy of our free booklet *What Is Faith?*) □



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The short study you've just completed is a sample of the study method used in each monthly lesson of the eye-opening Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. You can enroll in this free course by mailing the request envelope in this issue or by writing to the *Good News* address nearest you. See inside front cover for addresses.

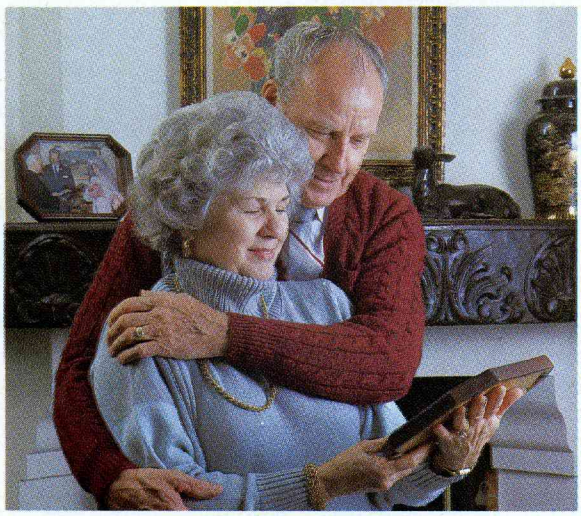
By Earl H. Williams

Today's Treasures

How much we miss in life!

Often we are so concerned with details and worries about tomorrow that we miss what's happening today.

Oh, it's alright to think about and plan for the future — it's a must in the Christian life — but



God intends for us to enjoy the good gifts He bestows upon us now, too. If we are not alert we can overlook many treasures that we pass along the way through our lives.

Overlooked family joys

Slow down and think about your family. Perhaps you will see how much you've been missing as you've hurried along.

Look at your mate. Remember your first date? Well, what about today? If you are striving to live by God's laws, your wife or husband should be even more attractive today than when you first met. Stop and savor the moment — the life you share now.

Gaze upon his or her face and think about the treasures stored away in memory — the happy times, the closeness, the accomplishments, the tenderness. Even simple smiles can brighten cloudy days.

What about the sound of your mate's hello? If you would stop and really listen, you'd hear a symphony. The sighs, the laughs, the casual conversation are all fine instruments playing for you. Notice the little things.

Ancient King Solomon knew about these treasures of today. On living with our mates, he commented: "Live joyfully with the wife [or husband] whom you love all the days of your vain life . . . Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (Ecclesiastes 9:9-10).

Elsewhere Solomon offered this insight: "There is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage" (Ecclesiastes 3:22).

Marriage is one of the most central of life's relationships. Savor all the little things about your mate today.

You don't know what tomorrow may bring!

And what about your children? God has given our children to us to nurture.

Again, Solomon said, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is His reward" (Psalm 127:3). Children grow so fast and then go on their way. We could easily miss all the subtle but invaluable joys they can give us. See the morning sparkle in their eyes as they greet each day. "What's for breakfast, Mom?" Stop and just watch them as they run and play. If only we had their energy!

And when they are tuckered out, kneel with them and pray, thanking God for His love and kindness toward us. As they sleep, peek around the corner and look at them. If we take time to notice the little things, we can experience pleasures that are simple and yet difficult to describe in words.

Be sure you are teaching your children God's laws. You should never be too busy to fulfill this important responsibility: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). Yes, it's a constant job. But teach God's way continually and your children will grow up to live that way (Proverbs 22:6).

Treasures to discover

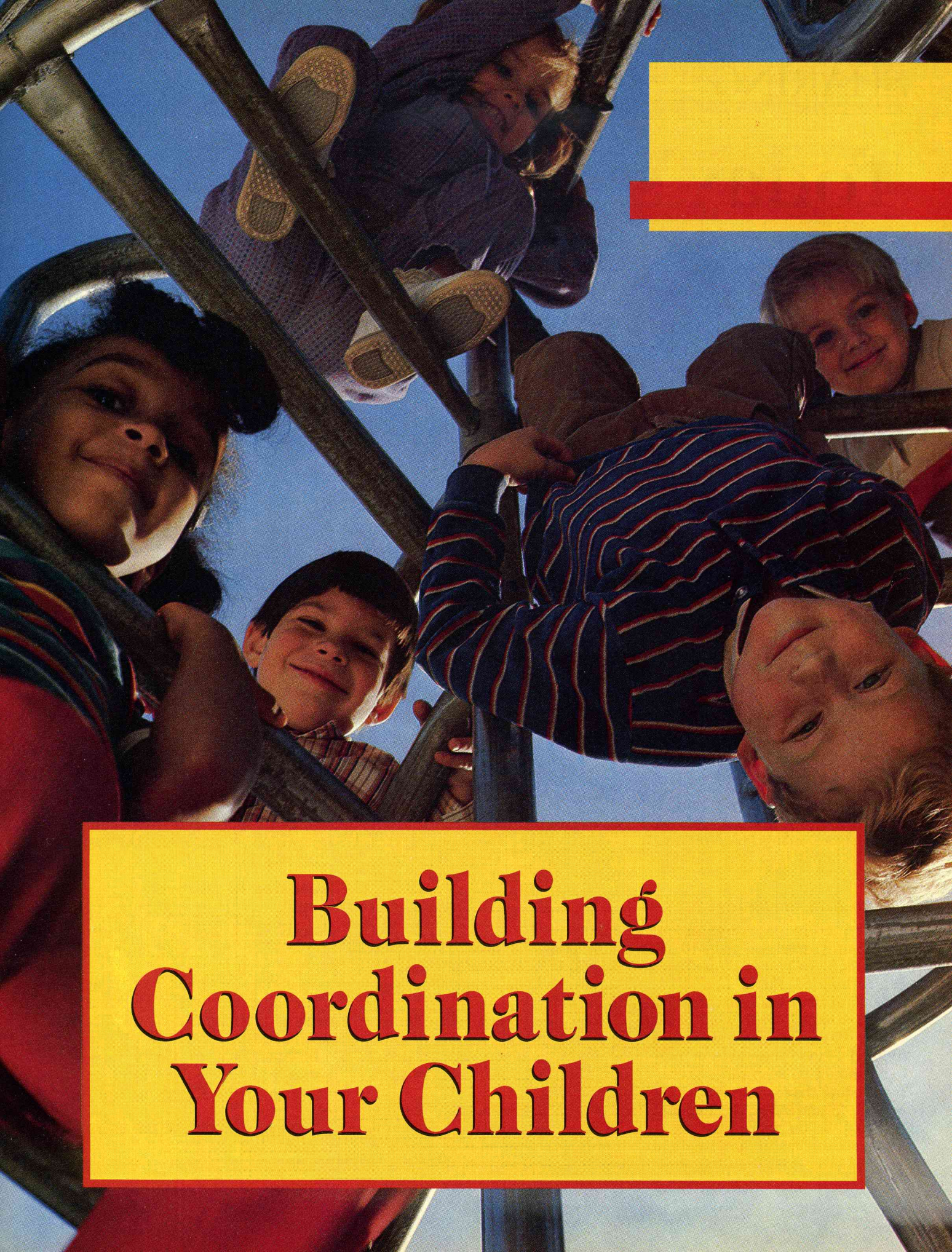
There are so many treasures to discover in our lives if we'd just stop and see them. Our family is just one area!

Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow is not here yet. What God has given us is a valuable commodity called *today*.

In obedience to God's laws, and as you look to the ultimate future in God's Kingdom, enjoy today.

Tap every minute. Savor every moment! □

Photo by G.A. Belluche Jr.



Building Coordination in Your Children

Learning to coordinate mind and body is essential to a child's future success. Here's practical advice for parents.

By Joan C. Bogdanchik

Ask a mother-to-be who is just a few months pregnant what she first looks forward to experiencing.

Movement — the first stirrings of her child within her!

Movement conveys to her that all is progressing well. Parents-to-be are exhilarated as they trace baby's activity across mother's abdomen.

Movement symbolizes life, and movement is necessary to sustain life. All throughout life we move our bodies in the space around us. How well we do so helps determine our quality of life.

It is through movement that baby enters the world. After birth it is through movement that the baby stretches and grows. It is through movement that the baby blows bubbles, fingers its hand, reaches and explores.

Mental growth is tied closely to movement. Lack of or limited activity can hinder growth. Play is fundamental to the way babies learn about themselves and their world. It is essential to their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

I have been a schoolteacher for many years. With each entering class, I find parents who stress only certain areas of development in their child, while they rarely touch on other areas. Often, if parents are athletically inclined, this is stressed. If parents tend to be more sedentary, the child's exposure to physical activity can be sorely limited. The child is afraid to participate with others.

Importance of physical activity

Often, involvement in physical (as opposed to mental) pursuits is not considered important. Of much more import, say some, is reading, for example. So they set out to teach their tiny tots reading, forgetting vital, foundational necessities.

The movements at life's start must continue and develop. Through life's experiences we gain a type of physical education. From earliest days, a child needs movement to help the child discover and explore his or her world.

Play is not just a filler of the child's time. It is of fundamental importance to growth — a most essential part of the learning process. The child, while playing, grows and develops. Through the movement of play, children advance from their helpless state to new stages of accomplishment. They do this by developing their growing bodies by exercise. Children learn muscle control and coordination.

How vital to success it is to coordinate mind and body!

The mind and emotions develop as children rehearse real-life situations through play. Did you ever hear your child talking to a doll or other toy in tones he or she has heard? Have you noted how your child bounces or throws a ball? Is it with happiness and joy? Or is it being done in fear — or anger?

Through play children act out events in their lives, trying to understand new concepts they have encountered. They learn to solve problems. They practice being in charge. They grow in language development.

Play is a definite learning process. It is a sign of healthy growth. Have you noticed that a child does not want to play when he is ill? Children are their real selves when they play. By observing them we see what our children are like. If we direct them in what they do, we help determine what they become.

Observe and direct

This should be uppermost in our minds. We should be directing our children's activities to help them develop physical, mental and social skills, for these skills are to be used all throughout life in work and play.

But we must not forget that play must be fun! Parents must be careful not to stress only "educational" play and put pressure into their children's lives. Play should be pleasurable and natural, fitting a child's needs.

The parents are the first ones to play with their child. They are the child's first "playthings." How the child grows to look for the parents — their faces, their touch, their scent, their voices! Parents are more valuable than any toy could ever be. Don't ever abandon your position.

The parents help the child to play together with them as well as alone. The child needs the playing companionship of both parents. While Mother tends to play with coos and cuddling, Father plays the rough-and-tumble games that cause the child to explore and accomplish feats of mastery. While he or she wants Mother for comfort and security, you'll notice he or she will also want more of Father's games.

And this is important: Because of Father's involvement, a child will tend to be less fretful when meeting new people, and will make steady advances in social skills.

Since God made us social beings, it is important to learn early how to get along with others. A child needs to learn both how to contribute and how to receive benefits from the group. Through instruction, the selfish *I* drives can be directed to become the *we* drives that properly trained children should possess and display. A child who is flexible in games and sports, who can play and

Photos by Hal Finch

work with others, will achieve this level of maturity faster.

Play helps children learn warmth, understanding and sympathy. A child experiences hard knocks through play and learns how to win and lose gracefully. He or she learns when to assert and when to sacrifice self-interest, and to persevere to the end.

But parents must come to know the needs of their child. Father must know how much a child is able to handle for his or her age. He must know when it is time for rolling on the floor or other kinds of activities.



Parents must provide their child with a variety of experiences, as these experiences spawn such wonderful, long-range effects. The active participation of Father in the child's play is extremely vital to the child's well-being and balanced growth.

Develop mental gifts

Children are born with a wide variety of mental gifts, which we as parents must encourage and develop. We should be bringing all of the child's senses into play.

At night, a dim light burning in the baby's room offers something to look at upon awakening.

Babies need a change of scenery. They benefit from soft, hanging objects near their cribs. Bouncing the objects on elastic ribbons is a wonderful discovery of science principles. Rattles are essential. Make sure all you supply are safely made. During the first four months keep objects within baby's focus. Eight to 12 inches is good. Be sure the objects are too large to be swallowed.

When you talk to your baby as you move around the room, you become a moving target to follow, helping the child associate sight and sound and build coordination. If you carry your baby in an upright position, you will increase visual experiences.

At 2 to 3 months help your baby switch hands while shaking a rattle, and hold his or her hands in front of his or her face as you play peekaboo.

At 4 to 6 months hand your baby an object and help him or her take hold of it. As you take it away you are helping to develop eye-hand coordination. As the baby grows, place a toy just a little farther out of reach. The child will have to stretch to reach it. Shake a rattle first on one side of the baby, then the other. This helps eye muscles. Placing him or her on the tummy and doing this helps develop neck and arms. With a little help from you, this game can help him or her turn over, as you gently guide the body with your hand.

At about 5 months, prop the baby up to watch your activities of the day. Be sure, though, that you give a variety of other activities, too.

At 6 to 8 months, allow your child to crawl outside the confines of the playpen and explore surroundings. Creeping and crawling are important to coordinated growth.

But be sure your house is safe! Put all dangerous items out of sight and reach. Take note of your housekeeping. Be sure the carpet is vacuumed and that no dangerous or hazardous pins, coins, buttons or tacks are within baby's grasp. Check furniture edgings, glass, tablecloths and electrical outlets. Be thoroughly aware of baby's environment.

Promote creativity

Store-bought toys are not the most valuable possessions your child has. So many things around the house are there for baby's enjoyment!

Cardboard boxes of all sizes (some big enough to crawl through), plastic cups and spoons, empty paper-towel rolls and pots and pans lend themselves to great experimentation. They help the child to seriate, or line up and stack according to size. This is valuable training for schoolwork later on. Give your child a paper (not plastic) bag to fill and empty.

Don't think you must spend great sums of money on toys. Like an effective classroom, a home need not be furnished expensively to have the best education going on. Creativity is much more valuable. Too many luxurious playthings tend to lead to lesser values of the right sort.

Be sure of the safety of all bought toys. And don't give your child too many toys at once. Put some away and change toys for surprise and new interest.

Toys that involve your child in making things happen are the most valuable. This aids coordination as, for example, squeezing makes parts move or change shape. If toys are too difficult, they don't help coordination. The child then gets the idea that others must do it for him or her.

Don't forget balls. Give your

child various sizes over the years. Start with one the size of a soccer ball. You will find it easier for your child to throw than to catch, as more eye-hand coordination is needed for the latter.

Give your child a ball and a wall. The ball becomes an active playmate by its movement. Coordination and learning take place.

Roll the ball to him or her. Later on toss it to the hands. Do not try to have your child move to it at the beginning. He or she cannot coordinate these movements yet.

Water play is important. Using a variety of squeezing, squirting, floating and sinking utensils teaches much. (When the child changes from his tub to the big bath, don't put in too much water. Never leave your child unattended — not for a second.)

Blocks aid manipulation and building, but be sure to start with soft, sponge ones.

Let your child have an old zipper to play with as ability matures, as well as material to button and holes to lace. What good practice here! Let him or her feel the differences between various fabrics.

Motor skills

Your child needs exercise in motor skills. Playing with small objects such as beads (which may be threaded), picking berries, sorting nails for Daddy, cutting pictures from old magazines and pasting will help improve coordination of fine motor skills and small muscle development.

Sorting cut-out pictures according to category, such as those found in the kitchen, living room and so on, makes for good organization practice. Paste them in a scrapbook, assigning separate pages for each room. Let him or her paste some pictures on the plastic lids of cans to make pictures for wall hanging.

Be sure your child is given experience in working with clay. This molding in three dimensions is important. The shape changing gives him new challenges.

Make your own jigsaw puzzles by pasting pictures on cardboard and cutting into several parts. Make the pieces smaller as your child grows bigger.

In home responsibilities, have your child pick up small bits of trash. This combines hand-finger coordination with useful chores.

Your child needs both the large and small motor skills to be exercised. For proper growth, too, he needs well-fitting shoes. It is difficult for a child to play in slick sandals.

Make a line on the floor or ground. Have your child practice stepping, then jumping over it. Add another line or string on the ground. Widen the distance according to your child's skill.

Provide, or give playground access to, climbing frames, jungle gyms, swinging loops or tires from sturdy tree branches, swings and slides.

Initially some children may be afraid of some playground equipment. Understand this and encourage them. Teach them safety rules. Playing on this equipment encourages a child to estimate distance. Thought must precede action. Good training is going on. Movements must be coordinated with thought.

As he or she rides a rocking horse or wagon that is straddled and pushed by the feet, eye-hand-foot coordination increases.

Sharpening perception

Remember that children from rural areas need directed play, too, in addition to the fields of experience through which they roam.

And how careful we must be if we are city and apartment dwellers to see that our children are exposed to places of play where they may move, explore and discover amidst trees, bushes and meadows, while creating their own games and adventures. For some parents this may take some doing. But how valuable it is for children to be surrounded by the natural environment of growing things found in God's creation!

Our children need to develop their bodies while they sharpen their perceptual skills. Perception involves receiving information through the senses, and the ability to react accordingly.

Parents need to be sure that their child knows left from right and how to jump, slide, hop and hop and skip. Can your your child hop on both the left and right foot? Are movements coordinated? Can he or she control both sides of the body together and separately?



A coordinated body helps promote early success for your child. This spills over into all of life's later activities.

Coordinated movement goes far beyond the playground! Work diligently on cultivating it in your child. □

What Is Death?

Public enemy No. 1! That's how death can be described. For truly it will slay us all, and at a time of its own choosing.

But paradoxically, although we all know we will die, very few know exactly what death is. Certainly death must be the least understood although most relentless enemy!

Yet it need not remain a mystery to those who will look into their Bibles to read — and believe — what God says. For God has not left us in ignorance about this important subject.

The basic doctrine

Since life is merely a temporary, mortal, chemical process (with man being made from the physical elements — "dust"), death is just the cessation of life. One who is dead has no consciousness separate from his body and feels no pain nor pleasure, but is as if asleep. Nonetheless, we all will live again after death, after a passage of time, when resurrected back to life again.

The usual teachings of this world

Most professing Christians believe that at death they do not really die — that is, cease to live in any form. They instead believe that at death only the body dies, and that the "soul" is then liberated to live on in heaven or hell (depending upon the moral merit of the former life).

Others believe in reincarnation, thinking that their soul, which is liberated at death, will be placed in a new body to live again, with this process occurring over and over. Scientists who believe evolution seem to recognize death for what it is (the total cessation of life), but they also err because they know nothing of the hope of the dead — life again after a resurrection. Even other beliefs about death exist.

Yet, surprisingly, these concepts are not from the Bible!

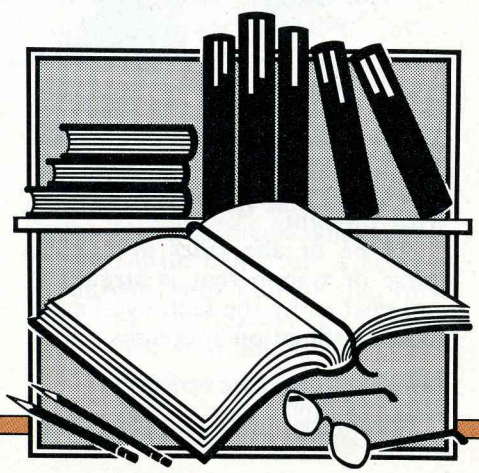
The Bible teaching

Perhaps the main reason why people, religious or otherwise, do not understand death is because, first of all, they do not understand what life is. The Bible makes it plain.

Genesis 2:7 records, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and *man became a living soul*" (Authorized Version).

Notice! Man does not *have* a soul. He *is* a soul. The word translated "soul" here is the Hebrew word *nephesh*. It means a living, breathing, physical creature. The word carries no implication of immortality. In Genesis 1:24 it is translated "living creature" and refers to animals.

Further, the Scriptures say dogmatically that the soul can die and therefore cannot be immortal. See Ezekiel 18:4, 20 and Matthew 10:28.



The Bible nowhere teaches that man has an immortal soul. In fact, the immortal soul doctrine was adopted by professing Christianity from pagan Egypt through the Greek philosophers.

But note that man, as God stated, is composed of the physical elements of the earth and is dust. God plainly told Adam, who sinned, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). But men do not want to die, so they do not want to believe God. They do not want to believe that man's life is merely a physicochemical existence that will run down and stop — die!

Hence, they choose instead to believe the lie Satan told Eve when he said, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). They believe that within this dusty body, as a sort of prisoner of the flesh, is an immortal soul that is unleashed at the death of the body and that continues in conscious life forever.

To be sure, man is not merely an animal. For one, man is made in God's image and in God's likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). And man's potential — that of being born into the God Family — is far more incredible than the fate of any animal.

Further, God reveals that there is a spirit in man (I Corinthians 2:11) that gives man mental superiority over animals. It is this spirit that imparts the power of mind to man, and the power of moral decision, including the ability to grow in character. But this spirit is not the man. And it is not an immortal soul. It is something in man that gives man

a dimension of life above the animals. It does not give him immortal life, however.

To understand death requires that we know that man's life is merely a chemical process involving physical elements. When that process stops, we die. We are dust, and when we die our bodies decay and return to the dust.

When we die, all conscious thought and awareness ceases. Notice Psalm 6:5: "For in death there is no remembrance of You; in the grave who will give You thanks?"

And compare Ecclesiastes 9:4-5: "For him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing."

The apostle Peter knew that even the righteous die and lose all consciousness and bodily presence, for he stated: "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. . . . For David did not ascend into the heavens" (Acts 2:29, 34). Even righteous David was not an immortal soul that left his body and went to heaven. Even David was dust and decayed back to the elements.

Other scriptures supply even more detail about death, comparing it in a figure of speech to sleep (I Corinthians 11:30, I Kings 2:10). When a person is asleep, he loses consciousness and is unaware of his surroundings.

The topic of death is in some ways unique. Most people will not believe what God says if their senses tell them differently. For example, Adam and Eve did not believe God's warning about the tree of good and evil, because the fruit of it looked good and desirable. Yet, in the case of death, people will not believe God when He says death is what it indeed appears to be to the most casual observer — namely, the cessation of life! People will not believe God no matter what He says, whether our senses tell us to agree or not.

But caution! Nothing said here means to imply that death is the end of all hope of life. It is not. An old saying goes, "Where there is life, there is hope." But the great God says, in effect, that even where there is death there is still hope — in fact, the main hope.

That hope is the resurrection of the dead from death to life again. Notice Job's question and answer about death: "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come" (Job 14:14, AV).

Realize this: The demonstrable fact of the resurrection of the dead proves once and for all that humans are not immortal souls. If we were, why would the dead have to be resurrected? They would already be alive.

And see further Christ's startling statement: "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live" (John 5:25).

Jesus knew His statement might startle His audience, so He said further: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation [judgment]" (verses 28-29).

The Scriptures are plain that all people will be resurrected, even those who will eventually be cast into the lake of fire to die the "second death." For more information request our booklet *Life After Death* and our reprint article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?"

The apostle Paul chose to comfort the living relatives of those true Christians who had died by reminding them of the wonderful resurrection to come (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

To alleviate their sorrow, Paul explained that the dead in Christ will be resurrected at Christ's return, and that they — along with us, if we qualify — will forever be with Christ.

Yes, the truth about death is far less foreboding than the fanciful imaginations of well-intentioned but errant religionists!

Key verses

When properly understood, this topic of death can fill us all with real hope, for then we know the wonderful truth that we will all see our beloved deceased relatives again. Therefore it may be well to note specially the basic scriptures that describe the truth about death. Here are some of them:

Genesis 2:7 and 3:19 — man is a mortal being made from the dust. Genesis 1:24 — the Hebrew word translated "soul" in Genesis 2:7 is translated here as "living creature" and refers to animals. Ezekiel 18:4, 20 and Matthew 10:28 — the soul is not immortal; it dies. Psalm 6:5 and Ecclesiastes 9:4-5 — the dead have no consciousness. John 11:11-14 and I Kings 2:10 — death is compared to sleep. John 5:25, 28-29 and I Corinthians 15 — the dead will be resurrected.

Death is indeed an enemy, but through the resurrection from the dead this enemy is annihilated. Therefore Paul says in I Corinthians 15:26, 54-55 (AV): "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. . . . So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" □

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