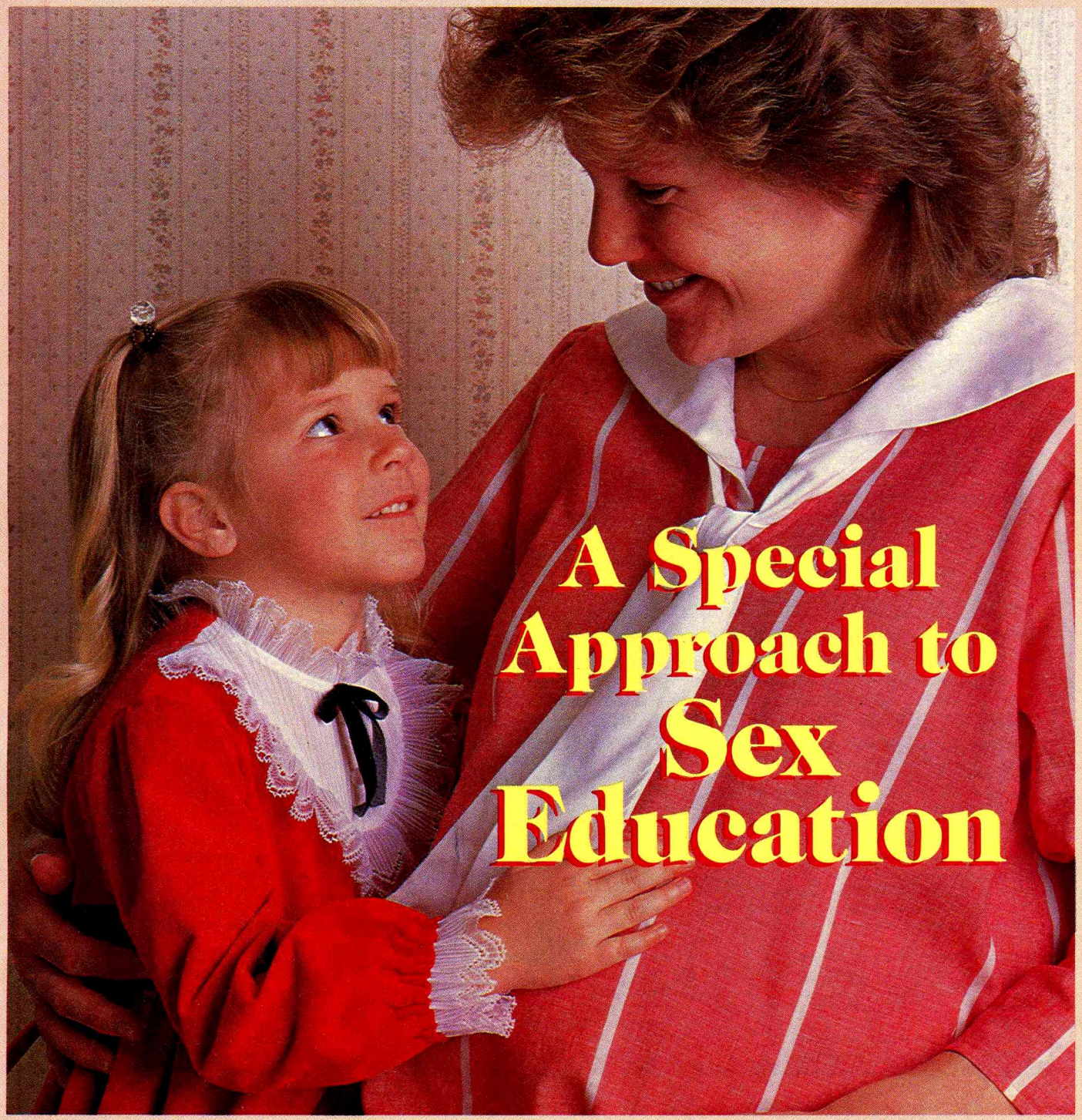
JUNE-JULY 1986

The Good News
OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



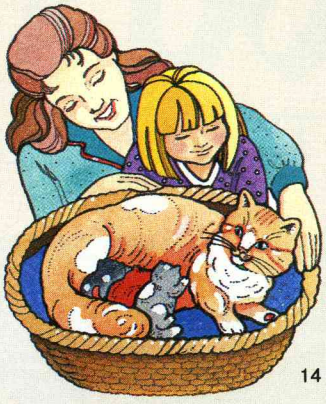
A Special Approach to Sex Education

The Good News
OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

JUNE-JULY 1986 CIRCULATION: 940,000 VOL. XXXIII, NO. 6



The Home of Abraham
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COVER: Explaining to children the role of mother and father in reproduction is the focus of our article, "A Special Approach to Sex Education," which begins on page 14. Photo by Nathan Faulkner.

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GOOD NEWS PERSONAL

To Tell the Truth

You and I live in an age that seems to have lost nearly all regard for simple, honest, uncolored *truth!*

For several years I worked in Washington, D.C., as a news correspondent for the *Plain Truth* magazine. My colleagues in the press corps tended to be a bit cynical when they learned what publication I worked for, and often I was asked the question, "What is truth?"

After all, *The Plain Truth* is a bold and unusual title for a magazine today. Yet *The Plain Truth,* of which I am now executive editor, dares to offer readers just that — the straightforward, candid, unbiased truth about world events.

It can do so because we — believe it or not — base everything we say on the only source where ultimate, absolute truth may be found. That source is the Holy Bible.

But we live in an age that doesn't seem to place much value on sincerity, trust and credibility. The Ninth Commandment, the one against lying, is largely ignored. At the root of the problem is the carnal human desire to *get* as much as possible for self — to win at any cost. When the only goal is to *get,* honesty becomes expendable. Thus *truth* is a relative term in most people's minds today — not an eternal value to be cherished and practiced.

Different churches even have their own versions of exactly what the "truth" is. They can't seem to agree on what can be known about God or Jesus Christ, or about what Christ's Gospel message was. (You especially need to know more about this last point. We will send you, free upon your request, a copy of our booklet *What Is the True Gospel?*)

Jesus, on trial for His life, was asked by Pilate, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). But He had already given the answer to this question a few hours earlier, to His true followers, while praying to God the Father: "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. . . . Sanctify them by Your truth. *Your word is truth*" (John 17:14-17).

There it is! The source of ultimate, absolute truth is God's Word. In personal form, God's Word is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14). In written form, God's Word is the Bible.

Telling the truth to the whole world is the commission given to God's Church (Matthew 24:14, 28:19-20). We tell the truth about world conditions. We preach the same message Christ preached. That message was about the Kingdom of God and the coming world tomorrow. Announcing that imminent world tomorrow is what this magazine, *The Good News,* is all about.

You regular readers of *The Good News* actually understand more than most other people in this world about this vital subject of truth. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone in all walks of life valued honesty and truth as the foundation of all dealings?

It is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). One of Jesus Christ's names is "True" (Revelation 19:11). God desires truth in our inward parts, too (Psalm 51:6).

The time is coming when everyone will value the truth and tell the absolute truth all the time. That will occur when the glorified Christ has restored God's government to this earth.

In the meantime, those of us who desire to serve God need to redouble our efforts to always tell the truth in every aspect of our daily lives. Everything we say, do and think should reflect the truth. The example we set should be the true way of God.

Don't lie. Don't even shade the truth, even to save face or when harm may come to you for being honest. That doesn't mean you have to tell everything you know, but when you say something, it should be the pure truth.

As Colossians 3:9-10 says, "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

Dexter H. Faulkner

Editor

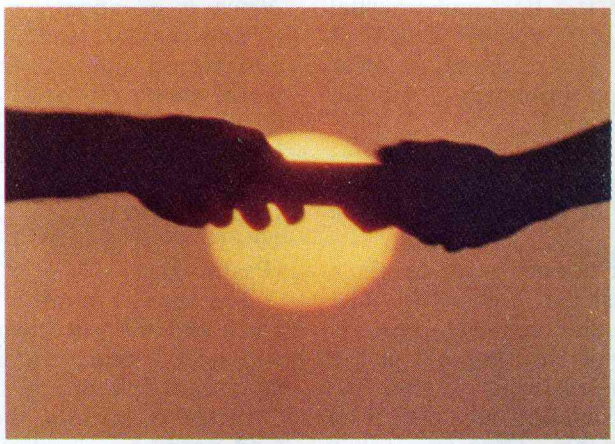
He Followed in the Footsteps of an Apostle

It was a time of transition. The Church of God had lost its apostle. Tribulation lay ahead in the world. But a faithful leader stepped into the gap.

By Norman L. Shoaf

Satan the devil would like nothing more than to destroy God's one true Church!

He can never do that, of course. Jesus said the gates of hell would never prevail against the Church (Matthew 16:18).



Throughout the nearly 2,000-year history of the New Testament Church of God, God has provided leadership for whatever job was to be done at the time. An illuminating and encouraging example occurred when power was transferred from the first apostles, the original human leaders of the Church, to their successors.

The last original apostle

The apostle John had been taught personally by Jesus Christ, and had been one of Jesus' closest human friends. He also lived the longest of Jesus' original 12 disciples and, according to tradition, was the only one to die of natural causes.

After the deaths of the other early leaders, including Peter and Paul, John became the human leader, under Christ, of God's Church. During the latter part of the first century, the Church among the Greeks was headquartered at Ephesus, in Asia Minor.

All was not well. False teachers had risen; even the ancient Babylonian Mystery religion had adopted Christ's name in pursuit of followers. Heresies had crept into the true Church itself; John expended much effort in his later years fighting against the pollution of the original faith.

But there was more. At the end of the first century, God revealed to John a basic truth that every one of the other original apostles, apparently, died without realizing: The return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth were not to occur immediately.

Not until God inspired John to write the book of Revelation did God clearly show that His master plan for humanity stretched 7,000 years, analogous to the seven days of creation. The time of Christ's reign on earth before the second resurrection was finally revealed to be a millennium, or 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4).

Now John saw that there was much more work left to do than anyone had previously thought. The Church had to continue on through seven definite time periods or eras, as revealed in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation.

John himself, regardless of the mounting deceptions around, continued to teach the way of life Jesus had communicated to him, even while the Ephesian era of God's Church — the first of seven historical eras — grew tired of hearing and lost its first love (Revelation 2:4).

Tradition says that John, aged and infirm, had to be carried into Church services, and that he al-

Good News photo

ways gave the same message: "Little children, love one another." His listeners grew tired of hearing the same thing over and over and asked why he always delivered the same sermon. John replied, "Because if you do this, it is enough."

In other words, if they expressed true love, which means obeying God's commandments (I John 5:3), they would be fulfilling their Christian calling.

John's successor

The apostle John died about A.D. 100. What was to happen to the Church, facing persecution from without and possible erosion of the true faith from within?

The Church could not die out — Christ said so (Matthew 16:18)! So God raised up another leader, Polycarp, a disciple of John and the bishop of God's Church at Smyrna, another city in Asia Minor. John "passed the baton" on to Polycarp.

This was a direct fulfillment of Christ's prophecy to John in Revelation 2:8-11. After the Ephesian era of God's Church would come Smyrna.

Polycarp had been personally taught by the apostle John, who had been personally taught by Jesus Christ, and he continued in the footsteps of his predecessor.

Still extant today is an epistle Polycarp wrote to the church at Philippi. Polycarp encouraged the Philippians to "gird up your loins and serve God in fear and truth, forsaking the vain and empty talking and the error of the many" (§ 2). Polycarp continued to teach the promise of the resurrection from the dead (§ 2), the truth about the coming world tomorrow under Christ (§ 5), the fact that the saints will judge the world (§ 11) and government in God's Church (§ 6).

Polycarp quoted heavily from John, mentioning "love toward God and Christ and toward our neighbour. For if any man be occupied with these, he hath fulfilled the commandment of righteousness; for he that hath love is far from sin" (§ 3).

That's exactly what John taught right until the end of his life! Remember? John said: "Little children, love one another. . . . Because if you do this, it is enough."

Speaking of Jesus Christ, Polycarp wrote: "Let us therefore become imitators of His endurance; and if we should suffer for His name's sake, let us glorify Him. For He gave this example to us in His own person, and we believed this" (§ 8). Polycarp may well have foreseen what his own future would hold.

Christ's teaching defended

Polycarp taught the same message he had been taught. But by the middle of the second century, the bishop at Rome, to accommodate pagan converts, accepted Sunday as a day of worship, instead of God's true seventh-day Sabbath. He taught — incorrectly — that Christ was resurrected from the dead on Sunday morning and thus justified calling Sunday "the Lord's day."

The truth is that Jesus Christ was not resurrected on Sunday morning and that the Bible offers absolutely no justification for changing God's original Sabbath. We can prove it! Write for our free booklets *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* and *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*

The bishop at Rome also adopted the custom of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus on the Sunday after God's Passover. Polycarp and most of the churches in Asia Minor continued to observe God's Passover on the 14th of Nisan on God's sacred calendar, just as Christ and the apostles had done. The Passover is today a memorial of Jesus' death. This struggle over Passover came to be called the Quartodeciman Controversy.

In A.D. 154 Polycarp, now in his 80s, traveled to Rome to discuss this question with Anicetus, bishop at Rome. Little is known of this meeting except that neither man was able to persuade the other. So the Roman church firmly established Easter, while the churches of God in Asia Minor, under Polycarp, continued to observe the Passover. But Polycarp, according to early church historians, "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." So he had!

The death of Polycarp

Polycarp, John's student, continued to follow the apostles' teachings and pass them on faithfully to others. He provided spiritual leadership.

Historians record an occasion when Polycarp met Marcion, a famous heretic. Marcion challenged Polycarp, "Recognize us, Polycarp." Many today, unwilling to obey Jesus Christ, nevertheless want to be recognized as true followers of His. Polycarp replied, "Yes indeed, I recognize the firstborn of Satan."

One cold night in February, about A.D. 156, at a retreat outside Smyrna, Roman soldiers arrested Polycarp. Brought before the magistrates, Polycarp was ordered to renounce Jesus Christ and threatened with death. Polycarp answered: "Fourscore and six years have I been His servant, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

A mob stabbed Polycarp and burned him at the stake, thus ending the life of one of a long succession of God-inspired human heads in the history of God's true Church. God had provided an unbroken chain from Jesus Christ to John to Polycarp. Polycarp passed the baton on to a student named Polycrates in Asia Minor.

That same God still rules His Church today, inspiring His servants in the conduct of God's great end-time Work, directing in all matters of government and choosing whom He will have lead His people.

God's Church and God's government can never be destroyed! That Church — made immortal sons of God — will soon begin to administer God's great government over this entire world in the Kingdom of God! □

WHY So Few Understand the Truth!

Infinitesimally few people have known God's truth through the ages! Few know it today! Would you be able to recognize a true Christian? Are you one yourself?

By Graemme J. Marshall

People who are beginning to learn about God's truth through the Work being done by the Worldwide Church of God are often puzzled about why it is so hard to share that truth with relatives and friends.

The following examples are typical:

Mrs. "Middle-aged Housewife" had been subscribing to *The Good News* for several years. Inspired by its solid answers to the basic questions of life, she had on numerous occasions attempted to share her new views with others. But she met only indifference and even hostility.

She became confused. Why did others seem so reluctant to understand? As she had not met anyone else who read the magazine, she began to think she was the only one in her town who did. Maybe in her state. Perhaps in her whole nation!

Mr. "Young Carpenter" found a copy of the magazine on a building site. He never did find out how it got there. Nor could he find anyone else as interested in its message.

This was perplexing. He attempted to tell his parents, but they were uninterested. He went to his aged grandmother, a religious woman. Surely she would be overjoyed to hear new biblical truth. Again he drew a blank. His friends thought he was odd — "going religious," they said. He retorted, "When all these things happen, just remember I told you so!"





Why is it so difficult to get others to understand? The answer lies in knowing that God at this time is only working with a special group of people He calls "firstfruits."

What is a "firstfruit"? Why so few at this time? What are their attributes? What are they learning and doing right now? What is their awesome future responsibility on planet earth?

Few called now

The Bible describes Jesus Christ as the first of the firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:20-23) and as the "firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18).

The Bible reveals — and this is a truth almost no one knows — that all humans will eventually have an opportunity to qualify to be born into God's Family — to be God as God is God! (Write for our free book *The Incredible Human Potential.*)

Regular readers of *The Good News* understand this amazing aspect of God's master plan. But God is not giving everyone the chance for salvation — being born into His Family — right now.

There's no use trying to "convert" relatives and friends. If God is not calling them, they can't understand!

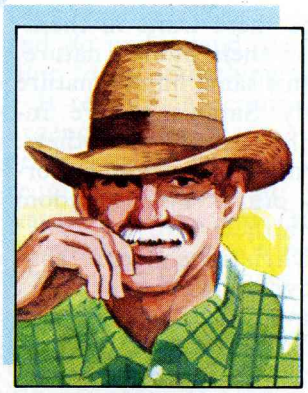
God reveals that, in His plan for mankind, He is now only dealing with very few people. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44).

Today God is working with









just a small part of the huge spiritual harvest of the billions of humans who have lived since the world began. The majority of all who have lived before, and who are alive in this age, will yet have their opportunity to know God's truth at a different time. But in this present day God is only ready to extend His truth to the few, known as His firstfruits. (Request our free reprint article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?")

It is a divine miracle for any person to be called, because only God can unlock the human mind to spiritual understanding. He is the one who removes blindness from the human heart so it can readily grasp and accept His truth (Isaiah 25:7).

When this miracle happens, a person becomes overjoyed with newfound spiritual knowledge. He or she begins to grasp truths simply not available to the average person, no matter what the crusading evangelists of this world's Christianity tell you. Inspired with this knowledge, it is only natural for one to want to share it with others.

However, a firstfruit realizes that this special knowledge can only be appreciated by those who have been similarly called by God.

Why, then, are only a few called now? What is the responsibility of a firstfruit, as a possessor of knowledge made personally available by God the Father in heaven? Such knowledge is given at this time for a specific purpose, and it must be used well.

God's firstfruits

God reveals in advance what a spirit-born firstfruit will be like in the resurrection at Jesus Christ's return to earth (Revelation 14:1-5). Firstfruits must be developing godly attributes now. The qualified saints in the first resurrection are pictured as being without guile. What does this mean?

To be without guile means to be free of deception, falseness, evasiveness, pretense, window-dressing or lip service. It means being characterized by honesty, by being true, as good as your word. It means plain dealing and being truehearted.

Verse 3 shows that the resurrected saints sing a new song that only they know. What might that be? Could it be a song of repentance that only changed sinners can know? A song of the experiences of being one of the firstfruit Christians in a world that lies in darkness? A song of conversion and overcoming in an evil age?



This is the matchless opportunity God gives firstfruit Christians who faithfully live out their lives in this world that is given to evil.

What they are learning

Few people would argue against the evidence that earth is a dangerous place to live. A firstfruit is called by God to demonstrate that God's commandments can be kept even in an evil time — with God's help.

Firstfruits learn through a type

Illustration by Ken Tunell

of "aversion therapy" about what is wrong with this world. Living *in* this world, but not being part *of* it, they come to understand the cause of the world's ills — sin — and learn to want no part of breaking God's laws.

They learn to hate evil — to detest pomposity and violent dictatorships. They learn to hate vanity, lying, cheating, stealing and politicking. They abhor the manipulation of the poor, innocent and defenseless by bullying humans.

They see these traits in themselves — in their human nature. They see this same human nature — actually Satan's nature injected in humans — in others. They yearn for the world tomorrow. They pray, "Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10).

True Christians learn that man's government over man doesn't have the answers. They see the just suffer and the corrupt prosper. They see man's history as lurching from one war to another.

In the midst of this learning experience they must endure, keep balance and stay zealous for God's ways. At times the way seems long and hard, having to wait for the ultimate application of the answers they now know would solve man's problems — obedience to God's laws — the government of God set up on earth.

The apostle Peter explained that God views time differently than we do (II Peter 3:8-9). A thousand years to God is as one single day. We can gain encouragement when we understand God's immense patience compared to our human impatience. What seems interminably long to us may only be a brief period for God. After all, He has been patiently waiting for 6,000 years. And most of that time He has had to put up with man's inhumanity to man.

A rare group

Down through history, only a few people have been privileged to be called by God (Hebrews 11). Today the earth's population is nearly five billion. Of this number only a minuscule few are firstfruits.

By definition a firstfruit is one who understands the commandments of God and obeys them — one who knows that the Bible is the guide for life and the authority for all that is done.

For illustration purposes, let's take an approximate figure for the number of people around the world who are today associated with God's true Church. Let's say 150,000.

Just for example's sake, compare this figure with a country of around 15 million in population — like Australia. This means that the entire group of commandment-keeping people who are now alive and serving God's purposes would only make up 1 percent of the Australian population. Some 99 percent of Australians would be left, *plus* the rest of the world!

How few! This emphasizes the awesome responsibility placed upon a few chosen people.

But what are they first in?

What did Abel and Enoch (Hebrews 11:4-5) understand that the rest of their contemporary ages did not? They knew the true God. They knew His ways, and they kept them. They knew sin, and avoided it.

What was Noah's message (verse 7)? Noah was called a preacher of righteousness (II Peter 2:5), and righteousness is defined by God's commandments (Psalm 119:172).

God's people exemplify God's law in the way they live. They understand and use the power of the Holy Spirit. They understand their battle with human nature. They understand that they are fighting a spiritual battle against an unseen devil who rules this world (II Corinthians 4:4, 10:4-5, Ephesians 6:12). They know the sanctity, purpose and symbolism of marriage and the family (Ephesians 5:32-33). They know the power of prayer and healing (James 5:14-18). They know the nature of God the Father and Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5-11). They are the first members of their entire families to be called by God.

The job today

But God's firstfruits in our day are not called just to get salvation for themselves. God has always had special commissions for those with whom He worked.

Today, God's called firstfruits — you, if you understand this message and want to obey your Creator — are commanded to preach the Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God as a witness to this dying world (Matthew 24:14), and to prepare to teach God's way to all humanity in the world tomorrow (Isaiah 2:2-4).

That is what the Worldwide Church of God is doing right now!

The technological revolution has provided ways of preaching the Gospel that never before have been imagined. The Church uses the printing press, radio, television, satellite communications and films to trumpet God's message to the world and to teach the present-day disciples of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).

The firstfruits are so few. They are precious to God. It is important to know whether you are called as a firstfruit. If you are, you must make that calling sure (II Peter 1:10).

The Israelites of old were instructed to present the best possible offerings to God (Numbers 18:12). So, too, with firstfruit Christians. Their spiritual character is to be the finest they can produce. Firstfruits down through history, along with those alive today, will eventually become the examples and models for the rest of the world. That will occur when God finally steps in to replace man's world with utopia — when He sets up the Kingdom of God on earth.

Until that momentous time the daily goal of a firstfruit — a true Christian — is to support God's great worldwide Work of preaching the Gospel and to patiently produce the finest spiritual character possible! □

'But I Didn't Count the Cost!'

How many of us have said this after making bad decisions in marriage, job or finances? The most crucial area where counting the cost is necessary, though, is one most people take far too lightly — answering God's calling.

By Jerold W. Aust

If you were to build your own house, how would you begin? Would you ask qualified people for advice? Would you seek a reputable building contractor? Would you carefully consider the substantial financial responsibility?

In other words, would you count the cost?

Jesus Christ, before divesting Himself of His divinity, had to carefully consider the awesome cost.

His mission was to take upon Himself the inherent weakness of a human body, highly susceptible to transgressing God's holy law (Philippians 2:6-7). He had to live a perfect life, against all temptation, and then die a horrible death so that forgiveness of sin would be possible for human beings. He had to found the Church of God and instruct faithful followers in God's way of life.

Jesus succeeded perfectly. He built His own spiritual house, His called-out ones, His New Testament Church (Hebrews 3:1-6). He became the chief cornerstone in the structure God is using to prepare the way for the wonderful world tomorrow!

Jesus knew He could fail. Yet, for the sake of billions of humans who do not yet appreciate His efforts, He was willing to risk all.

Apprentice carpenters

Today God is working with a small group of chosen servants — firstfruits — to complete the building atop the foundation Jesus Christ laid (Ephesians 2:19-22).

True Christians are involved in a great Work that will literally save this world, and help make it possible for the rest of mankind to be converted and born into God's universe-ruling Family!

Perhaps God is calling you to help construct that spiritual building. But, just like Jesus Christ, you must seriously count the cost before committing yourself to have a hand in God's end-time Work.

Christ knows what it means to count the cost. You, before you make this commitment — the biggest commitment you will ever make — must do the same.

Jesus said: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it — lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish' " (Luke 14:28-30).

Christ counsels us to put God first in our lives, everywhere and always (verses 26-27). We must strive to live perfectly God's way of outgoing love and concern for others, based on God's Ten Commandments.

This is the cost in answering God's calling — in becoming a true Christian. Not one in a thousand people today really understands what this means! If you've been reading *The Good News* and *do* understand, perhaps it is time to do something about it.

It requires a genuine sense of urgency. It requires putting all other possible pursuits second. It requires forsaking all the false ways of this world (Revelation 18:4) and being willing to take whatever consequences come.

The commission of God's Church is to announce to the world the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

Each member is also responsible, in his or her personal life, for exemplifying God's perfect way of peace and joy to mankind at large.

Are you being called?

Christ will never leave you while you serve Him in fulfilling this special calling (Hebrews 13:5-6). Satan will try to discourage and dissuade you from finishing the job, sometimes through your own loved ones. But you will have carefully counted the cost in Christ, and you will be able to complete the task — and enjoy the benefits!

Christ will finish the building job He has begun in and through you (Philippians 1:6). He is not a quitter. He risked His own eternal life and position in God's Family for you personally, and won! Therefore, you can win, too.

But first, you must start.

God wants you to know where He's building His holy house on earth today. Why not send for our free booklet *Where Is the True Church?* Just mail the request card in this issue or write to our address nearest you. □

BAPTISM

From a Minister's Point of View

Jesus Christ commissioned His true ministers to baptize those who would respond to God's calling. What is a minister's duty in carrying out this function? Are you really ready to seek baptism?

By Clyde L. Kilough

Many of you reading this article right now have been considering taking the biggest step in your lives, making the most important decision you'll ever face — whether to be baptized.

Every day our offices around the world receive many requests for booklets and information on baptism. I, along with hundreds of other ministers of the Worldwide Church of God, consequently receive in our church areas a steady stream of personal requests for baptism.

If you are thinking about baptism, this article is for you.

Maybe you were baptized before but have learned it was not according to the biblical method, or perhaps you feel that somehow it just wasn't the "real thing." Maybe you never have been baptized but now have a strong desire to be.

Baptism is the greatest step a person can take. But understand that true baptism — that is, one that is genuine and valid in God's sight — is a once-in-a-lifetime step. The apostle Paul noted in Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

It is God who ordained the baptism ceremony and its deep significance. And God's Word reveals that unless baptism is carried out in the right attitude, with the right knowledge, in the right manner, by the right ministers of God with the right understanding, it is not honored and recognized by God. In fact, it does little more than get you wet!



It is our desire, as ministers of God in service to you, to help you do more than get wet. We have a desire — and a God-ordained responsibility — to help you make a mature, careful, sound decision when considering baptism. We truly want to help, but you will find our approach is different from that used by any other ministers of other churches with which you may be familiar. What, then, should you expect if you ask for baptism counseling with a minister of the Worldwide Church of God?

The minister's responsibilities

Understand first that we are interested in the *quality* of conversion, not the *quantity*. The Worldwide Church of God is not in a numbers game, competing with other churches to get you saved in our brand of religion. It's not our job to try to convert you and, knowing that, we don't exert any type of pressure to produce more and more converts for the Church.

Christ plainly said, in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." It is God's job to draw, call and convert someone and, as regular readers of *The Good News* understand, God is not calling the whole world now.

So where do human ministers fit into the picture?

It is their job, as Christ com-

missioned in Matthew 28:19, to go and "teach all nations, baptizing them" (Authorized Version) — the ones God the Father is specifically drawing from among those witnessed to. Notice that preceding that baptism, though, must be teaching.

Our duty, then, is to see how much you know of God's teaching, to give instruction where you may lack understanding and then to finally conduct the actual baptism. When you consider the necessary teaching along with the understanding of all the ramifications of baptism, it becomes a vast undertaking.

Therefore we do not rush or push anyone into baptism, both for the individual's sake and our own accountability. If someone is not yet fully prepared and ready, it is not helpful to prematurely baptize him or her. That can be spiritually and emotionally damaging. On the other hand, under the right circumstances, there is certainly no reason to delay, as will be explained.

Your binding contract

Now to your responsibility! Do you fully understand what you are accountable for? When you tell God you have repented and want the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover your sins, and want the gift of the Holy Spirit, you are taking on a gigantic responsibility! You are then committed to say "Yes" to God's way and "No" to the self. Are you sure you are fully aware of all God's way entails?

When the minister, just before immersing you into the water, asks you those two simple, yet profound, questions — "Have you repented of your sins?" and "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?" — your answer "Yes" is a vow, a contract, an irrevocable agreement between you and God.

You cannot get out of that contract! God promises total forgiveness and the gift of His Spirit, and you promise total commitment to following Him for the rest of your life.

Christ stressed in Luke 9:62, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." There is no looking back and reneging on this contract, because it is written in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Are there areas in your life where you are not following Christ because other things come first? To seek baptism means you want to come to Christ, to follow Him, to be His disciple. Are you totally committed, no matter what comes as a result?

Total commitment required

Many Christians have lost their families, and others their lives, all for following God. Christ isn't saying this is guaranteed to happen to you, but is warning that it could. There will be burdens to bear.

Note Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." We cannot have a Pollyanna approach to following Christ. The glamour of Christianity soon wears off when trials come, and come they will. Are you willing to bear those crosses?

Count the cost (Luke 14:25-30)! It does cost to follow Christ. It may cost friends and family, jobs, possessions or someday even our own lives. The price may be ridicule, rejection or persecution. Weigh it carefully!

Does that sound a bit scary? Some people, after considering the cost and realistically concluding that they would indeed pay a heavy price to follow God, say, "I can't do it," and turn away. They are fearful of making that commitment and not being able to keep their end of the bargain. And that truly is a fearful thought.

Here is where ministerial counseling can be of great help, however. Yes, we do want to make sure you understand the seriousness of your commitment and the costs to bear, but we are also here to help strengthen your faith.

It's easy to look at the negative side and say, "What if I can't do it?" The fact is, you can't! That's why it takes faith to be baptized. We cannot, of and by ourselves, go God's way, but with His Spirit helping, guiding and leading us, and with Jesus Christ actually living His life over in us (Galatians 2:20), God promises that we can make it.



Photos by Hal Finch

It takes faith to be "confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Satan will try to discourage and cause doubts to weaken anyone being drawn by God. The input and encouragement of God's ministers are often just what we need to get back on the right train of thought.

So in this area we also spend time pointing out the source of your salvation, showing how you have to totally, faithfully rely on God. God doesn't expect us to make it into His Kingdom, or even spiritually survive this

present life, based on our own works. But He is loyal to those who seek to follow Him, and with His help you can bear the burdens and pay the price — gladly, willingly and faithfully.

The key to being willing to pay the price is to understand what God is offering to you through baptism. It is eternal life, yes, but eternal life reigning and ruling in the Family and government of God. It is not the purpose of this article to go into all the aspects of the future God is holding out to us. Write for our free book *The Wonderful World Tomorrow — What It Will Be Like* for more information.

Real repentance

What else do we look for?

The main factor is something you will need for the rest of your life, but something begun and required by God before baptism — repentance.

What is repentance? The story of the woman taken in adultery and brought before Christ to see what He would do with her (John 8:3-11) illustrates what God wants to see. Verse 11 is the key: "And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.' "

We are all sinners (Romans 3:23). Baptism pictures our deeply realizing that fact and asking God to forgive and forget our sins, not to condemn us for them. That is God's job, but are you ready to do your part — to "go and sin no more"?

This is true repentance — to change, to overcome our wrong ways.

Do you understand what sin is? It is the breaking of God's law (I John 3:4). Do you hate sin? Are you conquered by God? Have you unconditionally surrendered to Him and His will?

Before baptism God must see real repentance — deep, genuine change — not just being sorry. To be sorry over sin isn't enough. Many are sorry but never really change. That's worldly sorrow. Many people are sorry about the penalties they have to pay for sinning, but they aren't sorry that they have crucified Jesus Christ through their sinning!

True repentance — zealous, vehement desire — diligent changing — is quite different from what most understand.

We are instructed in Matthew 3:8 to "bear fruits worthy of repentance." Also, "By their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20). A minister counseling someone for baptism will be able to see the evidence in his or her life that he or she is truly repenting and changing, striving to "go and sin no more."

A repentant attitude is not just an emotion. God is looking for fruits, not emotions. That is exactly why many people's previous baptisms were incorrect and unacceptable to God. They were based on emotions rather than concrete changes.

So a minister will discuss with you many vital areas relating to repentance and commitment. Do you understand repentance? Do you understand the life and death of Jesus Christ and how they relate to you personally? What changes have taken place in your life? Are you really trying to put into practice what you know to be right? Have you started developing a relationship with God based on daily prayer and Bible study?

Do you really hate and want to eradicate sin? Are you striving to keep God's law? Are you teachable, willing to accept instruction and correction? Are you yielded to God and submissive to Him and His government? Do you identify with His Church and the job God has called you to now?

When the right attitude, right knowledge and right fruits are present, then why delay baptism? We won't. But as you can see, we also won't rush to baptize based simply on the request.

Are we, and is God, looking for perfection? Ultimately, yes (Matthew 5:48). But God does not expect us to be perfect when we first come to the knowledge of His truth. If He did, none of us would ever be baptized. The bottom line of the matter is attitude. With proper attitude, proper fruits will follow. Through time and effort, we will attain "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Further study

These are the basic points God's ministers would want to cover with you in baptism counseling. In addition, based on the depth of your previous study and knowledge of doctrine, we may recommend that you give additional time to further study of certain subjects before baptism. This is not to put you off, be offensive or unnecessarily delay your baptism. It is to help.

Remember, the minister with whom you counsel has dealt with perhaps hundreds of people regarding baptism, and knows what is needed to help you be thoroughly prepared for this step.

One book he will undoubtedly recommend you read is *The Incredible Human Potential.* This book helps give you the firm, concrete, biblical foundation of where your baptism fits into God's plan. For the rest of your life you will find that this knowledge is invaluable. So send for this book if you are thinking about baptism. It is free of charge, of course.

Also request our free booklet *All About Water Baptism.* It goes into even more detail about many of the points covered in this article.

One of the greatest pleasures of the ministry is to work with new "babes in Christ." It is truly thrilling to see a person's life change for the better.

Luke 15:10 says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." It is also a joy for ministers to be personally involved with someone going through that process.

So if you are considering baptism, think it through long and hard. Study, prove all things and ask God to show you what He knows you need to understand and comprehend. When the time comes that you are ready to ask a minister of God to baptize you, know that we are there to help. □

WHICH Days Should We Observe?

Many ask about Paul's warning, in Galatians 4:10, against observing "days, and months, and times, and years." Just what were these days against which Paul preached? The answer is surprising.

Here is what the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians:

"Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God . . . how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Galatians 4:8-10, Authorized Version throughout).

What is Paul saying? Read these verses again. Did Paul say, "Ye observe the Sabbath and annual Holy Days such as the Passover, Pentecost and Feast of Tabernacles"?

Was he telling the Galatian Christians not to observe these Holy Days of God?

No!

Paul said "days, and months, and times, and years" — something altogether different.

What days were these?

Notice this entire fourth chapter of Galatians. Paul begins the chapter by addressing the Jews — not gentiles. In verse 3 Paul addresses these Jews as "we," because Paul was also a Jew.

But beginning with verse 6, Paul ceases to speak to the Jews. Now he is speaking to the gentile converts. He does not say "we," but "ye."

Notice it: "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God" (verse 8) — remember, the Jews knew God, but the gentiles had not known God before the preaching of the Gospel.

Jesus said to the gentile Samaritan woman: "Ye" — the gentiles — "worship ye know not what: we" — the Jews — "know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

Continuing with Galatians 4:8-9: "When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God . . . how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

These converts to whom Paul is now writing were not Jews. They were gentiles by birth. These gentile converts in times past did not know God — were cut off from Him (Ephesians 2:13). They were slaves to gods that were no gods at all. They had been serving demons and idols, not the living God.

False teachers were coming among them, perverting the true Gospel, beguiling them to turn again to their former ways. Paul was alarmed. They were departing from the Gospel and returning to what? "Days, and months, and times, and years."

They couldn't be returning to God's festivals. They did not keep them before Paul preached about them.

What are "times"?

Next, turn to Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10, 14. Here Moses, according to the command of God, ordered the people not to observe "times." "Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times" (Leviticus 19:26).

To observe "times" originally was a heathen practice often attached to the heavenly bodies, especially in determining the pagan calendar and the heathen religious seasons.

The Catholic bishop Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth century, admits that these superstitious times Paul forbids were

pagan customs practiced by "Christians" in his day, as in the days of old.

He says: "Many were superstitiously addicted to divination. . . . In the celebration of these times [they] set up lamps in the marketplace, and crown their doors with garlands" (from Binghams' *Antiquities of the Christian Church,* pages 1123-1124).

Besides times, the Greeks observed special days in honor of the dead. "The rites took place on the . . . unlucky days accompanied by complete idleness and cessation of business" (Hutton Webster, *Rest Days,* page 79).

These gentile Galatians were returning to the customs of doing penance on the old pagan days.

Penance denounced

Paul denounced this vain and abominable practice. We are not to learn the way of the heathen (Jeremiah 10:1-2, Deuteronomy 12:29-32).

In connection with the old pagan idolatry were numerous days observed as idolatrous penitential festivals. These days were consecrated to deities of the state religious cults and were "unlucky" because of the supposed influence of the gods.

These religious holidays were set aside as periods of penance because they were "regarded as unsuitable for many purposes, both public and private: for battles, levies, sacred rites, journeys and marriages. We are told that they owed their unlucky quality to the pronouncement of the Senate and pontiffs" (*Rest Days,* page 171). As many as one third of the days of the old Greek and Roman calendars were marked as "unlawful for judicial and political business . . . on which the state expected the citizens to abstain, as far as possible, from their private business and labour" (*Rest Days,* pages 304-305).

No wonder Paul spoke of "days."

And how many nonreligious as well as religious people still have similar beliefs today about certain days, such as unlucky Friday the 13th!

Other heathen holidays

Notice that Paul also condemns the custom of observing "months, and . . . years" — another pagan custom.

Certain months of the year were considered sacred to the Greek gods Apollo (April, October), Zeus (February, June), Artemis (April), Bacchus (January) and many others. Also, certain years were set aside every two years and every four years. During these special years, national idolatrous feasts were held and the Olympic, Isthmian, Nemean and Pythian games were celebrated. Every one of these was connected with idolatrous worship and ceremony.

Paul was forbidding gentile converts to return to these heathen practices of observing days, months, times and years.

Misunderstood texts

Some claim there are texts in the Old Testament in which God says "my" Sabbaths and festivals "I hate." This is not true. God said, "I hate, I despise *your* feast days, and . . . *your* solemn assemblies" (Amos 5:21). Notice: "*Your* new moons and *your* appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me" (Isaiah 1:14). See also Hosea 2:11 and Amos 8:10.

These were not divine institutions, but man-appointed days observed in the ancient tribes of Israel. These days God despised.

Several chapters are devoted by the prophet Ezekiel to a condemnation of ancient Israel for breaking the Sabbaths God had given. Take special note of Ezekiel 20:12-26 and 22:26. The punishment inflicted upon the House of Israel was for desecrating the Sabbaths.

Ancient Israel did not continue to observe the Holy Days of God. They refused His judgments and statutes (Ezekiel 20:18-21). They copied the heathen idolatrous feasts of surrounding nations.

The chronicler of ancient Israel preserved a record of just such a change in the laws of God, when the House of Israel separated from Judah:

"And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. . . . sacrificing unto the calves that he had made . . . the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart" (I Kings 12:32-33).

Thereafter Israel altered the new moons and changed the sacred calendar. They exchanged the Sabbaths for idolatrous days for sun worship. Israel, taking over the feasts of the heathen Baal — sun worship — turned them into idolatrous rest days according to the statutes of the kings of Israel (II Kings 17:7-8).

God never abolished His feasts and Holy Days. But He did hate the different days ancient Israel invented.

If you would like to know more about God's festivals and their true meaning for us today, write for our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* □

These gentile converts in times past did not know God. They were slaves to demons and idols. False teachers were coming among them, beguiling them to turn again to their former ways — "days, and months, and times, and years."

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Would you explain the number 666 of Revelation 13?

Revelation 13:17-18 tells us that 666 is the number of the beast's name and the number of a man or, as the Revised Standard Version says, "a human number." This name and number refer back to the first beast mentioned in the chapter (Revelation 13:1); this beast, as other scriptures make clear, represents the Roman Empire.

We are told to "calculate" the number, that is, to add up the numerical values of the individual letters in the name. Most of us are familiar with Roman numerals; some of the letters of the Roman or Latin alphabet have numerical values. The same is true of the Hebrew and Greek alphabets, except that in Hebrew and Greek *every* letter has a number value.

Irenaeus, a "church father" who lived at the end of the second century, recorded that 666 was derived from the Greek word *Lateinos,* understood to represent the founder of the Latin race, the original people of Rome. Lateinos' name, the name of a man, also became the name of the people — Latin — and a synonym for *Roman.* The Greek expression referring to "the Latin kingdom" likewise equals 666, as does *Romiith* in Hebrew.

Many would-be interpreters have tried to apply the number to some individual human leader (often dubbed the "Antichrist"), Roman emperors being the earliest favorites. The names of at least two early Roman emperors can be made to add up to 666: Nero, who died before John wrote the book of Revelation, and Trajan, who began to reign shortly after John's death.

But the real significance of the name and number lies in the prophecy of a time now shortly ahead of us when anyone without the beast's mark, name or number will be unable to buy or to sell. Thus the name and number must apply, by extension, not just to one man, but to the entire people of a world-ruling empire.

Every reader of *The Good News* needs to understand the significance of this coming beast power and how to respond to it. For more information, request our free booklet *Who or What Is the Prophetic Beast?* Just mail the literature request card in this issue or write to our address nearest you.

Would you explain the meaning of the "synagogue of Satan" mentioned in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9?

The word *synagogue* comes from a Greek word meaning "assembly" or "church." The "synagogue of Satan," then, is an assembly or church made up of individuals who claim to be Jews but are not.

The term *Jew* is used here in a spiritual sense. Notice: "He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:29).

In this case, it is not one's physical race that counts, but his spiritual condition (Galatians 3:27-29). True Christians are spiritual Jews. Why? Because Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

Those in the "synagogue of Satan" say they are spiritual Jews — pretend to be real Christians — but are not. This false church was already developing in the days of the apostle John. It masqueraded as God's true Church. It had congregations in the cities of Smyrna and Philadelphia in Asia Minor even at that early time. It and its daughter churches are further described in Revelation 17.

For more information, send for our booklet *Where Is the True Church?*

What was the apostle Paul doing when he commanded those in authority in the Church to "deliver such a one [a fornicator] to Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (I Corinthians 5:5)? Why would Paul do this? Is this really showing love to a person?

Like the individuals Paul described in I Timothy 1:19-20, this man was continuing to sin. He was headed for the ultimate penalty of sin — death (Romans 6:23). He had cast aside the faith.

Paul gave him over to this world — cut off from God's people and God's protection. He was at the mercy of this world's system and the power of Satan, this world's ruler.

This drastic action was for the purpose of waking him up and showing him his need to repent of his sin. He may have suffered both physical and mental pain. He was left to the devices of this world "that his spirit [Greek, *pneuma* — the mind, character or life] may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Corinthians 5:5).

If Church leaders had let him remain in fellowship with God's true people, he would have seen no need to quit committing fornication with his stepmother. He might have been lost forever and faced ultimate destruction in the lake of fire. And he would have wrongly influenced other Church members.

What was the result of this excommunication or disfellowshipment? Was it beneficial?

Yes!

This man repented and submitted to God because of this severe action, which Paul took in love. Paul then wrote a letter to the church congregation and commanded them to take this man back into their fellowship after his repentance (II Corinthians 2:6-10).

God wants "all men to be saved" (I Timothy 2:4). God is a God of love. He does everything with a purpose for our good. □

A Special Approach to Sex Education

Here's how to banish parental embarrassment and end forever the feeling of awkwardness when explaining the role of father and mother in reproduction.

By Herman L. Hoeh

It is a marvelous experience to become parents. But it is quite another matter to teach the children you gendered how you became their father and mother!

Why should the miracle of life be so awkward — *for parents* — to explain? It is, after all, not your children who are embarrassed. They are inquisitive and curious.

There is an answer to this needless dilemma — a special approach for the father and mother who recognize the need but have been embarrassed when attempting to explain the divine significance of love and sex in marriage and childbirth.

The foundation of knowledge

The Bible is the foundation of *all* knowledge, so let's use it as the starting point for sex education in the home.

Let God speak for you to your child — right out of the Bible. Let whatever embarrassment you feel in explaining your parental role in reproduction become His. After all, you are only quoting Him when you read the Bible to the child you occasioned to bring into the world.

Take your favorite modern translation. (Let us suppose that it is the Revised Standard Version.) You turn to Genesis 1, verse 11, and you let God say, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth."

That turns out to be a direct quote from the lips of the Creator God. No occasion to be embarrassed here.

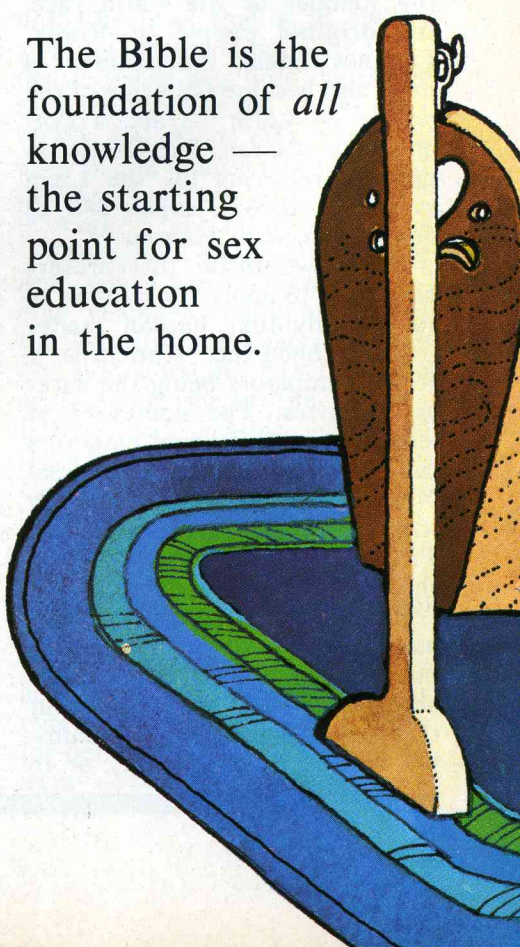
But you want to comment on the divine utterance. Then let Moses help you with his inspired comment: "The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good" (verse 12).

You have now been able to explain to your child that what he sees in the garden — plants and trees reproducing seed for the next generation — is good. Reproduction in plant life in which the flowers are sexual organs producing male pollen for the female ovary at the base of the flower is good — because God created it to be that way.

A special natural blessing

Now you let God speak again

The Bible is the foundation of *all* knowledge — the starting point for sex education in the home.



in verse 20: "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens." Here are creatures having various levels of conscious awareness unlike plants and trees. God now gives them a blessing.

"God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth' " (verse 22). "And God saw that it was good," comments Moses in verse 21.

Did you catch the significance of this verse? It is a natural blessing for fish and sea mammals and birds to be able to mate and reproduce. God *blessed* them with sexual reproductive experiences, which include, you might explain, nudging of the female fish by the male, touching the external sexual organs of the female bird by the male and complete copulation among sea mammals, certain fish and waterfowl.

God similarly blessed with reproductive capacity a host of insects and land mammals who instinctively share their bodies in reproduction.

By this time your emotional fears should be fast disappearing when explaining reproduction of plants and pets to the children you brought into the world.

"But what about us human beings?" your child might naturally query.

What about human beings?

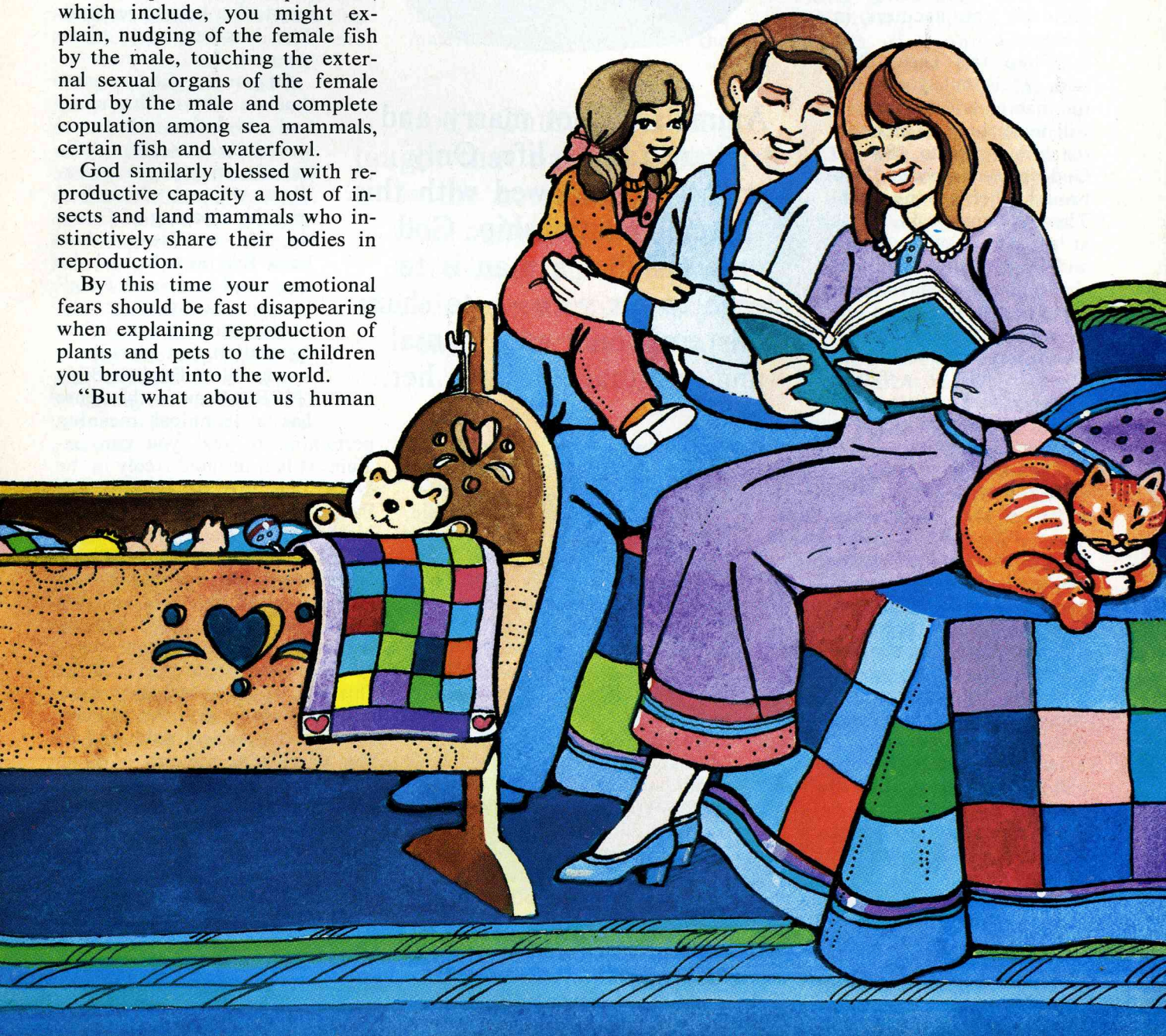
Again we pick up the answer in Genesis 1. "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion . . . over all the earth' " (verse 26).

God made us to be in a special way like Him. The human capacity to think and to develop character lifts man far above the animal realm.

Moses tells us how God designed the human being. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (verse 27). Fathers are male; mothers are female. "And God *blessed* them, and *God said to them*" (verse 28) — we will stop here to note an important distinction.

God made plant life to reproduce. God *blessed* a host of creatures in the animal world with the capacity to share their bodies with the opposite sex in reproduction. But here we find God not only creating human beings male and female, but blessing them *and talking to them* about that special blessing.

"And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it' " (verse 28). Because man is in God's image,



Illustrations by Michael Nelson

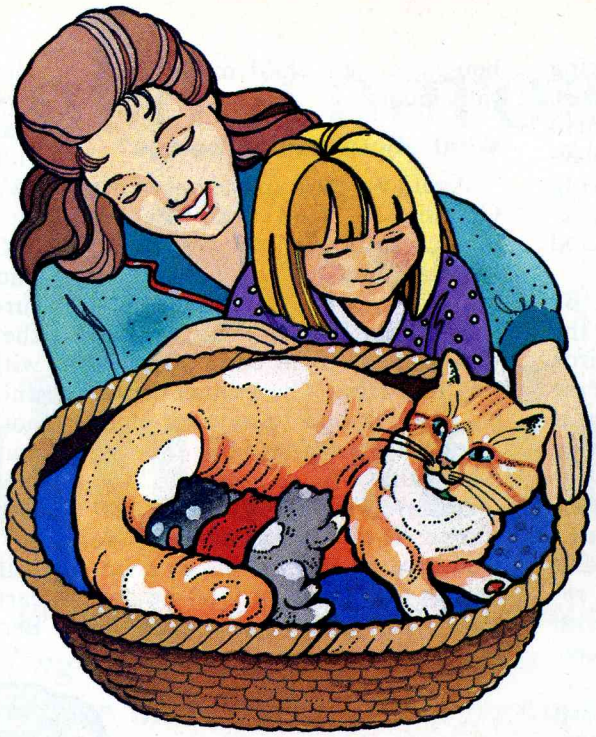
God can converse with man. And the first matter He discussed with them both together involved sexual reproduction — "be fruitful and multiply."

When finished with the physical creation on earth God pronounced it all "very good" (verse 31).

Origin of the family

Animals and birds and sea creatures mate and on occasion may pair for a season or for life. But they do not marry and share family life. Only man is endowed with this special relationship. This is easily explained by reading to children the account in Genesis 2.

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him' " (verse 18). So God formed woman "and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; and she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man' " (verses 22-23). God brought the woman to the man just as a father brings his daughter as a bride to the groom in a marriage ceremony.



Animals do not marry and share family life. Only humans are endowed with this special relationship. God reveals that a man is to cleave to his wife — to share his emotional and mental and spiritual life with her.

Then God says (compare Genesis 2:24 with Matthew 19:4-5), as part of the first marriage ceremony, "Therefore a man leaves his *father* and his *mother* and cleaves to his wife, and *they become one flesh*." These words of God should have been written as a direct quote, you can explain to your children. They reveal that a man and wife are meant to become father and mother and have children. The man is to cleave to his wife — to share his emotional and mental and spiritual life with her.

By now you are prepared to explain to your children the rest of this Genesis account. Together husband and wife are also to share their physical life — to "become one flesh" — join their separate bodies together through romantic love in sexual union.

God designed male and female anatomy, you can explain, so the husband and wife can join their bodies together as one flesh. That is what God was instructing the first man and woman as he performed the first marriage.

God was not embarrassed. Neither should you be when reading these verses to your children. Furthermore, God inspired Moses to add the helpful comment (so you would not have to fumble around for words) found in verse 25: "And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed." It was their honeymoon and no other human beings were around to disturb them. Later, of course, after sin entered, and with it the corrupting sense of guilt and shame and embarrassment, "The Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21).

The answers are plain

It is a surprise to many, who have never closely examined these first three chapters of Genesis, how much God helps us to find answers to questions children — and adults, too — ask about sex and marriage and family. We are not left wondering how to respond. The answers are plain when read.

Of course, God expects that we add to this spiritual revelation additional knowledge as our children's minds mature. Thus, when a child first asks the meaning of Genesis 4:1 — "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain" — you can turn to the same verse in another translation that clarifies it — the New English Bible (NEB). *Knew* in this sense has a technical meaning pertaining to sex, you can explain. It is translated freely in the NEB: "The man lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain."

For the young child this translation would be answer enough. For the child in early primary years you will probably have to explain the meaning of "conceive" in simple terms. And for this you ought to acquaint yourself in advance with the primary book on this subject published by the Worldwide Church of God. It's titled *The Missing Dimension in Sex*. You may have a free copy by writing to our address nearest you.

Add to your knowledge

The Bible is the foundation of

knowledge. Indeed many more chapters relate fundamental knowledge on homosexuality (Genesis 19), on premarital sex (II Samuel 13), on sexual responsibility before marriage (Genesis 39), on sexual love in marriage (Song of Solomon).

But these are only the broad principles. Additional knowledge on sex, marriage and the family is needed. That is why *The Missing Dimension in Sex* was written. It is hoped that parents will recognize the urgency of placing this volume in the hands of their own adolescent children. No other book more clearly expounds the sacred meaning of sex, its divine purposes and its God-ordained uses. The book's dignified graphics of sex anatomy provide a clear introduction to the written text.

Every husband- and wife-to-be should read it. And every father- and mother-to-be. And every young person approaching teenage should read and reread it. Material in it can be expounded by parents to young children, always bearing in mind that each year new material from the book becomes relevant to children as they mature.

Keep one step ahead of your children at all times by having the answer ready before they have the question!

And natural childbirth, too

For more than half a century the teaching of the Church of God has been that natural childbirth is the normal way God ordained we bring children into the world (barring some accident, of course). And that women were designed to nurse children at their breasts. For three decades ours was nearly the only voice crying out this way of life.

Happily, within the last two and more decades many responsible men and women, professional and nonprofessional, have come to the same understanding. A number have written books on the subject. Some of the great photographers of this generation have contributed their skills to expanding our understanding of natural childbirth and breastfeeding. The remainder of this article will introduce volumes that are graphically most helpful in explaining conception and birth. Some are designed for early years, some for teenagers. If even some of these books were in your personal library, you would find as a father and a mother your emotional and intellectual tasks in sex education in the home greatly aided.

These books will be described in the order God presented the material in Genesis 1 — with the creation of the animal world first, then man.

Two wonderful books for young children are available explicitly depicting the birth of a foal and the birth of twin lambs. These books enable the parent to expound the subject of birth without the emotional stress that comes with identifying our roles in human reproduction and birth. The author's name appears first, then title and other facts.

Miller, Jane: *Birth of a Foal,* J.B. Lippincott Co., E. Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105, $11.00.

Miller, Jane: *Lambing Time,* Methuen, Inc., 733 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017, $7.95.

Parents of young children should find the text and photos of the following volume helpful in explaining reproduction and birth. The text is designed to be read to children by parents who sometimes find themselves at a loss for words.

Stein, Sara Bonnett and Doris Pinney: *Making Babies — An Open Family Book for Parents and Children Together,* Walker & Co., 720 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019, paperback $4.95. Also in hardcover. Published simultaneously in Canada by Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Ltd., Toronto. Written for the English audience and available in the United States is a small, candid volume, done in pastel colors.

Sheffield, Margaret: *Where Do Babies Come From?* Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 201 E. 50th St., New York, N.Y. 10022, $10.95. Originally

God's Church has long taught that natural childbirth is the normal way that God ordained we should have children. For three decades ours was nearly the only voice crying out this way of life.



published in Britain by Jonathan Capt, Ltd., London.

Two informative paperbacks with artwork for young children are:

Levine, Milton I., M.D., and Jean H. Seligman, illustrated by J. William Myers: *A Baby Is Born — The Story of How Life Begins,* Revised Edition, Golden Press, Western Publishing Co., Inc., Racine, Wis. $3.95 and

Parker, Stephen and John Bavosi: *Life Before Birth,* published by the British Museum (Natural History), London, and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP; Bentley House, 200 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB; 32 East 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10022, U.S.A.; 296 Beaconsfield Parade, Middle Park, Melbourne 3206, Australia, U.S.$3.95.

The most impressive photographic story of human reproduction and birth for maturer children is by the great Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson. A thoughtfully written text accompanies superb color and black-and-white photos. You will see photographs of the fetus in the womb and a child being born. The text is helpful for young fathers to expound the role of the male in reproduction.

Nilsson, Lennart: *How Was I Born?* Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, $10.95.

A thoroughly helpful volume in beautiful color, especially for the teenage girl and young mother-to-be, is a study in pregnancy and infant care.

Trimmer, Eric, M.B.: *Having a Baby,* Berkeley Publishers, Ltd., 9 Warwick Court, London WC1R 5DJ; St. Martin's Press, Inc., 175 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010, $9.95.

A new concept in natural childbirth has been pioneered by the French doctor, Frédérick Leboyer. His book is designed to "revolutionize the way we bring our children into the world." It is for all age-groups including grandparents!

Leboyer, Frédérick: *Birth Without Violence,* Fletcher & Son, Ltd., Norwich, England, $11.95. The original work was first published in France under the title *Pour une Naissance Sans Violence* by Editions du Seuil, Paris.

An interesting topic for children is *twins*. A highly illustrated and worthwhile quality paperback is:

Clegg, Averil and Anne Woollett: *Twins from Conception to Five Years,* Francis Lincoln, Ltd., Apollo Works, 5 Charlton Kings Road, London NW5 2SB; Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., Inc., 135 West 50th St., New York, N.Y. 10020, $11.50.

By the same publisher is a quality paperback especially helpful to mothers.

Messenger, Máire: *The Breastfeeding Book,* Francis Lincoln, Ltd., 91 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7TA; Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., Inc., 135 West 50th St., New York, N.Y. 10020, $8.95.

For older children approaching puberty there is an inexpensive hardcover book with artwork and photos.

Krieger, Morris: *The Human Reproductive System,* volume 4 of Basic Biology in Color Series, Oak Tree Press, Ltd., 116 Baker Street, London W. 1.; Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 419 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10016.

One relatively expensive item is included for those who may have opportunity to teach groups of young people outside the home. It is a spectacular set of 79 35-mm. slides on embryonic and fetal development with text on tape.

Allen, John M.: *Biological Aspects of Sexuality/ Module 3 — Human Development,* Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 10 E. 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022, $85. There are other modules in the sequence that have not been included here.

If the family is expecting a baby, older brothers and sisters can better understand the birth experience with the help of the following graphic, full-color quality paperback.

Michele, Karen with Elizabeth Bing: *We Gave Birth Together — Color Photographs and Dialogue of the Work, the Joy, and the Emotions of Childbirth,* William Morrow and Co., Inc., 105 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016, $13.95.

The above volume is a truly dramatic, full-color photographic rendering, in a home setting, of four natural childbirths. No other comparable work is published.

This list of significant works for sex education in the home concludes with a change of pace — a story of two young people who shared high adventure, grew to love each other, married and had their first child by natural childbirth on Santa Catalina Island., Calif. It is the life story of Robin and Patti Graham. Robin sailed around the world alone from 1965 to 1970. It is an unforgettable romance.

Graham, Robin Lee with Derek L.T. Gill: *The Boy Who Sailed 'Round the World Alone,* Word Publishers, Inc., 4800 West Waco Dr., Waco, Tex. 76796, $8.95.

This listing is not meant to be definitive. In fact, some valuable titles no longer in print may be obtained from your local public library. But from a photographic, artistic and textual point of view, this list will prove as helpful as any supportive items to assist young fathers and mothers in presenting their respective roles in the drama of human reproduction and birth. □

By Ronald D. Kelly

Can the Family Be Saved?

This article is being written on a new and sophisticated word-processing package and computer.

To learn how to use this program, I had to read the instruction manual, which contains many pages. It has taken me several hours of reading and practice to become proficient with the keyboard, disks, monitor and printer.



If I do not follow the instruction manual, I'll have quite a mess on my hands. But by following the directions carefully, I can write much more efficiently. The editor will appreciate the clean, correctly spelled copy.

Marriage and the family are much the same way!

God's instruction manual

The great Creator God who created mankind male and female and instituted marriage at the very beginning has given an instruction manual on successful, happy living — we call it the Holy Bible. Read it. Carefully follow its instructions. You *will* have a happy family, just as I will have a nicely printed manuscript for this article *if* I follow the computer instruction manual.

Tragically, millions of people today are definitely *not* following God's instruction manual when it comes to marriage and the family. Millions of failed marriages and broken homes are the result!

There are even those who say family life is going the way of the dinosaur — becoming extinct.

Why has family life disintegrated so much in our generation? The technological developments of the 20th century have been astounding. But in inverse proportion to our scientific progress, we have deteriorated in marital and family happiness.

There is a reason! Though most people today don't realize it, a very real and influential Satan the devil is dedicated to destroying God's plan!

You see, the marriage union is a type of the coming spiritual marriage of Christ to His Church — a wedding to take place soon, at Christ's Second Coming (Ephesians 5:22-32, Revelation 19:7). Is there any wonder Satan would devote time and energy to pervert and destroy the holy institution of marriage?

And he has done a pretty good job. Satan has his own instructions for marriage. They aren't written down anywhere, but many have followed them: Do whatever you want, experiment blindly, try anything. He has convinced millions there are no values, no laws, no absolutes.

His way of life has produced our modern world, with its awesome progress but appalling evils — a society seemingly bent on destroying itself in a gigantic mushroom cloud.

That's what would happen if the eternal God did not intervene. But we've got good news! There will be a change. God will send Jesus Christ to establish God's Kingdom on earth. The world will be taught God's way. Family life will be based on the immutable laws of God — unchanged since creation.

But what about between now and then? It's all a matter of applying available knowledge.

In spite of it all

It is possible *now* to have the happiest marriages in human history. How can that be?

If you are willing to look into and apply the laws and principles in your Bible, your marriage can grow into a living type of what marriage will be like in the coming Kingdom of God on earth.

That's what our "Family Sharing" column is going to be about in the coming months. It will be dedicated to sharing with our readers the way of life that leads to the happy families everyone dreams about.

We look forward to sharing that way of life with you, the readers of the *Good News* magazine. □

Photo by Hal Finch

LETTERS

The death of Herbert W. Armstrong

I am sad in hearing of the passing of the great human being of mankind, Herbert W. Armstrong, a great man. He will be missed dearly. I hope and pray that *The Good News* will continue forever. This magazine is helping me so much in everyday life.

Duane Cuttill
Decatur, Ill.

Though I did not know him personally, I was deeply moved by his telecasts on *The World Tomorrow,* and of course through the articles he published in *The Good News.* He was a positive influence that strengthened my relationship with God. I hope his work will still be continued. He will not be forgotten.

Gloria Alonzo
Alamo, Tex.

Mr. Tkach, we want you to know, as our new Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, that we are behind you 100 percent.

Thank you very much for the very beautiful letter from you about Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's funeral. . . . We are certainly going to miss our dear friend, Mr. Armstrong, and shall never forget what we have learned through him — God's truth.

Edna P. Breedlove
Kansas City, Kan.

I've never written to your organization before, but lately, I have been feeling very grateful for everything that has happened to me since I began requesting literature three years ago — and I feel compelled to write.

Years ago, I would have never believed that so much knowledge of the Bible could be possible. But my understanding and interest in the Bible have grown to such an extent that I sometimes need to remind myself that there is still more to learn — much more!

I have confidence and faith in my beliefs now for the first time in my life. I can't begin to tell you how much that means to me, but I thank God for opening my eyes. I get answers now to all my questions, and it always amazes me how much the Bible makes sense.

I've been a co-worker now for about the last two years and it is truly a blessing to feel a part of the most important Work of God. I thank you for the letter I received that gave the account of the services for Pastor Armstrong. I never knew him, but, in a sense, I felt I did — he had such an evident love for God and for mankind.

I'm praying for Pastor Tkach and for all the members of God's Church. I hope someday to be a part of it.

Cheryl L. Nasuti
Falls Creek, Penn.

Mystery of the Ages

I truly enjoy both *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News,* and also *Mystery of the Ages.* I just wish I'd known all the startling differences 50 years ago. But thank Mr. Armstrong for bringing to light the truth about the Bible. I enjoy them all, and reading *Mystery of the Ages* is so enjoyable as it appears he is talking from the book directly to us in person.

Louise Walters
Grants Pass, Ore.

I have sent for and received *Mystery of the Ages.* I just can't seem to put it down, always wanting to read one more page. All the work and energy you have to have to write all these wonderful books! Where do you find the words? Once again, I thank you.

Susie Guk
Willoughby, Ohio

Herbert W. Armstrong's last book, Mystery of the Ages, *puts together all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that is the Bible, to clarify the most important knowledge ever revealed. Interested readers may have a free copy of this book by mailing the literature request card in this issue or by writing to our address nearest them.*

God's Sabbath

This is for that person that doesn't believe Saturday is God's true Sabbath. Why don't you pick up your Bible, wipe the dust off and begin to read? You'll be surprised to find how many truths you have been lied to about. . . .

But let me warn you! It will be one of the hardest things you've ever tried to do in your life. And you can't do it without God's help. Because Satan will hit you from every side, to try to make you break that Sabbath. This is when you will have to call upon God for help. I know. I've been there. But, oh, the blessings you will receive by keeping that seventh-day Sabbath! I'm praying for you that God will open your eyes to see that Saturday is the real Sabbath.

Mrs. Myron A. Nelson
Gautier, Miss.

Reading Mr. Hume L. Neumann's letter, I went through unbelief, then anger and finally compassion for him. It certainly seems to me that he is afraid of the Word of God . . . I'd like to remind him of Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25, and also of I John 1:9.

We can pray to God for Him to grant Mr. Neumann the wisdom to understand God's ways and to come to repentance and to realize that this sick world will be replaced by a utopian world after Jesus Christ returns to rule all nations.

Guido M. Martinez
Brownsville, Tex.

P.S. By the way, I am one of those idiots that lost his job for keeping God's laws. I have not regretted my decision one bit!

I have learned a lot from you, and one thing is: The truth is the truth, like it or not, and it is not all that hard to accept . . . But the truth sure does make people mad, as in your March issue, the letter you received about the true Sabbath. I also tried to prove you wrong and was unable to do so. The newspaper, the TV guide, the dictionary, the encyclopedia and the Bible all say Saturday. Truth is truth.

Frank Stepanich
Englewood, Colo.

Disagrees with us

This is to inform you that I no longer wish to receive your magazines. After reading the final part of the article on the prophetic beast (February), I realize that my beliefs are totally different from the ideas in your magazine.

I do not believe that I am "worshiping the sun" at an Easter sunrise service. I am celebrating the glory of Christ arising from the dead, and the beauty and glory of the rising sun show the power and glory of God. Also, I celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday because Christ arose on that day.

Carol Bovaird
Papillion, Neb.

Spilled milk

I accidentally spilled milk on my father's January *Good News* ("Are You Teaching Self-Discipline?"). Would you please send me another one so he won't be mad at me?

Joey Krill
Delmont, Penn.

Prepared by Richard H. Sedliacik

God's Invisible Agents

God is the Creator. Genesis 1:1 tells us, "God created the heavens and the earth." But the earth, stars and galaxies were not the first of God's creations. The Bible reveals that God created vast numbers of spirit beings before bringing the physical universe into existence. Who these beings are and the purpose for their existence will be explained in this study.

The method of study is similar to that used in the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. You simply look up and read in your Bible the scriptures given in answer to each question. Comments following the questions will elaborate on these verses. Now let's begin this fascinating and eye-opening study.

1. What did God create before bringing the earth into existence? Job 38:4-7. What are these "stars"? Revelation 1:20.

In Job 38:7 "morning stars" and "sons of God" refer to angels. Notice that Revelation 12:4, 7-9 also speaks of angels as the "stars of heaven."

Angels are individually created spirit beings. They cannot marry or reproduce (Matthew 22:30). They are called "sons of God" because God created each angel a separate, immortal spirit being. And so we find the angels shouting for joy at the creation of the earth, long before the creation of Adam. They were joyful because the earth was to be the home of at least one third of them.

2. Does the Bible plainly speak of angels who sinned? II Peter 2:4, Jude 6. What details are revealed about their sin? Ezekiel 28:13-17, Isaiah 14:12-14.

Among the untold millions of angels God created was a powerful, wise and beautiful cherub — the great archangel Lucifer, who was perfect in all his ways. God set Lucifer over the angels on earth to administer God's government over them.

But Lucifer sinned. He became jealous of God, envious and resentful of God's authority. Eventually, he and one third of God's angels rebelled against their Creator. They left the earth and ascended to heaven in an attempt to take over rulership of the universe.

Lucifer (renamed Satan) and his angelic cohorts (demons) failed in their attempted coup and were cast back to the earth (Isaiah 14:12, Revelation 12:3-4, Luke 10:18). Revelation 12:9 refers to another attempt by the devil and his demons to overthrow God, apparently to occur in the end time.

3. How many angels remained obedient to God? Revelation 12:4.

This verse indicates that two thirds of the angels remained loyal to God. These millions upon millions of spirit beings are God's servants, helping to carry out His will.

4. The Bible describes various types of angels whose appearance and function differ. Are there cherubim at God's throne? Psalm 99:1. And seraphim? Isaiah 6:1-2. What other types of angelic beings surround God's throne? Revelation 4:2-11.

Cherubim are associated with God's throne, either transporting it or carrying out directives from that throne, such as guarding the tree of life after Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:24). Recall that Lucifer is the "anointed cherub" (Ezekiel 28:14) who was assigned to rule the earth. The best description of cherubim is found in the book of Ezekiel. In chapters 1 and 10, we read of cherubim transporting God's throne. They are large, powerful, four-faced creatures with four wings.

The seraphim, which are said to be above the throne, seem to bear a general resemblance to humans, but are described as having six wings. The four "living creatures" of Revelation 4:6-8 appear to have the combined features of cherubim and seraphim. No description of the 24 elders is given in the Bible except that they are dressed in white clothing, each having a golden crown on his head.

5. Has God assigned some angels to continually walk about the earth to observe and report back to Him conditions in the world? Revelation 5:6, Zechariah 4:10, II Chronicles 16:9. Do other untold millions of angels serve God at His throne in heaven, from which He rules the universe? Daniel 7:9-10.

6. In Hebrews 1 and 2 the apostle Paul speaks about the difference between man and angels. Are we told that "the world to come"

— the Millennium and thereafter — will not be ruled by angels? Hebrews 2:5. But, if we become spirit-born children of God, are we promised rulership over angels? Hebrews 2:6-8, I Corinthians 6:2-3.

Although humans have been made a little lower than the angels for now, in the world tomorrow those born of God will be placed over all of God's creation, including angels!

7. In what other way, besides composition, do angels and humans differ? Hebrews 1:5, 13.

Man, now lower than angels, has a destiny far greater. Man was created to be literally begotten by God's Spirit, ultimately to be born into the divine Family of God. Angels are not destined to ever become part of God's universe-ruling Family. Angels, higher than man is now, were created to be God's servants in His universe-ruling government.

8. What is the function of many of God's angels? Hebrews 1:7, 14. Are Spirit-begotten Christians the heirs Paul is talking about? Romans 8:16-17, Galatians 3:26-29, 4:6-7. Has God specifically assigned certain angels to look after His begotten children? Acts 12:15, Matthew 18:10.

A number of God's angels are commissioned to minister to the Spirit-begotten children of God, who are His spiritual heirs.

To illustrate this function, we might consider the status of the son of a wealthy man. While still a child, the son is under the care of an adult servant or guardian chosen by the boy's father. The servant is older, further advanced in knowledge, more developed physically and mentally — but has much less potential. For when the son matures, he will inherit his father's wealth and power. Therefore the servant, older and more mature, is only a servant ministering to the young heir. Likewise, angels are ministering to Spirit-begotten humans today.

9. Are angels powerful? II Peter 2:11. Do God's angels protect His obedient children from accidents, calamities, plagues and other evils? Psalm 34:7, 91:1-12.

God's angels are assigned to help His heirs of salvation along the road to eternal life — to save them from premature death, accidents and to protect them from the devil and his demons.

10. What did an angel of God do when the civil rulers imprisoned some of the apostles? Acts 5:17-20. Did this enable the apostles to continue preaching the truth of God? Verse 21.

11. Do God's holy angels have the power to sometimes manifest themselves in order to carry out their duties? Daniel 9:21, Hebrews 13:2. Also read Genesis 18 and 19:1-22.

Angels are also messengers. (The Hebrew and Greek words for *angel* also mean "messenger.") Angels appeared to Abraham, Lot, Hagar, Moses, Gideon and many of God's prophets and apostles. When God's angels manifest themselves to human beings, they look like ordinary men.

Paul points out in Hebrews 13:2 that angels sometimes travel incognito on God's business, not revealing who they are. But righteous angels never capriciously appear and disappear merely to amuse either themselves or men.

12. Why did the prophet Elisha ask God to open the eyes of his servant? II Kings 6:15-17.

No wonder Elisha did not fear his enemies. He knew that one of God's spirit armies was standing upon the mountain, ready to protect him and his servant from the army of the king of Syria.

13. Has Michael the archangel been assigned to protect and minister to the 12 tribes of Israel? Daniel 12:1.

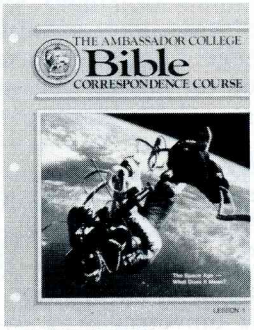
The Bible mentions by name three angels of high rank: Lucifer, now Satan the devil (Isaiah 14:12); Gabriel, who appeared to Daniel (Daniel 8:16-17, 9:21), to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19), and to Mary, the mother of Jesus (verses 26-28); and Michael, called one of the "chief princes" (Daniel 10:13), whom Jude identifies as an archangel (Jude 9).

14. Was Gabriel (apparently of archangel rank) sent to give Daniel understanding of visions, and to fight spiritual battles with fallen angels ("princes") of the devil so God's will would be carried out among the governments of men? Daniel 8:15-16, 9:21-22, 10:10-14, 20-21.

From this brief study we can see that the spirit world is teeming with activity. God works (John 5:17), and so do His invisible servants, who are busy helping Him carry out His will.

The time is coming soon when God will send one of His powerful, righteous angels to bind Satan and all his demons — to completely restrain them, preventing them from deceiving mankind for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3)!

(For more information about the origin of Satan, be sure to call or write for our free booklet *Did God Create a Devil?*) □



ENROLL IN FREE BIBLE COURSE

The short study you've just completed is a sample of the study method used in each monthly lesson of the 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.



The Home of Abraham

Abraham came from a city with a long cultural tradition, a place of learning, law and government, with trade connections from India to Egypt.

By K.J. Stavrinides

Students of the Bible know that Abraham was from the city of Ur, now clearly located in Lower Mesopotamia.

What is not often realized is that the location of Abraham's city of origin was not known until the 20th century.

Between 1922 and 1934, the British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley excavated Tell al Muqayyar (Mound of Pitch), as it was known to the inhabitants (a place repeatedly ravaged by treasure hunters), with a serious intention of discovering the civilization that lay beneath the mound.

Sir Leonard soon realized that he was excavating the site of the biblical home of the father of the Hebrew nation.

The result of his long and arduous work was the removal of the biblical patriarch's birthplace from the list of unknown locations and its placement, for the first time in history, on the map of Sumer by the Persian Gulf.

Some critics questioned the accuracy of Sir Leonard's conclusion that the southern Ur was the home of Abraham. As Genesis 24:4-10 mentions Haran in the north as Abraham's "country" and "land of his kindred," they

Illustration by C. Winston Taylor

preferred to seek a northwestern location for Ur.

The reference to Haran as Abraham's "country" and "land of his kindred," however, is not a strong objection to Sir Leonard Woolley's discovery. Given either location for Ur, it would have been natural for Abraham to visit Haran, as long as his kindred were there.

In favor of the southern location, it can be shown that the archaeological evidence from Sir Leonard's excavation indicates a high culture in the southern Ur, with laws that fully account for Abraham's behavior with respect to legal inheritance, burial customs and general conduct.

The first "archaeologists"

The river civilizations first came to the attention of Western scholars in the 17th century. In 1625, Italian nobleman and explorer Pietro della Valle returned from a visit to Mesopotamia, bringing with him tablets written in an unknown script that needed deciphering.

Neither this first explorer nor many who came after him — from Denmark (1761), France (1845) and Britain (1854) — understood scientific excavation. The expeditions conducted during these three centuries were no more than searches for museum pieces that would attract the attention of visitors.

More often than not, the "excavations" that were carried out by these groups did serious and permanent damage to valuable relics that had been safely buried for millennia.

The early culture of Ur

The whole area encompassed by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which is now known by the Greek name *Mesopotamia* ("land between the rivers"), became a focal point for archaeologists only during the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th.

Excavations at the lower part of the city revealed flint implements and a mud-hut culture that Sir Leonard Woolley placed in pre-Flood times.

The implements and the dwellings revealed a community whose mainstay was farming and husbandry. Fishing was also an essential part of life (the coastline was closer to the city at that time than it is today). Since the loom, too, was already in use, the inhabitants were not necessarily dressed in skins. At the same time, they were not what we might term a civilized society. The Sumerians moved into Ur at a later time with an advanced culture. They were skilled in the use of metals, and surviving records show that they excelled in the art of writing.

The invading Sumerian tribes captured Ur, along with surrounding areas, rebuilt it with burnt brick and constructed a wall around it. The archaeological finds from this period include the wheel, and the examination of the pottery reveals that the potter's art, even at that time, included the use of the wheel.

Like their predecessors, the Sumerians were farmers, but they also conducted trade with other peoples as far east as the Indus valley and as far west as Egypt.

By far the most important discovery at Ur was the vast number of written documents. The Sumerian language is the oldest known to us with surviving records.

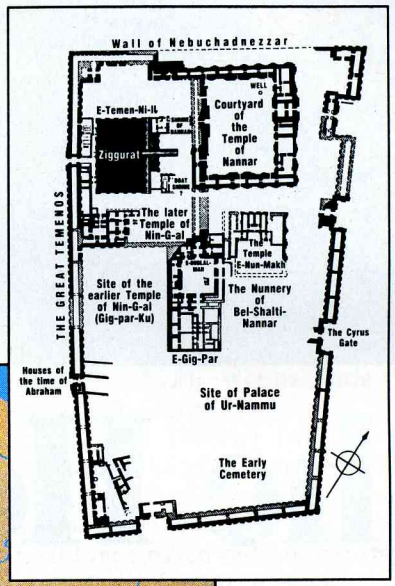
No similarity has yet been established between this language and any other in the world. It is a known language, however, and has been classified among the agglutinative languages.

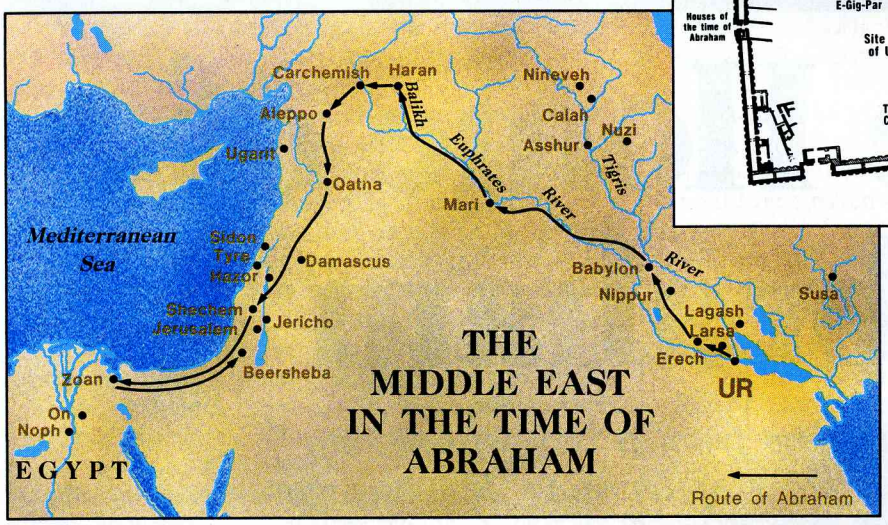
The Sumerian language was such an established feature of culture at Ur that even after the city declined — with the rise of Babylon — this language continued to be the means of expression for arts and letters.

A modern parallel is the literary role of Latin in European culture. Latin was so established in Europe that, as late as the 16th century, literature was written exclusively in Latin, even though countries used their own languages in daily life.

Scribes in Sumeria were specialists who had devoted much time and effort to the art of writing. The Sumerian name for

Mesopotamia *has been called "the cradle of civilization"; some of history's most influential cultures flourished here. Right, city plan of Ur.*





City plan courtesy of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania

scribe (*tupshar*) meant "one who writes on tablets."

The city plan

Sir Leonard Woolley was able to draw up a plan of the city, incorporating details that had come to light during the excavation. The city of the patriarchal times had narrow, winding, unpaved streets. Its houses were slightly raised off the ground, perhaps as a practical precaution against inundations from the river. Its temples and shrines were in prominent places.

There was, of course, a cemetery, which has yielded most of the information we have today about Sumerian culture, and the whole city was surrounded by walls.

The architecture of houses and other buildings is impressive, given their historical setting of four millennia ago along with the desert conditions and the total lack of stone for building purposes. The lower part of the houses was constructed with burnt brick, which provided strength. The upper part of the houses was of ordinary (mud) brick.

The Sumerians were artistic enough to realize that the combination of two types of brick was unsightly and in need of hiding. Houses, therefore, were covered with plaster and whitewash.

Far from all expectation, the houses consisted of two levels and comprised 13 or 14 rooms carefully arranged around an open courtyard. In one corner of the courtyard were the stairs, which led to the upper level. The rest of the courtyard led to a kitchen, reception rooms, servants' quarters, a chapel and rooms used for storage.

The condition of these relics was not as bad as might have been expected. Some of the ovens, for example, were soon restored and used for baking fresh bread for the archaeologists working on the site.

The large amount of evidence that came to light from these excavations moved Sir Leonard to make a profound statement regarding the culture in which Abraham spent his early years:

"We must revise considerably our ideas of the Hebrew patriarch when we learn that his earlier years were spent in such sophisticated surroundings; he was the citizen of a great city and inherited the traditions of an ancient and highly organized civilization. The houses, themselves, bespoke comfort and even luxury" (*Ur of the Chaldees,* Sir Leonard Woolley, Pelican, 1938, page 90).

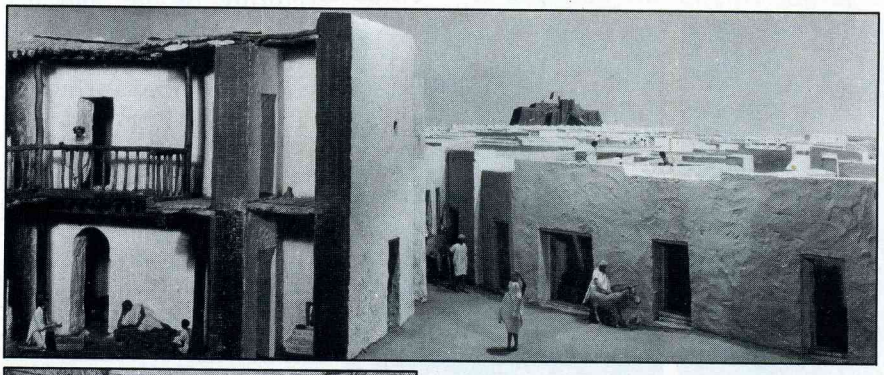
Law and government

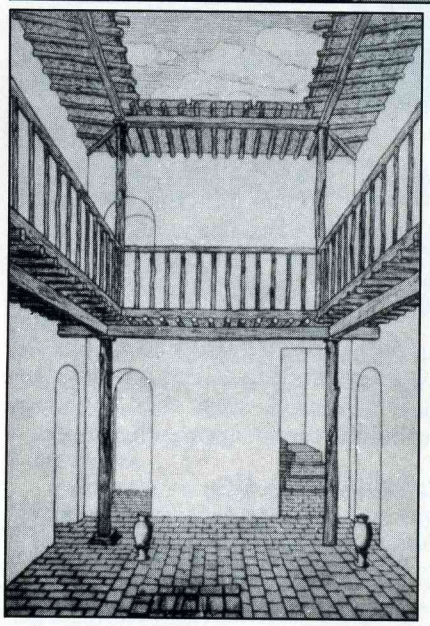
If Sumerian houses bespoke comfort and even luxury, the legal and governmental structures of Ur were very advanced, even by 20th-century standards. The numerous clay tablets provide us with the full text of laws and the governmental system.

At the head of the government was the "lugal" or "prince." He was a monarch — not an absolute monarch like those of Europe, but, at the same time, not a figurehead either. He was a powerful ruler and the ultimate authority for all appeals of the community. Under the lugal was a cabinet of ministers of war, communications, agriculture and finance.

A vital aspect of the governmental structure was the function of the scribes. The scribes were highly specialized in keeping records. It was their duty to keep the calendar up to date, to proclaim the month by each new moon and to intercalate an extra (13th) month whenever it became necessary. It was also the duty of the scribes to keep track of the receipts deposited in the temple by all citizens.

The scribes' records show that the king of a city often had control of surrounding areas, too. The government in such cases was somewhat decentralized. Scholars who have tried to analyze these records believe that, although wars between cities broke out from time to time, in general there was stability and progress.





Model of street scene *in Ur, circa 2000 B.C., shows ziggurat in distance (above). Left, a house from Abraham's time.*

Photo of model courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History; illustration of house courtesy of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania

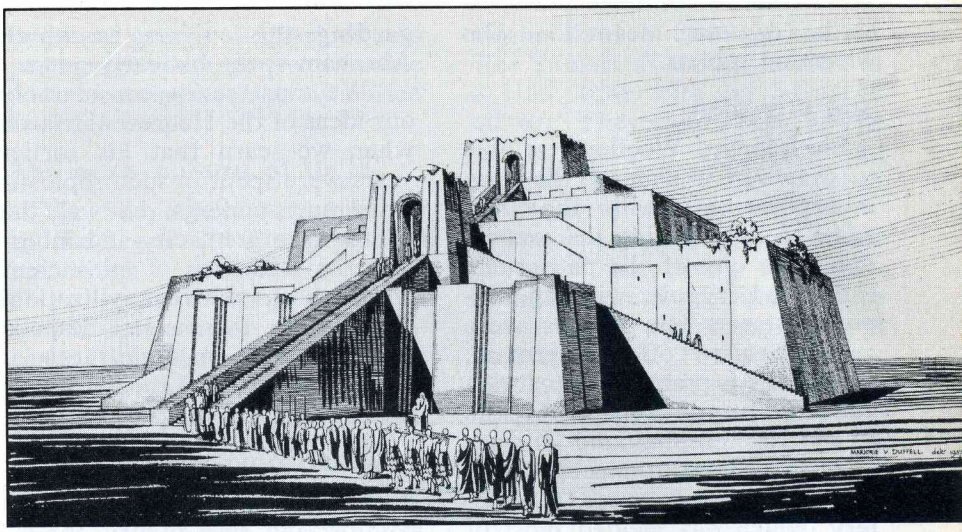
The greatest period of Ur is considered to be that of the third dynasty (circa 21st century B.C.), especially the reign of Ur-Nammu. King Ur-Nammu rebelled against Ur-Khegal of the city of Erech and made Ur the capital of a large empire. His ascension to authority was seen as a special appointment by the god Nanna.

Ur-Nammu's dynasty was followed by that of Isin and Larsa,

and then the Sumerian civilization came to an end with the rise of Babylon.

In spite of the tremendous achievement in government, bureaucracy was pervasive in Sumerian culture. This may be a natural outcome of the ease with which the Sumerians kept records. Tax collectors were especially hated in Ur because they seem to have left nothing untaxed, but the heavy taxation did not detract from the effective legal system.

The legal system at Ur was based on specific codes that have survived. Ur-Nammu's legal code is the oldest in existence, antedating the code of Hammurabi by more than 300 years.



Art

The excavation carried out in the Royal Cemetery brought to light an abundance of small objects that indicate a sophisticated use of gold and expert decorative techniques with precious stones: beads, earrings, daggers, pins, cylinder seals, tools, weapons and various clay vessels.





Sound box of a lyre *unearthed by Sir Leonard features bull with beard of semiprecious lapis lazuli (left). Right, ornamental headdress of the Lady Pu-abi, with gold hair ribbon and wreath.*

A golden dagger, for example, discovered in 1926-27, had a golden blade, a hilt of lapis lazuli and gold studs. A lyre showed the same artistic qualities: It had a golden head of a bull with eyes and beard of lapis lazuli, and decorative illustrations along the side of the sound box. Larger objects of art found in the cemetery did not have the same charm as smaller objects. They were rather on the unattractive side. Statues, for example, have a head that is too large for the size of the body, and eyes that are too large for the size of the head.

This disproportion has attracted considerable attention as inconsistent with the advanced culture of Ur, and has led to the theory that these works of art betray foreign influence from northern Semitic Akkad. This theory, however, is not without weaknesses, since there is no archaeological evidence to justify the conclusion that the local art was of a higher quality than that of Akkad.

In any case, the religious nature of the art of Ur may hold a better explanation for the incongruity. After all, it is known that the Etruscans and the Egyptians, who likewise had reached great heights as engineers and goldsmiths respectively, exhibit artwork that is not significantly different from that found at Ur. An understanding of the religious beliefs in Ur may shed light on their art and approach to life.

Religion at Ur

Among the religious edifices that made the greatest impression on archaeologists are: 1) The ziggurat — a tower about 200 feet long, 150 feet wide and 70 feet high, 2) the temples and shrines to various gods and 3) the Royal Cemetery.

The religious significance of these finds lies in the conclusion that the civilization of Ur was dominated by religion. The evidence overwhelmingly supports the biblical statement that Abraham's ancestors worshiped many gods (Joshua 24:2).

It is generally accepted that the Sumerians, who captured Ur, brought a worship of the "high places" with them; they must have come from areas that afforded mountain habitations for their gods. The Mesopotamian area, however, afforded no such luxuries, and this natural deficiency prompted them to build towers that would function as high places.

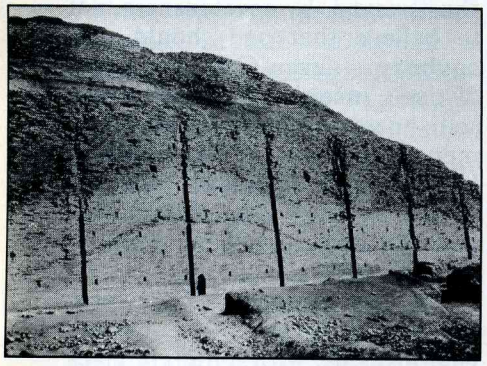
The ziggurat was called "Hill of Heaven" or "Mountain of God" and was a standard feature of every Mesopotamian city. The steps of the ziggurat led up to a shrine that may have functioned as a post for the observation of the stars. The ziggurat was an impressive structure, not unlike the Egyptian pyramids, by its sheer size.

The ziggurat at Ur was built by Ur-Nammu and stood by the main temple, which was dedicated to Sin. Its four corners pointed to the four points of the compass, possibly as an indication of an extensive influence in the world.

At the base of the ziggurat

Ziggurat of Ur-Nammu *(left and below). Ziggurats foreshadowed modern minarets and church steeples. Temples of various deities were at base; shrine at top may have been used to observe stars.*





were temples dedicated to various deities. The main temple was also the king's palace; he was, after all, the vice-regent of heaven. Here, in the temple, was his cabinet of ministers and, of course, his harem. The harem has persisted through history as a privilege of eastern kings and other potentates, the temples and the shrines speak for themselves in all cultures and the ziggurat has developed into the minaret and church steeple.

Excavation at the Royal Cemetery

The excavation of the Royal Cemetery has had the most profound effect on our understanding of the religious life at Ur. Here are some brief extracts from Sir Leonard's own description of the excavation in the Royal Cemetery:

"We found, in another part of the field, five bodies lying side by side. . . . Below them, a layer of matting was found and tracing this along we came to another group of bodies. . . . We found the earth side of the pit in which the women's bodies lay and could see that the bodies of five men were on the ramp. . . .

"Following the pit along, we came upon more bones which at first startled us by being other than human. . . . In front of the chariot lay the crushed skeletons of two asses with the bodies of the grooms by their heads. . . . At the foot of the ramp lay six soldiers, ordered in two ranks, with copper spears by their sides and copper helmets crushed flat on the broken skulls. . . .

"Against the end wall of the stone chamber lay the bodies of nine women wearing the gala head-dress of lapis and carnelian beads from which hung golden pendants in the form of beech leaves, great lunate earrings of gold . . . the whole space between them and the waggons was crowded with other dead, women and men" (*ibid.*, pages 23-51).

It is known, now, that the custom in the city of Ur was that a royal person had to be accompanied to the grave by his entire staff in perpetual attendance. The king, in this case, was accompanied by 65 men, and the queen by 25 people in all.

The order with which the dead were arranged around the royal person and the decency evident in their dress indicated to Sir Leonard that they probably had been marched down to the grave (perhaps in a drugged state) and their bodies arranged accordingly before the pit was filled in and the soil was trampled down on top of them.

The clear division of the royal tombs into different levels and floors showed that the pit was filled in stages and with appropriate ceremonies. These ceremonies included a human sacrifice at each level, until the top was reached.

Discoveries show the religious life of the inhabitants included magic, interpretation of dreams, astrology and fertility rites. This is suggested even by jewels in the shape of ears of corn, pomegranates and bulls.

Significant finds

Sir Leonard's discoveries from 1922 to 1934 are an important benchmark for biblical studies. Ur was placed firmly on the map of historical cities, and clearer light was shed on the early life of Abraham.

Abraham emerges, on the strength of the discoveries, as a man with a background of refined culture, an heir of a body of literature and an artistic tradition and a product of a society that understood law and order and strong government.

The archaeological discoveries have at last provided a cultural framework that can be valuable in developing a deeper understanding of the home, life and mission of Abraham. □

How the Findings at Ur Relate to Us Today

- The Tigris and Euphrates rivers are mentioned by name in the opening chapters of the Bible as proceeding from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:14).
- Some of the most influential cultures in the history of the world flourished on the banks of these rivers: Sumerian, Assyrian, Hittite, Babylonian and others.
- Sumeria has bequeathed its cultural legacy to the modern world in many ways. An example is the sexagesimal system, by which the day is divided into 24 hours, each hour into 60 minutes, each minute into 60 seconds and the circle into 360 degrees.
- Mesopotamia, and Sumer in particular, was the first culture to establish commercial banking, to standardize weights and measures, to make legal contracts and to codify civil laws and statutes in writing.
- Some 20th-century religious buildings had their beginnings in Abraham's city, including the church steeple and the minaret. □

Photos and illustration courtesy of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania

The Blessing of Tithing

Treasury bills, certificates of deposit, mortgages, stocks, bonds, real estate — the complicated vocabulary of our modern money system seems hard to master. And new money-making schemes are constantly being dreamed up.

It seems almost every conceivable way of making one's money stretch and grow has been tried.

Every one but one, that is — the very one that the Bible, God's instruction Book for man, proclaims as the true investment vehicle for financial peace of mind! That virtually untried system is tithing.

The very suggestion that modern man should tithe strikes most as laughable. But isn't it strange that the bonds of a human government billions of dollars in debt make sense as an investment, while the tithing system of the God who created and owns everything in the universe is treated with scorn?

Should tithing be treated scornfully? Is it passé? Or is it a command and a financial law that we must observe today?

You need to know, for Malachi 3:8-10 pronounces a blessing on those who tithe and, conversely, a curse on those who won't. If tithing is for today, that blessing or curse is for you!

The basic doctrine

To tithe means to allocate one tenth of one's income to Christ for His Church. Tithing has always been God's financial system and continues to be a binding obligation upon New Testament Christians, to whom blessings are promised for tithing and curses for refusing to do so.

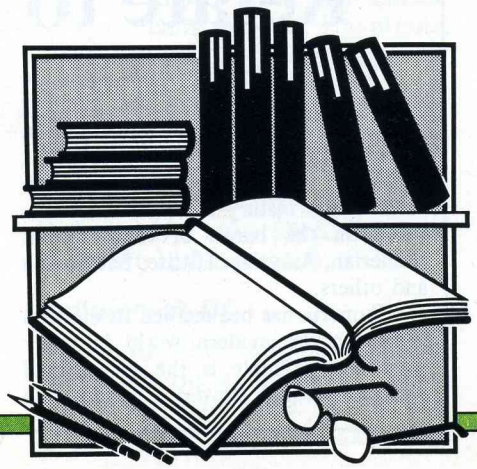
The usual teachings of this world

Of course, the law of tithing finds precious little support even in religious circles today, to say nothing of financial advisers who would openly laugh at the idea.

Many, though not all, religious leaders proclaim that we need not tithe, saying that the New Testament just requires giving as we are able. Some say tithing was just for the Jews, or that the law of tithing was done away with the passing of the Old Covenant and the law of Moses. Others maintain tithing was only a civil matter even in Old Testament times, and the existence of civil tax codes negates the need to tithe today.

Others say the tithe was only to help the poor and that our modern welfare systems take its place. Still others say they believe in tithing, but conclude that the word simply means giving money to the Church in whatever amount one chooses.

Many of these beliefs may be well intentioned, but all of them are proven wrong by plain biblical evidence.



The Bible teaching

The mind of man is selfish, and thus swayed, by covetousness, not to believe that one should give anybody — even God — a tenth of one's income. Most often this selfishness is framed by the argument that says: "I've worked hard for my paycheck and the money is mine! Why should anybody be able to tell me what to do with it?"

But this argument is fallacious. We make money with talents God gives us, with a life He gives us, with elements from the earth He created and owns.

God says plainly in Job 41:11, "Everything under heaven is Mine." And in Psalm 50:12, "The world is Mine, and all its fullness."

We are mere guests blessed with the privilege of living here and using God's beautiful earth. So our money is not really ours!

And why should it seem wrong for God to command that we tithe our income to Him? Even the governments of this world make prior demands on our income in the form of taxes, and we quickly agree with their right to do so, if not with their means or amounts.

The place to begin for this topic is to define the word *tithe*. It means an exact tenth of something. As used in the Bible, it refers to allocating one tenth of one's income to the Work of God's Church. It does not mean simply giving in a general way.

The crux of the tithing doctrine is simply this: The only financial system for the support of the Church commanded, illus-

trated or even referred to in the entire Bible — in both Old and New Testaments — is tithing. No other overall financial system is recognized. The Church is not authorized to charge for its services, nor is it put into the position of having to beg for money.

Abraham tithed to the priest Melchizedek long before the children of Israel were ever given the tithing law (Genesis 14:18-20). Tithing was commanded of the Israelites in later centuries as God's chosen method of financing the priesthood (Leviticus 27:30). The prophets denounced those who would not tithe (Malachi 3:8-10). Tithing was the recognized system during Christ's time (Matthew 23:23). The apostle Paul proclaimed that God's ministry should receive the tithes of the people in the New Testament era of the Church (Hebrews 7:4-14).

Those who oppose tithing cannot turn to Scripture to support any supposed substitute. So what men have instead tried to do is frame counter arguments against tithing in an attempt to say it was done away.

One such argument against tithing states that we need not tithe today since we are bound to the spirit of the law and not the letter. For proof some will turn to II Corinthians 9:6-7, which seems to imply a person can give whatever he wants. But to obey the spirit of the law means to go above and beyond the letter, not to annul it. Therefore tithing is not annulled by the spirit of giving, but merely consigned to be the *least* a person must do.

Another supposed reason why we need not tithe, critics say, is that tithing was only for the Jews. Of course, those who use this argument don't even address 1) that the law God gave Israel was not just to the Jews, 2) that God said the law He gave Israel was full of wisdom and understanding (Deuteronomy 4:5-6) or 3) that we all must become spiritual Jews to receive salvation (Romans 2:29, John 4:22).

But even in addition to these truths, it is plain tithing was not merely for the Jews, since Abraham tithed to God long, long before God gave Israel His tithing law. Abraham was, of course, not a Jew, but was the father of the faithful, one who feared God and kept His commandments (Genesis 26:5), as should we.

Tithing is not necessary, say some detractors, because it was part of the Old Covenant, and the Old Covenant is done away.

True, tithing was indeed part of the Old Covenant. But Abraham tithed, and he lived long, long before the terms of the Old Covenant were instituted. What the Old Covenant did not originate did not die with it. Rather, tithing was part of the Old Covenant because tithing is the system God has always used to finance His Work.

Some who are uninformed will say tithing was purely a matter of civil taxation, or was only to help support the poor. They say that our government tax systems and welfare programs take the place of the tithe.

But the Bible is clear on the matter. The first tithe was specifically for the support of the religious system and priesthood (Numbers 18:20-21).

Finally, some will say that they do not tithe since it is "not commanded" in the New Testament. Again, this is a fallacious argument, and for numerous reasons.

First, those who say such a thing are requiring, in effect, a direct "Thus saith the Lord" before they will obey God on any point. And the Bible shows God's will on many doctrines without using that exact expression. Those who will not obey God unless He uses some magic words of which they approve plainly do not want to obey God, and will always try to find a way to justify not obeying Him, no matter what He says. It's as simple as that.

Second, the New Testament does indeed clearly confirm the tithing law for us today. For example, in Matthew 23:23 Christ upbraided the Pharisees for ignoring justice and mercy, but added that tithing (which they did do, albeit in a wrong manner) should not remain undone. Hence He confirmed the tithing law.

Further, Paul spoke of tithing in Hebrews 7. Paul showed that the priesthood of Jesus Christ supersedes the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament. We must tithe to Christ today! Hebrews 7:5 clearly labels tithing as a law.

In summary, then, the law of tithing remains what it has always been — the only system of finance for God's Church that has ever been used, espoused or even referred to in the Bible.

Key verses

Tithing is such an important topic that we should briefly list the main scriptures one may turn to in explaining it:

Genesis 14:18-20 — Abraham tithed long before Israel was commanded to do so. Leviticus 27:30 and Numbers 18:20-21 — Israel was commanded to tithe in support of God's religious system. Job 41:11 and Psalm 50:12 — God owns everything, even things we think are ours. Matthew 23:23 and Hebrews 7:4-14 — even after Christ's death, Paul called tithing, which was confirmed by Christ, a law. Malachi 3:8-10 — blessings for tithing and curses for not tithing are listed.

Yes, man in general has looked to every conceivable method of finance and money management, but has ignored the very system God ordained to finance His Church and bless His people personally. But God's Church today stands as a bright beacon, proving for all to see that God's tithing system works. □

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