

October – December 2014

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BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

*What is a 21st
Century Philadelphian?*

Gambling and Sin:

*Is it a sin for Christians to gamble?
Who gambles the most?*

Iraq in Prophecy:

*Iraq has been in the news a lot.
What does the Bible teach will happen there?*

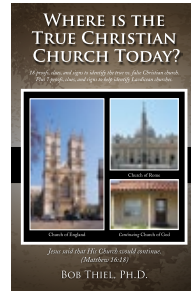
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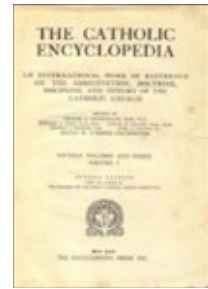
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Back Cover: Internet and Radio This shows where people can find the message from the Continuing Church of God.

About the Front Cover: Some of the remains of the ancient city of Philadelphia. Philadelphia was a city on an ancient Roman mail route and was one of seven churches to receive a specific letter in the Book of Revelation. While the Continuing Church of God was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20), it represents the leading remnant of the Philadelphia era during this time of Laodicean dominance. Photo by Joyce Thiel.

BibleNewsProphecyTM is published by the *Continuing Church of God*, 1248 E. Grand Avenue, Suite A, Arroyo Grande, CA, 93420. <http://www.ccog.org>

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Bible News Prophecy-

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WHAT IS A PHILADELPHIAN?

What is a Philadelphian in the 21st century?

Why this is important to know? What does the Bible teach? How can church history assist in understanding this?

The Book of Revelation is a prophetic book. It begins with, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1).

In chapters 2 & 3, the Book of Revelation shows a series, in an apparent overlapping succession of seven churches, each with somewhat different strengths and weaknesses (as well as attitudes that exist throughout the church era). Despite the views of certain allegorists and others, the Book of Revelation is clearly a book of prophecy (Revelation 1:3). Since several statements made to the seven churches (e.g. Revelation 1:19; 3:3; 3:10) simply cannot have been intended to be completely fulfilled by the physical churches they were addressed to in the late 1st century, scripture itself proves that many of the messages to those churches were prophetic, with some of those prophecies intended for those in the 21st century.

The Bible clearly shows that Jesus walks in the midst of these seven churches (Revelation 1:9-13), showing that somehow they represent His church for the church age. The fact that there are seven churches addressed and the number seven suggests completion, combined with the fact that the churches are listed in the same order as they would receive mail in the Roman times, is also consistent with the view that these churches were to represent the true church throughout the ages in a type of sequential order of predominance.

The letters to the Churches of Revelation 2 & 3 need to be understood in a prophetic context, and they discuss the Church in Philadelphia as well as others.

What Did Jesus Tell the Church at Philadelphia?

Notice what Jesus told the Church in Philadelphia:

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

“These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”: 8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make those of

the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie — indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ‘

(Revelation 3:7-13).

Jesus says here that He “has the key of David,” and He talks about doors. References to the “key of David” and doors are used together in another Bible passage:

20 ‘Then it shall be in that day,
That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah;
21 I will clothe him with your robe
And strengthen him with your belt;
I will commit your responsibility into his hand.
He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
And to the house of Judah.
22 The key of the house of David
I will lay on his shoulder;
So he shall open, and no one shall shut;
And he shall shut, and no one shall open.
23 I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place,
And he will become a glorious throne to his father’s
house. (Isaiah 22:20-23)

This, amongst other things, suggests that the “key of David” has something to do with governance and something to do with a throne. How could that relate to the Philadelphia era of the Church in the 21st century?

When the Philadelphia Era Began

A review of literature on the “Sardis” era of the Church (Revelation 3:1-6) demonstrates that there never was truly effective governance over the body (see also, True History of the True Church by A.N. Dugger and C.O. Dodd). In the Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong (all quotes from the 1973 edition), the late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

Ministers were to be employed, and under orders from lay members. This is essentially the concept of what we call democracy: government from the bottom up. Those being governed dictate who shall be their rulers and how their rulers shall rule them. The most perplexing subject in all the Bible to me was this matter of church government. I never did come to clear understanding of the BIBLE teaching on the subject until after Ambassador College was formed (pp. 411-412).

Note that when the Church of God Seventh Day (CG7) split over governance in 1933, Herbert Armstrong did not go with the side that had the most votes, but, at a distance cooperated with the side that lost the vote (Mystery of the Ages, pp. 558, 561). He also wrote:

I continued to work with and fellowship with West Coast members of the Sardis era until 1942, when the rapidly growing work of the fledgling Philadelphia era required my full time. The present era was officially begun in October, 1933. (Worldwide News, June 24, 1985)

Herbert Armstrong left CG7 primarily because of doctrine as well as the fact that to him CG7 did not seem to feel that its top priority should be to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to the world as a witness. His autobiography contains a letter one of CG7's top leaders wrote that CG7 would not teach British Commonwealth and United States peoples were descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, even though that leader believed what Herbert Armstrong had written on that subject was true.

The reality is that the late CG7 president and leader A.N. Dugger had doctrinal problems. According to another former CG7 President, Robert Coulter, A.N. Dugger also had some serious personal integrity issues around this time that Herbert W. Armstrong would have known about. Here is some of what Herbert Armstrong wrote about A.N. Dugger:

He was forced to admit, in plain words, that their teaching on this point was false and in error. But, he explained, he feared that if any attempt was made to correct this false doctrine and publicly confess the truth, many of their members, especially those of older standing and heavy tithe payers, would be unable to accept it. He feared they would lose confidence in the Church if they found it had been in error on any point. He said he feared many would withdraw their financial support, and it might divide the Church. And therefore he felt the Church could do nothing but continue to teach and preach this doctrine which he admitted in writing to be false.

Naturally, this shook my confidence considerably. This church leader, if not the church itself, was looking to people as the SOURCE of belief, instead of to God! (Autobiography, pp. 315-316)

Thus, it was because of doctrinal and integrity issues that Herbert W. Armstrong left CG7 and formed a group he named the Radio Church of God to do the Philadelphian work. Interestingly the same type of issues many decades later resulted in the formation of the Continuing Church of God which needed to continue and finish that work (cf. Matthew 24:14).

Once he understood God's form of governance Herbert Armstrong wrote:

The Church is organized under theocratic government, hierarchical in form (Mystery of the Ages, p. 246).

From the year 1931...this small remnant of the original true Church of God began to take on new life as the Philadelphia era... This era of the Church was to produce fruit... (Mystery of the Ages, pp. 289-290).

Then, he also wrote:

after 3 1/2 years of intensive study and training, Christ ordained me to preach this same Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world as a witness to all nations (Matthew 24:14). This ordination took place at, or very near, the Day of Pentecost, 1931 (Autobiography, p. 428).

Herbert Armstrong had preached before then, but "by this time my whole heart was in it" and he was able to do his first extended campaign (Autobiography, pp. 426, 430). In 1933, he refused to accept any salary from the Oregon Conference of CG7, and on October 9, 1933 he began proclaiming the gospel over radio, which he considered to be a door opened by God and "the start of the present work" (Autobiography, pp. 506, 507, 525, 529, 530).

He felt "though we did not know it then, that a new era of the Church was dawning" (Autobiography, p. 526).

He later wrote:

Jesus Christ started the Philadelphia era of God's Church through me... August 1933. (What Is a Liberal? The Worldwide News, Feb. 19, 1979)

Herbert Armstrong found that since God promised David: "Your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16) and "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" (Jeremiah 33:17), that this had been partially fulfilled throughout history through what became the British throne.

Herbert Armstrong considered this identity to be part of the "key of David." By 1937, because of his writings on the biblical Holy Days and the identity of the U.S. and British Commonwealth in prophecy, CG7 rejected Herbert Armstrong—so it appears that from sometime between

1933 and 1937 the Philadelphia era of the Church became completely separate from CG7 (though Herbert Armstrong still spoke to one of their congregations until 1942).

An Open Door

Although some Protestant theologians feel that the Revelation 3:8 open door has to do with the entrance to the New Jerusalem (see Nelson's Study Bible, p. 2,170), Herbert Armstrong saw that it referred to public proclamation of the Gospel. "God had set before it [the Philadelphia era] an open door."

It is recorded in 2 Corinthians 2:12 and also Acts 14:27 how Christ opened the door for Paul to go into other countries and preach the gospel" (Mystery of the Ages, p. 290). Paul used a similar analogy when he wrote:

Meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ (Colossians 4:3).

Interestingly, right after Jesus declares to the Philadelphians, "I know your works," He says: "See, I have set before you an open door" (Revelation 3:8). Thus, Jesus ties the works of the Philadelphia Church to "an open door."

Also a door was to be opened for the Philadelphians to fulfil Matthew 24:14: 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come' (cf. Mystery of the Ages, pp. 290-291).

What Are the Traits of a Philadelphian?

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance shows that Philadelphia means "love of brethren" or "fond of brethren."

When Jesus used the term phileo with Simon Peter (translated as "love"), what was Peter to do to show this type of love?

Peter was to do the work:

17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" (John 21:17).

A trait of Philadelphians is that they love the brethren and will sacrifice to do so. While some may argue that this only means taking care of those already in the Church, this is inconsistent with Matthew 28:18-19 as well as Jesus' words in John 10:16:

16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Philadelphians love others, not just themselves.

As Herbert Armstrong wrote:

... the Philadelphia era...This era of the Church was to produce fruit (Mystery of the Ages, p. 290).

As Jesus taught:

35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it (Mark 8:35).

Philadelphians will give their all to proclaim the Gospel.

Philadelphians have "a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (Revelation 3:8). They are not part of an especially strong church (or a large church by the world's standards). They have kept God's word without watering it down. They have not denied Christ's authority (which is essentially how Strong's defines the word translated as "name").

The loving Philadelphians accept that "Christ is head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23), and accept authority within the Church:

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16).

As Herbert Armstrong wrote:

The government of the kingdom of God is of necessity government from the top down. It cannot be 'government by the consent of those being governed'... Revelation 3:12 indicates that those of the 'Philadelphia era' will be pillars in the Headquarters Church... What I am showing you here is that Christ's gospel of the kingdom actually includes all this knowledge here revealed-even the whole universe will be ruled by us, who, with God the Father and Christ, become the kingdom of God" (Mystery of the Ages, pp. 49, 347, 362).

Philadelphians were also given a warning: "Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

Herbert Armstrong wrote that he restored to the Church of God at least 18 truths that the previous era had lost (Mystery of the Ages, p. 251). Philadelphians are the ones who hold to those truths (as well as all other biblical truths)-including governance - and will be able to have a crown and to rule!

Jesus taught that Philadelphians have “kept My command to persevere” (Revelation 3:10). Holding fast to truth, while putting a priority on proclaiming the Gospel, is what sets the Philadelphia Church apart.

What About the Laodiceans?

The letter to the Laodiceans is the last one of the seven to the churches mentioned in the book of Revelation:

14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — 18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ‘ ‘ (Revelation 3:14-22).

Unlike the letters to the other six churches, this particular one is addressed to the plural. This seems to be telling us that there will be more Laodicean groups than any previous era of the Church of God.

Do we not now see this in the 21st century?

Many have wondered in near disbelief why there could be so many Church of God groups, yet multiple groups were clearly prophesied to exist in the time that Laodicea would predominate.

As the last, it is the one that will be the most dominant at the time of the end.

The word “Laodicea” can be rendered “the people rule,” “judgment of the people,” or the “people decide.” Laodicea is characterized by a rejection of the faithful governance accepted by the Philadelphians and by a general lukewarm attitude towards the truth. Laodicea places emphasis on self (as opposed to finishing the work of Matthew 24:14), thus it also waters down the truth - and so is “rebuked and chastened” (Revelation 3:18).

From an outside perspective (only God truly looks at the heart) it appears that most remaining outside of the Continuing Church of God do not seem to feel that they truly need “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), while getting the gospel out as top priority, while practicing Philadelphia love, and properly understanding prophecy. Others who claim to do this, sadly, often rely more on traditions of men than the word of God for that last point (and some others). The **multiple prophetic misunderstandings will cause the Laodiceans problems and they will have to go through the Great Tribulation** if they live long enough.

Why Is There a Philadelphia Remnant in the 21st Century?

Because Laodicea is dominant at the end of the age, Philadelphia cannot be predominant then. However, a remnant of Philadelphia must still exist.

Notice something from the Book of Hebrews:

1 Let brotherly love continue (Hebrews 13:1, NKJV)

1 Let Philadelphia continue (Hebrews 13:1, Semi-literal translation)

Some portion of Philadelphia was to continue into the 21st century.

We also know that Philadelphians would be around in the 21st century because Jesus told those part of that church:

10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (Revelation 3:10-11).

The Philadelphians are the only ones promised protection from the coming hour of trial known as the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord!

Just before the start of the Great Tribulation (cf. Matthew 24:15-21), the remnant of the Philadelphians are “given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and

half a time, from the presence of the serpent” (Revelation 12:14). Based upon what happened to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt (Exodus 19:3-4) it would not appear that these are literally eagles’ wings, but that God would lead His people out in His manner (cf. Exodus 13:21-22; Daniel 12:1).

Regarding the Philadelphia work, Herbert Armstrong wrote:

But Christ said to His Philadelphia era Church, that because we have but little strength, He would OPEN THOSE DOORS TO US (Revelation 3:8) (Letter, Nov. 19, 1976).

Our Work in the hands of Christ is NOT YET FINISHED, and He will not allow the Work to stop until it is finished! And when will that be? ... no definite date can, of course, be set. But when Daniel writes, in chapter 12 verse 7, “all these things shall be finished,” he refers back to the subject of this 12th chapter mentioned at the beginning—when the archangel Michael shall stand up (verse 1, as also mentioned in Revelation 12:7) and Satan shall be cast down—and the GREAT TRIBULATION (Verse 1 and Matthew 24:21-22, Mark 13:19-20, Luke 21:22) from the beginning will be 3 1/2 years...Never before have we understood these periods of 1260, 1290, and 1335 days. But it seems evident, now, a blessing is pronounced on us— GOD’S CHURCH—who wait and endure until the 1335 days—approximately 1335 days prior to Christ’s coming. But since no one can know the day or the hour of His coming, we probably shall not be able to know the exact day that this 1335 days begins. But apparently that is the time when OUR WORK SHALL END. That will be a time when the UNITED EUROPE shall appear —the revival of the medieval “Holy Roman Empire.” We shall then be warned, and readied to be taken to a place of refuge and safety from the Great Tribulation. Forty-five days later “the beast’s” armies will surround Jerusalem. Thirty days later the Great Tribulation will probably start with a nuclear attack on London and Britain—and possibly the same day or immediately after, on United States and Canadian cities. The GREAT TRIBULATION, we shall then fully realize, is the time of “Jacob’s Trouble,” spoken of in Jeremiah 30:7. (Armstrong HW. The Time We Are In, Now. Pastor General’s Report-Vol 1, No. 15, November 20, 1979, p. 1)

Philadelphians need to keep preaching to the world until the end comes, since they will be around until the end comes.

Philadelphians must lead the final phase of the work.

How to Determine Who the Remnant Is (or Is Not)

By attempting to heed Jude’s admonition “to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to

the saints” (Jude 3), the remnant of the Philadelphia Church will hold fast to the Truth that was restored in that era. The remnant of the Philadelphia Church will understand and teach that original faith, and will continue to attempt to go through whatever doors are open in order to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom as a witness. They will also proclaim the Ezekiel warning to the physical descendants of Israel.

It will keep the biblical form of authority within the Church - the same form of governance that will be used in the Kingdom of God. Remember, though: just calling oneself (or one’s church) “Philadelphia” does not guarantee that one actually is Philadelphia. Some who claim to be Philadelphia are not.

The Continuing Church of God does not claim that all its members are Philadelphia, but we do believe we are a uniquely Philadelphia remnant. Can one find a more faithful or more effective “corporate body” which retains the truth as taught by Bible and Herbert Armstrong, without adding non-biblical “revelations,” relying on traditions above the Bible, or diverting its members from making their top priority the Great Commission of proclaiming the Gospel as established by Jesus Christ?

No!

One can expect that Philadelphians, who care about doing an effective Work, fulfilling Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20, and holding fast to the Truth, will ultimately be led by God to support the Continuing Church of God. Of course, simply attending and/or supporting the Continuing Church of God does not make one a Philadelphia; individual members must do their part, and must not allow their lives to be cluttered by the cares of this world so that they themselves become lukewarm (Laodicean).

With all the confusion and misreporting that has occurred in the last several years, we can appreciate that there are Philadelphians outside the Continuing Church of God. However, this is not an excuse for zealous Christians to become “independent.” Herbert Armstrong wrote that the first “purpose of the Church” was to proclaim:

the coming kingdom of God to the world... The ‘loner’ - the ‘individual Christian’ who wants to climb up into the kingdom some other way than by Christ and His way through His Church - is not being trained in Christ’s manner of training, to rule and reign with Christ in his kingdom!... The person who says, ‘I will get my salvation alone, outside of the Church’ is totally deceived (Mystery of the Ages, p. 270).

Why Is This Important to Know?

Some say that knowledge of Church eras is unimportant, and believe that it makes no difference in how Christians live or act. Is this the correct attitude? It is not coincidental

that many who de-emphasize Church eras also water down key truths restored by Herbert Armstrong—in some cases no longer even considering it their top priority to proclaim the full Gospel as a witness. This may help explain such an attitude - but does it excuse it?

Seven times (in Revelation 2 & 3) Jesus warned:

13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (e.g. Revelation 3:13).

Why would Jesus repeatedly say this if these messages were not important?

Jesus promised the Philadelphians more than just physical protection. He also said:

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name (Revelation 3:12).

Who in God's Church does not want to receive these promises?

Those God has called can decide whether or not to accept and teach the truths restored to the Philadelphia Church. It is up to them - but the spiritual and physical costs of not accepting and teaching the Truth appear quite high. We in the Continuing Church of God "have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed" (2 Peter 1:19, KJV; cf. Amos 3:7).

A Philadelphian holds fast to true doctrine, does not deny Christ's authority, keeps His word, truly loves the Truth, goes through those doors that Christ opens and perseveres to the end. A Philadelphian hears "what the Spirit says to the churches."

GAMBLING AND SIN

By Bob Thiel

Gambling is a big industry. Millions, if not billions, of people gamble.

Is gambling just harmless fun?

Is gambling a sin? What is sin?

Is it always a sin to gamble?



The Gambling Industry

The gambling industry calls itself the gaming industry. Basically, they like to indicate that they are in the entertainment industry. And while that is slightly true, many people who gamble are not just playing games, but focused on winning money and hoping not to lose it.

And sometimes gambling is simply gaming.

Once, when my wife and I were waiting for our lunch in a small restaurant in the Netherlands, we saw some type of what we thought looked like a Dutch video or pinball game combination. We thought it might be fun to try it as it did not look like anything we ever has seen in the USA. It cost about 25 cents (\$0.25) U.S. to play.

Well, apparently we were doing fairly well and a man sitting right next to us somehow conveyed that we were winning money. This was a surprise as we did not know it was a gambling device and we were not sure how to play it. We ended up winning about the price of the inexpensive lunch. So, yes, gaming can be okay and harmless fun.

But frequently it is not.

What is Sin?

What is sin?

The Bible teaches:

4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4, NKJV, throughout except when otherwise stated)

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4, KJV)

What laws are not to be transgressed?

The Ten Commandments.

The tenth of which has to do with covetousness.

17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Exodus 20:17)

Some will say that they are not directly coveting something of their neighbor’s when the gamble. But Jesus broadened that a bit, as somewhat did the Apostle Paul. Notice:

15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15)

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” (Romans 7:7)

Covetousness can be a problem that most do not realize:

The Last — But Not the Least by Richard H Wilkinson

Not too long ago a prominent clergyman wrote that in all his years of listening to confessions, he had not once heard the sin of coveting confessed.

Interesting. Could it be because, humanly, it is easy to think of the Ten Commandments as descending in order of importance, and to not take the Tenth Commandment as seriously as the nine before it?

The last of God’s Ten Commandments, “You shall not covet” (Ex. 20:17), is just as encompassing and significant as any of the others.

The English word covet in the Bible is translated from seven different words that illustrate the different forms coveting may take. Let’s look at the meanings of these words.

1) That which is not ours. The word usually translated “covet” means to desire in a negative way, to want what is not rightfully ours. This is the Hebrew word

used in Exodus 20:17; the verse speaks of our neighbor’s property.

2) An interesting example of the use of this word is in Exodus 34:24, where God promises ancient Israel: “I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year.”

God promised to protect His people’s property from the greed of their neighbors if Israel would obey Him and keep His festivals. When Israel didn’t keep God’s Holy Days, God did not protect them from this basic form of human covetousness (Judg. 2:11 -23).

3) Dishonest gain. Another word often translated “covet” has the connotation of wanting something but not being willing to pay the price for it. It is not necessarily that the object of desire could not rightfully be ours, but we want it dishonestly. Ezekiel speaks of princes of Israel who were “like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain” (Ezek. 22:27). The phrase dishonest gain is translated from this second word.

Gambling, in its various forms, reflects this kind of coveting when it is based on the human desire to get and yet avoid paying the price.

4) Wanting for the wrong reasons. A third Old Testament word for “covet” means wanting something for the wrong reasons. It is in this sense that the prophet Amos wrote, “Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord” (Amos 5:18). We can desire a good thing for wrong reasons.

5) Overvaluing the physical. In the New Testament we find instruction regarding another kind of coveting: setting too high a value on some physical thing. Paul wrote, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel” (Acts 20:33).

In Genesis 25:29-34 we see this attitude displayed in Esau’s desire for Jacob’s pottage. Hebrews 12:16 warns us against being a “profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.” The word profane here means not putting enough value on the proper things, and especially the things of God.

6) Wanting more and more. Ever heard the expression, “Some people are never satisfied”? One of the words translated “covet” in the New Testament comes from a root meaning “to get more,” “to overreach,” “to be moved by greed.”

It is not wrong to exercise diligence and the principles of success, but God’s Word clearly says that a dissatisfied attitude — one of always desiring more — is only another

form of covetousness. Paul used this word when he wrote of “covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).

- 7) Obsessive desire. Another word used in the New Testament refers to a deep desire. A desire is not wrong of itself (see I Timothy 3:1), but this word can also reflect an inordinate or obsessive desire. (Good News, May 1983)

Covetousness is wrong and is sin. Gambling is often driven by covetousness, and even when not, often leads to covetousness.

Encounters with Gamblers

Herbert Armstrong related some of his encounters with gambling, beginning with a story about someone else's mother:

All mom cared about was card games. She played cards and bingo five and six nights a week. She even use the money that Len and me made working after school. Then, Leonard added, when she got mad, she'd curse at us and tell us that we were just in the way, that if it weren't for us that she could be free and have a good time. The boys describe the professional card games, to which their mother was addicted. She would pay fifty-cents or a dollar for a seat at the table, and then play cards until she was either broke or intoxicated with winnings, which she would take back and lose the next night. You know, that's one thing about gambling, incidentally I'm going to break in here since that's been mentioned.

I don't know whether you read the article by the owner of one of the biggest, I guess the biggest gambling house up in Reno, one of the biggest gambling houses in the whole United States, of the whole world. And of course, gambling is legal up there. But anyway, this gambling house owner said, he want to answer the question, 'do we cheat or is it straight or is it crooked in our gambling house'? No, he said, we don't have to cheat. It's absolutely straight. And that's the truth in these gambling houses. They don't have to cheat. Not at all. It's fixed in a certain way. For instance, the roulette tables and things of that sort. By the law of average it's fixed that the house is going to get a certain slight break on it and a profit provided it breaks even as it does of course over thousands of plays or thousands of dollars, or however you want to rate it. But here's the way he explained it. They don't have to cheat and they don't have to keep anything hidden or crooked or anything of the sort. They're piling up money and they're making themselves millionaires running these gambling houses without it. And here's why, it's a matter of human nature.

A man comes in to gamble. It gets into his blood. If he begins to win a little bit, he wants to win more. And he can't stop. He can't stop when he's ahead; he hasn't got

sense enough to stop because he's all intoxicated with the whole thing by that time. He's got to win more. Just a little more and then I'll quit. But before he gets that little more, where he willing to quit, at least before he comes to the time where he's willing to quit, he begins to lose. Well, if he loses a little bit, now he got to keep on long enough to get that back. But probably he goes on losing more and more. Now he's got to get that back. Well, if he gets a little of it back, he has got up where he wanted, so he keeps on. Pretty soon he gets down even and now he's got to get back again up on top. Well, then he begins to lose and go under. Now, he has less than he came in with. Well, now he's got to continue to play until he gets at least even with the game. He can't quit behind that game. So he keeps on and it goes up and down; up and down and of course it goes back and forth and then there's a good many games that's an even 50-50 break between him and the house but, you know first he's winning and then they are winning. But the thing is when he's winning he never can stop until he gets just a little more. He hasn't won quite enough to stop. And when he's behind he can't quit until he gets back up ahead again. And so what does he do? Well, he continues until he's broke. Now, the thing is, the house never goes broke. The house has enough money, they don't have to stop. They have more money than the customer and the customer continues to gamble until he's broke. Now, one of them has got to go broke because they wont quit. And it is always the customer who goes broke and so the house gets their money.

Now, actually, as this man said, and they have cards all over as you're driving anywhere in the western whole third of the United States you'll see the cards of this house or their billboards up all over the highways in every place. And, it was an article in one of our largest popular national magazines, I think, where this was written. I think it was some years ago now but not too long it comes back to me, I remember. Now, he says, supposing a man does win 10,000 dollars or something at gambling at his house? Do they hate to give it him? Why no, they're perfectly glad to give it to him. Not only that, they want to publicize that, they want everybody to know how much this man won because that makes everybody else want to come and win. Of course, the others aren't going to win most of them are going to lose. Now, in the law of averages, once in a while a man wins and has enough sense to quit when he's ahead.

As a matter of fact, I had business over in Las Vegas one time, and I was over there to see a man, who I had been informed wanted to make a donation to Ambassador College. And, we were staying in a certain hotel, and we were to see the man as we drove over and got there in the evening or late at night and we were to see him the next morning. Well next morning, the man who was, well our

agent and taking care of this matter for us, came to see me and he said, well, he said, you know something that you maybe didn't know, this man has a part interest in one of our casinos here and he said there were two or three men from Hollywood that were over here last night and took the thing for I think for was over a hundred thousand dollars, I believe it was something like a hundred and ten thousand dollars. And they quit when they were ahead. Now, that was such a loss; that really hit the gambling casino, that hit the owners and the management and they said that he had such a headache, that he wasn't going to feel like donating anything today and so we didn't see him. Well, of course I didn't know that he was in the gambling business or anything of that sort because this man had a very high reputation. And, one of the best thought of men in the state, as far as that is concerned.

Now, what actually happened to those gamblers, did they quit a hundred and ten thousands dollars ahead? I think that was the amount. Maybe it was more. It might have been over two-hundred thousand; I did,.. it was a terrific amount, I don't just remember. I believe it was! Come to think about it, I believe it was over two-hundred thousands dollars. And I believe it is in what they call a 'crap' game; that's shooting dice, you know. I don't know much about it, cause I've never done it. Never in my life have I ever gotten into such a game and I don't understand it. I'd seen it, when I'd been over there, you have to walk past those places to get to the dining room. But, I never stopped long enough to have it explained and I don't understand the game and I don't care to understand it.

But nevertheless, here's what happened to those fellows. They went over to another gambling casino from there, where they lost a big share of their money. And then they went to another one where they got cleaned out and lost all the money they'd come with and in addition to that hundred or two hundred thousands dollars they'd won. And so, this one gambling casino lost but the others made it up, and that's the way it goes. You know, you might just as well realize, my friends, you just can't beat it. There's no use of trying. Too many people in America are just trying to get something for nothing. They're trying to get money without earning it.

Now, I've heard of a lot of people who will go to Reno or to Las Vegas to gamble. And, will make a trip once or twice a year. And, they set aside a certain amount of money. And they say its their pleasure and they enjoy it. They go there with a certain allowance, a certain amount of money. They know they're going to lose it. But they feel that's their way of spending that much money for pleasure. So they gamble, and it may last two, three or four days, they take enough money to let it. They win, then they get behind then they get ahead and then they get behind. But they keep on until they're behind all the

money that they set apart that they come with; there to gambling. And, when it gets to that point, they quit and go home. Now there are people that go to Las Vegas every year who do it just that way. But what fun they get out of that; I never could see.

You know, some people can get dope in them. They start out with marijuana and then they go into heroin. And they get to the place they crave it and they have to have more. Well, it just isn't healthy. Don't ever get yourself to the place where you crave that sort of thing. Now, I've never been inoculated with it. What fun they can get out of it, I've, I've seen them in gambling dens, I've had to walk past those places. And, I don't see them looking really happy. They don't have their faces wreathed and smiles and happiness and just exuding joy and seeing how much good they can do for everybody and everything in that sort,..

No, the best you can say is they just came for excitement, but most of them have a worried look. And I've seen some that had a terrible worried look before they got through and I've heard of many cases, in Las Vegas, for instance, and places like that, where people come in there, they lose all they got and where men will gamble away all of the money they had and they'd plan on something that the family needed and was going to do but they thought they could run it up just a little more money. Well, they don't do it, they lose all they had. If they do run up a little bit they haven't got sense enough to quit when they're ahead. Course you think probable you'd quit when you're ahead, oh no, you wouldn't, you're human just like everybody else. Very few ever do. And if they quit when they're ahead in one place, why they lose it later. And it's just like this boy said, if his mom got ahead tonight, she'd lose it tomorrow night. Now that's human nature. You know that sort of thing just does not pay...

Well, to get back, and since I've started this I'd better finished this little story and show you exactly what happened. Now this Leonard added that when this woman got back home, she was mad, she'd curse at us and tell us that we're just in the way and if it weren't for us she could be free and have a good time. The boys describe the professional card games. Only, I guess I was a little farther along, I'm reading this, of course, something that I whip out. I was down here where she would lose the next night, whatever she'd win one night if she did win gambling. Well, that's the way it goes. Now, the boy's father, as they described him was well intentioned but weak and unable to do anything about it. When, their mother, isn't that the common idea today, yes, just as I told you, now that's in the Bible too.

A lot of things are in the Bible that makes sense. Only, most of you say, I just don't understand the Bible. And you some

how got it in your head that the Bible doesn't make any sense. So, let me tell you it does. If you think that, you just haven't understood it. (Armstrong HW. Hebrews Series 13 - Juvenile Delinquency. Radio broadcast, transcript at <http://www.hwalibrary.com/cgi-bin/get/hwa>.)

7. Ireland
8. Norway
9. Canada
10. Sweden
11. Britain

Most people lose discipline and lose money when they gamble. Slot machines, paramutual horse racing, etc. are programmed to guarantee it, while human nature tends to further increase the losses.

What About Casting Lots?

In the Bible, sometimes it is shown that lots were cast in order to determine God's will (Acts 1:23-26). This was something that God seemed to utilize prior to the pouring out of His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. While there may be possible place for this, it does not seem to have been a practice Christians felt needed to be continued. The sacred nature of appealing to God this way is another reason to be cautious about participating in carnal gambling.

Who Loses the Most Gambling? Who Wins the Most Gambling?

A 2014 report showed who lost the most from gambling:

The gambling industry around the world is huge, but the biggest market is the United States, where gamblers lost a staggering \$119 billion in 2013...

Some gamblers believe they are lucky or special and will beat the odds and win — it is untrue for the overwhelming majority of players. Inexperienced gamblers (and investors) may fall victim to the Dunning-Kruger Effect — the tendency for unskilled individuals to overrate their skill and ability, and underrate the difficulty of the task at hand. They may also create narrative fallacies and rationalizations to justify their belief that they can beat the odds and win.

So that covers the behavior of many casual gamblers, but for problem bettors, the issue is often addiction. <http://theweek.com/article/index/255982/how-did-americans-manage-to-lose-119-billion-gambling-last-year>

The article showed a chart of gambling losses per adult by nation, the biggest losers were those in Australia. Here is a listing of the nations whose people lost the most money per adult:

1. Australia
2. Singapore
3. Finland
4. New Zealand
5. United States
6. Italy

The Australians lost over USD\$1000 per adult in 2013, whereas the Brits lost just under \$400 per adult. It was interesting to note that the American and Anglo-Saxon nations had six of the eleven top biggest gambling losing nations in the world.

Since Australia was listed as first, I thought the following in the July-August 1983 edition of the old Plain Truth magazine would be of interest to some:

Commenting about the state of the nation, Australian teacher, writer and critic Bill Broderick is quoted in Time, September 22, 1980, as saying of modern Australia, "God is dead. Only in sport, gambling and sex is there hope of salvation. Nothing can shake the country of this cynicism except some catastrophe on a national scale."

In Hosea 5:14 God says, "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion... I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and NONE SHALL RESCUE HIM."

Placing their confidence in gambling and not God is not new for many Australians, or others for that matter. Christians are to have faith in God (see our free booklet Faith for those God has Called and Chosen).

The way the odds are stacked for almost all games (blackjack can be an exception, though the casinos tend to stop successful blackjack players after a while), the casinos win the most from gambling.

Governments, in a sense, do also as the odds of winning at government lotteries is normally a lot lower than the odds at casinos. However, because I feel that lotteries are a tax on the poor and function as a tremendous DISINCENTIVE for people to better their lives, I am not convinced that most governments are better off financially, overall, than they would be if they did not sponsor lotteries. Government lotteries play off the lust, hopes, and covetousness of their people.

Am I saying that all gambling must be a sin? No. Sometimes it is minor entertainment. But because it has a tendency to lead to covetousness, for most people it is best to be avoided most of the time.

Jesus taught that His followers were to pray:

13 And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one. (Matthew 6:13)

We are to not lead our own selves into temptation. We all

have strengths and weaknesses. What may tempt some, does not seem to have the same affect on some others (cf. Galatians 6:1).

Do not deceive yourself (cf. 1 John 1:8) if you have a gambling problem.

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. (Galatians 6:7-8)

If gambling may negatively affect your financial standard

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE



Lesson 4: How to Study the Bible

Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

Published 2014 by the Continuing Church of God

Preface: This course is highly based upon the personal correspondence course developed in 1954 that began under the direction of the late C. Paul Meredith in the old Radio Church of God. Various portions have been updated for the 21st century (though much of the original writing has been retained). It also has more scriptural references, as well as information and questions not in the original course. Unless otherwise noted, scriptural references are to the NKJV, copyright Thomas Nelson Publishing, used by permission. The KJV, sometimes referred to as the Authorized Version is also often used. Additionally, Catholic-approved translations such as the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) are sometimes used as other translations.

Why do so few really UNDERSTAND the Bible?

Why do we find such confusion—such disagreement as to what it says? WHY don't the hundreds of differing church denominations and sects AGREE on what their acknowledged textbook SAYS? WHY do so many individuals, capable of understanding almost any other book, say: "I just can't understand the BIBLE"?

Take a recognized textbook on biology. Show this book to ten different biology professors from ten different colleges and universities. Ask them what it says. They'll all give you the same answer. PEOPLE NORMALLY DO NOT DISAGREE AS TO WHAT BOOKS ACTUALLY SAY—EXCEPT WHEN IT COMES TO THE ONE BOOK of ALL the books—the Holy Bible! Did you ever

stop to think of that?

But take the Holy Bible to ten different ministers or to professors of theology from ten different religious denominations, and ask them what God's Book says—and you'll probably receive ten different answers!

Didn't you ever wonder WHY? Here, certainly is the enigma of the ages! The most important, yet the least understood Book of all the books! Year after year, the world's BEST SELLER—the Book owned by more people than any other. The one Book that has lived, in spite of every effort to stamp it out, down through the ages—and still outsells all others! THE ONE BOOK WHICH HAS foretold, centuries in advance, the very chaotic and uneasy conditions of the world today—THE ONE BOOK THAT EXPLAINS THE MEANING of this perturbed condition—that opens before us to behold IN ADVANCE, the WONDERFUL, PEACEFUL, HAPPY WORLD that is coming TOMORROW! The one Book that predicted, in advance, the rise and fall of specific nations and governments—that reveals the DESTINY OF THE WORLD!

No mere human-devised book could reveal such things! If you want to know the most necessary, basic knowledge of all life—the very FOUNDATION of all right knowledge—WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

Purpose of the Bible

WHAT are we? Were we put on earth for a PURPOSE? And WHAT is that purpose? WHY are human lives empty, discontented, unhappy? How may human life become HAPPY, filled with interest, ABUNDANT, successful, prosperous? WHAT is the real cause of wars, and THE WAY to world peace? WHAT happens after death—what is THE WAY to a happy, abundant, ETERNAL life? No book ever written, except the Holy Bible, REVEALS this FOUNDATION of all knowledge.

Are these questions important? One might ask, is anything ELSE important? You can find the answers to THESE questions only in this one divinely inspired, sacred volume!—and yet almost NO one has ever found the answers so PLAINLY written there! Here is the Book that, in spite of the human perversion of it, has changed more lives than all other books combined! And yet—it is the BOOK THAT NOBODY KNOWS!

The most misunderstood book of history! The most twisted, distorted, misrepresented, maligned and lied-about! WHAT'S WRONG?

Why Is the Bible Misunderstood?

Here is the answer—and it is very plain!

The answer lies in the fact that people have NOT BEEN WILLING TO OBEY the precepts of this holy, divine Word—and therefore this world has LOST ITS WAY. In so doing it has

not only lost PEACE, and HAPPINESS, and PROSPERITY, but it has also lost the knowledge of the PURPOSE of the Bible—it doesn't know what the Bible really is!

Stop and think! Would a Creator, having supreme intelligence, wisdom and love to think out, to plan, design, and bring about all creation—this earth, and all life and life-functions upon it—have left His created beings in IGNORANCE of HIS PURPOSE—the PURPOSE of their being here—THE LAWS that would bring us PEACE, and HAPPINESS, and JOY, and everything good?

THE BIBLE IS GOD'S DIVINE REVELATION OF BASIC NEEDED KNOWLEDGE which mankind is not otherwise capable of finding out!

Absolutely no tools or instruments of science can ever tell you whether there is life after death—the PURPOSE of your being alive—where you are going—or the WAY to a happy, abundant life, or to universal PEACE. Our scientists, our world leaders and our statesmen have failed UTTERLY to tell us these answers, or to lead us into the universally desired PEACE with happiness, and JOYOUS living!

God Almighty did not hide from human minds these all-important truths. He made them accessible to mankind. He committed His TREASURE-HOUSE of basic knowledge to WRITING. He revealed THE WAY TO PEACE and everything the human heart desires!

Now, WHY do so few understand the Bible? WHY do all the different church denominations disagree as to what it says?

We find the answer in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture"—not just those few verses of PARTS of sentences you wish to apply to suit your desires, but—"ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God." It is ALL inspired—EVERY Scripture is inspired by the Eternal GOD—"and is profitable for"—WHAT? "...IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So the Scriptures are PROFITABLE for the purpose of REPROVING, of CORRECTING us! But how do we do resent being reproved, and corrected! How many people do you know who are even WILLING to be corrected where they are in error—to be REPROVED for the wrong things they do!

Humanity Resents Correction

People DO NOT LIKE to BE REPROVED AND CORRECTED! They love PRAISE—they like FLATTERY—but reproof and correction they surely HATE! Now do you see why it is so hard for so many people to understand the Bible, and to agree on just what it says? The Bible is God's great spiritual MIRROR. IT SHOWS UP EVERY FLAW IN OUR THINKING, reveals every spot on our characters. It pictures us AS WE REALLY ARE—as God sees us, not as we like to THINK we are, or as we like to have

other men look upon us!

“For the Word of God,” we read in Hebrews 4:12 (KJV), “is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword”—IT CUTS DEEP, and it CUTS BOTH WAYS,”...and is a discerner of the thoughts and INTENTS of the heart.” Yes, it opens up and exposes and LAYS BARE THE INNER SOUL OF MAN!

When your little children do things that are wrong—that you have forbidden—do they usually own up to it freely and frankly? Do they say: “Father, I cannot tell a lie. I did it”?—or do they usually DENY it as long as possible, then try to cover it up, excuse it, JUSTIFY it, or place the blame on something else? Yes, it’s just human nature. WE are all only little children grown up; and so, when our heavenly Father speaks to us, through His Holy Scriptures, and reproves and rebukes, and corrects us, we usually do not like to ADMIT our errors, our faults, our wrong WAYS.

Too often, people have APPLIED SOME DIFFERENT MEANING to Scriptures that reproved them—they have passed right OVER some Scriptures that corrected and rebuked them or they have ignored them utterly, and have studied diligently to find some OTHER Scripture, or portion of Scripture, into which they could read a meaning THAT WOULD JUSTIFY THEIR COURSE! And so people began, centuries ago, to INTERPRET the Bible! God’s Word has become twisted, wrested, perverted. But it goes back before more modern times—Jesus reported that the Pharisees and others would not understand what the Bible said in His time—various ones reasoned around it (cf. Matthew 15:3-9).

Almost every false and counterfeit meaning imaginable is read INTO it, instead of drinking the natural meaning—the plain, simple INTENDED meaning out of it! Today we have hundreds of human INTERPRETATIONS of the Bible. You NEVER HEAR OF HUNDREDS OF INTERPRETATIONS OF A CERTAIN BIOLOGY TEXTBOOK IN HUNDREDS OF COLLEGES! WHY? BECAUSE BIOLOGY TEXTBOOKS DO NOT REBUKE AND CORRECT PEOPLE!

Instead of acknowledging the truth, repenting of the sin, having it legally justified by the blood of Christ, humans seek to JUSTIFY THEIR OWN ACTS BY PERVERTING THE SACRED AND HOLY WORD OF GOD!

The MOST DIFFICULT thing on earth for the average person to do is to ADMIT IT and CONFESS IT and repent of it when he is wrong. OH HOW hard that seems to be! Almost the rarest thing in this world is a person who will always acknowledge it when he is wrong, repent, and turn the other way. This world is FULL of people who PROFESS to be willing to do this. But the one who does it is a rare jewel.

Under God’s inspiration, Paul continued to say, in 2 Timothy 4:1-4, that the time truly has come when the many do not endure SOUND DOCTRINE. People have turned away their

ears from the TRUTH and have turned to FABLES and other traditions of men! Yes, fables palmed off AS the truth of God’s Word! Some hope, contrary to what Jesus taught in Matthew 24:29-31, that He will come prior to the start of the Great Tribulation and ‘rapture’ them away—but that is not what will happen.

Isaiah prophesied that in these latter days people would demand, “Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isaiah 30:8-11).

Yet Another Reason

Here is another reason why the Bible is not understood. Did you ever stop to think that KNOWLEDGE can be transmitted to the human mind, naturally, ONLY THROUGH FIVE CHANNELS? The ONLY means by which the mind can receive ANY KNOWLEDGE, naturally, is through the eye, the ear, the nose, the mouth, or the sense of feeling—the five physical senses. But the Bible reveals SPIRITUAL things—and SPIRITUAL THINGS CANNOT NORMALLY BE SEEN, nor heard, nor tasted, nor felt, nor smelled. And so the NATURAL human mind is INCAPABLE of understanding these spiritual revelations.

Then notice 1 Corinthians 2:14: “The NATURAL man” (that is, the natural-born, unconverted mind), “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned!”—revealed by GOD’S SPIRIT; for it says in the 10th verse “...God has REVEALED them to us through His Spirit.” And then again, you read that it is “the SPIRIT of Truth” which “will guide you into all Truth” (John 16:13). Since the Bible is God’s Word (it distinctly says “THY WORD IS TRUTH”), then it requires the HOLY SPIRIT TO OPEN UP to the human mind this marvelous revelation of God. Understand: THE HOLY SPIRIT within IS THE KEY WHICH ALONE CAN UNLOCK THE DOORS TO SCRIPTURAL UNDERSTANDING.

Thus, as this Scripture has said, WHEN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT—when the mind becomes SPIRIT-led, then through this supernatural process of God, spiritual knowledge is REVEALED, and the spiritual mind can begin to UNDERSTAND!

REPENT and BELIEVE

The CONDITIONS in the Bible for receiving God’s Holy Spirit are basically TWO—REPENT, and BELIEVE. But, REPENT means more than being sorry. It means a complete YIELDING to the WILL OF GOD, as that Will is expressed in His Word! It means a complete willingness to accept, and to DO what Scripture teaches, no matter what the cost, the persecution, the sacrifice, or the effort!

Jesus said, as recorded in John 7:16, 17 (KJV): “My doctrine is not mine, but HIS THAT SENT ME. If any man will DO HIS WILL, he shall know the doctrine.” Yes, there is a condition: You must SURRENDER TO THE WILL OF GOD IF YOU WOULD

COME TO UNDERSTAND the Bible.

MANY are like the man who once said, “I wouldn’t do anything I thought was wrong for the world!” he was sincere, but the BIBLE says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death!” (Proverbs 14:12) Therefore, since death is the penalty of SIN, then the ways that seem RIGHT to the natural mind of man MUST BE THE WAYS OF SIN.

GOD’S WHOLE PURPOSE is to RESCUE humans from this FALSE way that appears so alluring—this way that seems RIGHT—and yet ends up in despair, and suffering, and death!

We read from Psalm 111:7-8, 10 (KJV): “...ALL His commandments are SURE. They stand fast FOREVER AND EVER and are done in truth and uprightness. The FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM: A GOOD UNDERSTANDING HAVE ALL THEY THAT DO HIS COMMANDMENTS!”

We can see now why people do not understand the Bible. They are not yielded to the Eternal’s will—they are filled with fear of HUMANS, instead of the fear of God. They tremble at the thought of what PEOPLE say—but we had all better begin to tremble at the WORD OF THE LIVING GOD.

TRUTH is REVEALED. It is revealed by GOD’S SPIRIT—and that involves a SUPERNATURAL ACT OF GOD. The terms and conditions are utter surrender—REPENTANCE, and FAITH.

DAVID had understanding. And David said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

Today’s generation is like that of Jesus’ day, of which He said, “...this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)

Yes, the Bible is LIGHT—a lamp to our feet—a LIGHT to our path. Surely the world is in gross darkness.

How, then can you understand the Bible?

Here is how you may begin this thrilling, soul-satisfying adventure.

Here is how you can begin to really UNDERSTAND the Bible.

First, SURRENDER to God, and the authority of His Word. Forsake your ways—your thoughts—and those of this world’s society—this societal portion is very hard for many (Matthew 10:34-38). Study to find TRUTH—to show yourself approved to God. Ask God for guidance—ASK Him to reveal the true meaning. Then BELIEVE GOD—BELIEVE His Word—accept it in its plain, simple, NATURAL meaning, just as you would accept any other book in which you had confidence. Be careful to PROVE all things. Be cautious—avoid jumping to hasty conclusions, or taking things carelessly for granted. And above all—do not try to interpret the Bible. Don’t take

the interpretation of any human being or church that are in conflict. THE BIBLE GENERALLY INTERPRETS ITSELF.

God would not have us shut up our ears and our minds from HEARING what is being preached—even though it differs from what you have been taught. When the Apostle Paul came to Berea, the Bereans found he was preaching something utterly DIFFERENT than that which they had been taught and had believed. THEY did not know whether Paul was a false prophet, or a man from God. We read of them, in Acts 17:11 “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness” (that is, WITHOUT PREJUDICE) and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” STUDY WITHOUT PREJUDICE—but be CAREFUL—PROVE all things—search the SCRIPTURES WHETHER THOSE things be so.

THIS PARTICULAR LESSON IS TO SHOW YOU HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE. It is devoted entirely to giving you methods explaining HOW TO GRASP THE LESSONS WE ARE GOING TO PRESENT IN THE FUTURE. These methods of Bible study are like TOOLS in your work. You will use them often. Refer to this Lesson often!

Use the time you have set aside for this Lesson in familiarizing yourself with its contents. You will undoubtedly purchase a Bible Concordance. Familiarize yourself with this valuable tool, and be sure to review the three previous Lessons. As you review these previous Lessons, apply to them any new ideas you learn here. For instance, you may want to mark your Bible. Then, when the next regular Lesson comes out, you will find yourself better equipped than ever for studying this fascinating Course!

Now for the actual method of Bible study. But remember, the right SPIRIT—the RIGHT ATTITUDE—full SUBMISSION to scriptural dictates, BEING WILLING TO BE CORRECTED and reproved—that is the MAIN THING.

Necessities for Bible Study

God wrote the Bible. He inspired men to pen it (2 Timothy 3:16). It is God’s message to man!

Meaning Locked Up Until NOW!

Bruce Barton, the late author, has called the Bible The Book Nobody Knows—and he has been right for those in the world! This lack of understanding is the very cause for so many religions today—they cannot agree on what the Bible teaches. There is a reason for this.

God said, “For precept must be upon precept...line upon line...here a little and there a little, for WITH STAMMERING LIPS AND ANOTHER TONGUE He will SPEAK to this people”.

(Isaiah 28:10-11)

The dictionary defines “stammering” as the making of PAUSES in speaking. God has written the Bible with GAPS or PAUSES BETWEEN RELATED MATERIAL—material which MUST BE BROUGHT TOGETHER before its meaning becomes clear. Later, when you come to understand God’s PLAN, you will know WHY He did this. Even Christ, in His day, spoke in PARABLES TO CLOUD THE MEANING (notice Mark 4:11-12 and also Matthew 13:11-13).

NOW Revealed!

But was there to be a future time when the true message of the Bible could become known to those willing to be corrected? Yes! When?

God told Daniel to “Seal the book until the time of the end: (when) many shall run to and fro [through the pages of this book], and KNOWLEDGE SHALL INCREASE.” (Daniel 12:4). The explosion of knowledge in the 20th and 21st centuries, accelerated by the internet is fulfilling part of this prophecy.

IN THE TIME OF THE END BIBLE KNOWLEDGE WAS TO BE INCREASED! Moffatt translates “the time of the end” as “the CRISIS at the close.” The whole world is now approaching chaos—we are now entering the WORLD-CRISIS, at the CLOSE of this age! God said that at this crisis time—NOW—“None of the wicked shall understand, but the WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND” (Daniel 12:10).

Proper Attitude for Understanding

1. You must ACT on knowledge

Let’s get one thing straight right now! If you do not grasp this point, you have NO assurance that you will be able to understand this course regardless of all HUMAN effort to make it plain to you. God has vowed that none of the wicked would be able to understand His Word in this closing crisis time, but that the wise would understand (Daniel 12:10).

Since the Bible reveals that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV), those who conduct themselves as though His law is done away, are, in Bible terminology, called “the wicked.”

Who, then, are “the wise” who shall now understand? God says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of WISDOM: a GOOD UNDERSTANDING HAVE ALL THOSE WHO DO—[we must DO]—His Commandments” (Psalm 111:10). What has this to do with your being able to understand this course?

These Lessons will reveal to you many things that God commands you to do. If you fear Him enough to begin to build into your life habits of obedience to Him (DOING His Commandments). He has said, as we have just seen, that

you WILL BEGIN TO BECOME WISE! THE GREATER YOUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD, THE GREATER YOUR WISDOM WILL BE—you will have less and less trouble in understanding the Lessons made available to you.

If, on the other hand, somewhere along the way, you rebel at some of the things He wants you to do, your wisdom will be cut off.

None can understand by himself. The carnal mind cannot “see” spiritual things. “...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him: nor can he know them, because THEY ARE SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Christ said, “The Spirit of truth...will guide you [the OBEDIENT] into all truth” (John 16:13).

These truths are revealed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—and God gives the SPIRIT only to them that OBEY and keep His commandments (Acts 5:32). The choice is in your hands. Yet, just believing in Jesus and keeping God’s commandments is not all God expects.

Jesus also taught that only some of His true followers would be doing the Philadelphia work at the time of the end, and thus be subject to understanding various aspects of end time prophecy—as they will ‘hold fast’ to the truth of God’s word and doing His will (Revelation 3:7-13). The non-Philadelphians will not be living their lives with proper understanding of various matters (cf. Revelation 2:21-29; 3:1-6; 3:14-22).

2. You must PRAY

Jesus wanted His people to pray to be accounted worthy:

36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luke 21:36)

Other than watching and specifically praying that, how else?

Pray to God that He will give you more of His Spirit—the Spirit of TRUTH (Ephesians 5:17-18). Christ derived his power from God. He prayed for hours to God—sometimes all night. Surely we can spend an hour or so a day in such practice—we are incomparably weaker and less wise than Christ was. WE REALLY NEED HELP! IN YOUR PRAYERS ASK GOD THAT HE OPEN YOUR MIND TO HIS TRUTHS!

3. You must STUDY

This Study the Bible Course has been designed with the idea that thirty minutes a day devoted to it will enable the student to finish each lesson in thirty days. We know that anyone should be able to give at least this amount of time to such a valuable subject. There is a time coming, and it is not far away, when many who take this course will be judged by the Word of God—the Bible. We MUST have a knowledge of its

teachings!

The Father commands: “STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). We should be preparing ourselves for a high calling in God’s service!

4. You must BE ZEALOUS

You are going to learn, as you study these Lessons, that God is working out a purpose here below. Each of us must use the minutes, hours, days, and years of conscious life which God has given us, to prepare ourselves to fit into this purpose of His.

We do not have forever to do this, but God has given us enough time! We, today, do not even have a lifetime—WE HAVE BUT A RELATIVELY FEW SHORT YEARS to prepare possibly—and even in the latter part of these, conditions will make it more and more difficult for us to study. We live in the time of the “crisis at the close.”...Now, while there is a relative calm—BEFORE THE STORM BREAKS—is the time to study and prepare for the future (cf. Zephaniah 2:1-3)!

As most of you have to make a living and it requires a great deal of your time, you must use your remaining time to the greatest advantage. Above all, DON’T LET THE CARES OF THIS WORLD CROWD OUT THE TIME YOU SHOULD DEVOTE TO STUDY AND PRAYER (Matthew 13:22).

God is making clear for a short time now—just before the close—the message that the Bible REALLY conveys. Let’s make the most of this brief period! Be zealous in your Bible study! Go far! Dig deep! God says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). WHAT YOU DO NOW CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE FOR ALL ETERNITY! (Daniel 12:3)

What You are Going to Learn

In the lessons of the STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE God is going to:

1. Reveal the terrible events immediately ahead for you—and instruct you how you may escape the unprecedented slaughter which the nations are soon to bring upon themselves by their own folly.
2. Prove He does exist and He is going to show you His over-all PLAN.
3. Give you His requirements which you must meet IF YOU ARE TO HAVE A PART IN FURTHERING HIS PLAN FOR ALL ETERNITY.

Course Written to Aid Retention and Review

1. RETENTION EASY

A LOGICAL SEQUENCE of subjects will be found running throughout the course. Beginning with a description of the world as it is today, the necessity of Divine intervention is next studied. Following this, is the glorious revelation of the world as Christ will make it.

Then we shall go back to the very beginning and learn how God reveals Himself. Who—what is God? Very few people today know. What is the purpose He has set Himself to accomplish? Subjects continue to be treated, in order, until all phases of the Bible are covered.

The Bible is logical when its over-all pattern is grasped. BUT its over-all pattern cannot be grasped until all its uncorrelated parts, which are scattered here and there, are FITTED TOGETHER. This course is intended to help accomplish just that! This is what makes this course different from all others. When you have finished the STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE the Bible will no longer be, to you, the “Book That Nobody Knows”, but you will see that even a little child can understand its principles!

Notice the “COMMENTARY” STYLE NOTES which are inserted where the meaning would otherwise not be as clear as it should be. These comments also fill in necessary backgrounds.

The very logic of the Bible, when it is presented by this NEW METHOD, will enable you to RETAIN IN YOUR MIND THE BROAD PRINCIPLES WHICH GOD WANTS PEOPLE TO GATHER FROM IT!

2. REVIEW RAPID

Scattered throughout the written material of the Lessons will be found words or phrases printed in two types: LARGE TYPE, such as this, or ITALICIZED PRINT, such as this. These will either indicate the SUBJECT MATTER of the surrounding words or will be used to EMPHASIZE IMPORTANT POINTS. With these guideposts, you can quickly skim back over a subject and impress the outstanding points again upon your mind. Reviewing can be accomplished rapidly in this manner.

Keep all material together. In BOOK FORM, you will desire to review it often!

Use of Time and Material

1. SET TIME ASIDE

You should set aside a definite amount of time for your Bible study and religious worship. You can decide what time of the day is best. Your mind is most likely to be more alert in the morning.

2. DIVISION OF TIME

When he was relatively young, the late Herbert Armstrong

divided his time for Bible study into three parts, using one third of that time on his knees in prayer to God, devoting another third of the time to the study of the Bible, and using the remaining third to think over the things just studied. In following this method, God has opened the Bible truths to him. Sometimes he has studied the Bible while on his knees.

While that is not necessary (or possible) for all, it does show that he had a certain seriousness to Bible study that we should all have.

3. NO OUTSIDE LITERATURE

Religious literature of other sects should not be studied until you are thoroughly grounded in this course and have the whole pattern of the Bible fixed in mind. This takes time. Our Bible Course works towards being complete and it leads from one scripture to another and lets the Bible interpret itself as it goes along. NO LITERATURE CAN DO MORE! It would only confuse you to read other religious tracts at first. It is not recommended as a practice for beginning students.

4. SELECTING A BIBLE

We recommend, as first choice, that you use the New King James Version.

Most people prefer a Bible having heavy black print, large letters, and containing a center reference column. A good selection of maps in the back helps greatly. Many prefer a Bible measuring 6 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches for home use. (Often they carry smaller copies on their person for use during the day.) Most like a thumb index and relatively wide page margins.

Concordances which are found in the back of Bibles are not complete enough, so this should have little weight in your selection of Bibles. There are also many electronic concordances. I (Bob Thiel) tend to use a program I purchased from BibleSoft, but others are also available at no charge (like E-Sword) and often work just fine.

5. READING

First skim rapidly over the words that are ENLARGED in the Bible Course section you are about to study. This will allow you to obtain a grasp of the general field you are about to cover and will enable you from the very start to draw a better mental picture. Then study the section.

After you have finished studying the assigned material, it is often helpful to know the meaning of the Bible verses or chapters SURROUNDING the matter you have studied. Don't spend much time at this—glance over it. WHY is this helpful?

BECAUSE more writers than you realize have lifted whole passages of the Bible out of setting and have attempted to use these to prove the reverse of what the passages are intended

to convey. It is very important that you become aware of this.

Gradually you will learn you have been GROSSLY MISLED in many things. LET THE BIBLE BE YOUR GUIDE, not men! ALSO, sometimes the surrounding material is so closely related to a verse discussed in the Bible Course that it will cast ADDITIONAL LIGHT on the subject.

6. MARKING

At the old Ambassador College, both faculty and students marked their Bibles. Many have found that to be EXTREMELY USEFUL for purposes of review and Bible study.

The idea in marking is to MAKE CERTAIN KEY WORDS OR PASSAGES STAND OUT above the surrounding words. These key words or passages, in turn, recall to mind the general thought of the whole subject.

STUDY the key words or phrases which are written in large letters in the Bible Course for the purpose of aiding review. This will give you an idea of HOW TO MARK your Bible. You will learn the principle of emphasizing the right words. It may take some time before you master the method to your complete satisfaction, but it will be well worth the effort.

The SIMPLEST METHOD is to use an ordinary pencil and make an up and down line in the margin opposite the material you wish to find again.

The MOST USED METHOD here is to UNDERLINE WITH A COLORED PENCIL THE IMPORTANT PLACES.

PENCILS which have been found valuable for this purpose and which may be purchased at bookstores are the Prismacolor Number 924 (which is red), or Number 909 (which is green). But the specific brands and colors are not critically important. Studying, however, is.

Some will wish to make REFERENCE ADDITIONS IN THE MARGINS of their Bibles. This is best accomplished by use of a pen (fountain pen or other types) with a "bookkeeping" point. These vary somewhat in fineness. This is where wide-margined Bibles come in handy. Also SMALL NOTES can be inserted IN THE MARGINS. A small circle may be drawn around any IMPORTANT CENTER OF THOUGHT OR MARGIN REFERENCE.

Some may wish to INDEX IMPORTANT SUBJECTS in the back of their Bibles. This is best done by writing, or better yet printing, the name of the subject in small letters in the back of the Bible together with one reference. Any other references are then written nearest the outer margin at this point of reference. In this way there is no crowding for lack of room.

You can see that your marked Bible will become very valuable to you. You should PRESERVE this BIBLE. If the cover gives way,

it can be rebound at a bindery. The cost will not be too great considering its value to you. If the Bible comes apart, there are binderies which specialize in hand sewing.

7. MEDITATE

What is YOUR OBJECTIVE in studying this Bible Course? It is to learn and retain facts God gives you which will aid you in living. But even more, you are to interweave these God-given facts with the experiences of your daily life in such a way that you will LEARN THE PRINCIPLES of the right way of living.

If you learn these principles you will know the right way to conduct yourself under all circumstances. You will not feel the need of an exact parallel case in which God said “do this” or “do that.” But HOW can you learn to make the application of these principles?

David, God’s beloved, gave the ANSWER! He said, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...his delight is in the law of the LORD, and IN HIS LAW HE MEDITATES DAY AND NIGHT (Psalm 1:1-2).

David recalled the events that occurred during the day. He also remembered God’s commands—His “law.” And during the spare hours of his time—during the day, and especially during the evening when he had even more leisure—he recalled both, and THOUGHT on them—he DREW BROAD CONCLUSIONS as to what God really wanted. He applied these conclusions! For this reason, he was able to walk “Not in the counsel of the ungodly” to the extent that he became one of those who stood highest in God’s good grace. WE MUST DO THE SAME! How should we go about doing this?

Most people can’t pour knowledge into their minds and at the same time sort and analyze it properly. They, like David, will find it helpful to USE THE EVENING OR EARLY MORNING HOURS FOR ANALYZING it. Also, knowledge quickly slips away the first twenty-four hours after it is learned. The rate of loss lessens somewhat after this. If we lose the knowledge we obtain, there is very little use of acquiring it. How can you be relatively sure you will retain the knowledge you learned during the day, until you can analyze it? Here is how!

If you hear or study some religious knowledge during the day, it is advisable that you review it mentally just as quickly as you can after hearing or reading it. PICTURE IT IN YOUR MIND in its real setting as nearly as possible. These two habits will greatly aid you in remembering what you do not wish to lose. (If you can take notes, these will be of much value if reviewed.) PRACTICE THESE METHODS UNTIL THEY BECOME HABIT!

In the evening of each day, or early the next morning, you can group off these newly learned thoughts with similar thoughts you remember, and draw from them conclusions or principles. ANSWER for yourself such questions as, “WHAT?” “WHERE?” “WHEN?” “WHO?” “HOW?” and “WHY?” These will about

cover the field.

DECIDE IMMEDIATELY HOW THESE NEWLY LEARNED PRINCIPLES WILL GUIDE YOU IN YOUR DAILY PROBLEMS THAT YOU KNOW ARE GOING TO COME UP. Apply these principles constantly! It will gradually become second nature for you to act by them! GOD WANTS YOU TO LEARN DEEPLY EVERY DAY!

8. REVIEW

Reviewing will be very profitable in order to fix the knowledge you have learned in your mind so you will not forget it—after two or three weeks, REVIEW ALL YOU HAVE COVERED. On this review, you need only “HIT THE HIGH SPOTS,” both when you reread the material and when you turn it over in your mind later. ASSOCIATE ALL OF THE TWO OR THREE WEEKS’ MATERIAL TOGETHER IN YOUR MIND. Read lessons in order for thought SEQUENCE.

You will probably be surprised at the new and better understanding you will obtain by this method. It will help greatly in “putting you on your own” in reading and understanding your Bible.

9. OTHER BOOKS WILL AID

You can study the Study The Bible Course without any other books except for a Bible, but THERE ARE SOME WHICH WILL ADD A GREAT DEAL TO MAKING THE BIBLE REAL to you.

A broad knowledge of the customs, social and educational life, history of the people, together with knowledge of the geography of the country, is a great aid in visualizing and understanding events mentioned in the Bible. From experience, we know what books will help you most. Some of these books are MUCH MORE NECESSARY to have than others. (We have no connection whatever with any of the publishers whose books will be recommended here.) The most necessary books will be mentioned first.

A Concordance is almost a must. Why? Because if you know a few words of a passage you wish to find in the Bible, it will FIND that PASSAGE for you.

It helps in another very important way also – and this is VERY IMPORTANT! IT UNLOCKS THE MEANING OF THE BIBLE to you. How does it unlock the Bible? In two ways:

(a) Recall that at the very start of this lesson on “How to Study the Bible” we said that God wrote the Bible with gaps between related material in order to hide the meaning (Isaiah 28:10-11). Related material naturally has the same subject and often many of the same words will be used in each of these passages. By using a CONCORDANCE, which has the words of the Bible arranged alphabetically and tells where they may be found, you can thus BRING RELATED MATERIAL TOGETHER and thereby CLOSE these GAPS and obtain the WHOLE TRUE

MEANING of what the Bible has to say about anything!

(b) Now notice the second way. God has used another device to hide the meaning of Scripture until NOW!—the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:4). He has used SYMBOLS! A symbol is something which stands for something else. God often uses symbols which do not show clearly what they represent. He speaks (through the Bible) to us “with stammering lips [gaps] and ANOTHER TONGUE” (Isaiah 28:10-11)—a tongue which uses unknown SYMBOLS. He has to tell you what they mean, for only He knows what they represent. Here is how He tells you:

In another part of the Bible, He uses the same symbolical word and EXPLAINS CLEARLY WHAT IT MEANS there. The lesson? IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF A SYMBOLICAL WORD, TAKE IT TO A CONCORDANCE!

Here is a clear, simple EXAMPLE of what to do: Who is the “great red dragon” of Revelation 12:3? Turning to the concordance and locating the word “dragon,” we find the word “dragon” appears in this same chapter in verse 9 also. Turning back to the Bible, we read in verse 9, “The great dragon...called the Devil.” The symbolical mystery is solved! The “dragon” of verse 3 is the Devil! (Usually, however, the unknown word and the answer are not this close together.)

There are TWO types OF CONCORDANCES: large complete concordances (e.g. “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance”), which are especially good for research; and much smaller, but relatively complete concordances which are easy to carry and are very convenient to locate passages with.

Caution: Because we recommend books, this does not mean we agree with all they say. We do say that the good they contain overbalances their errors. On the whole we find them accurate. The small “Cruden’s Complete Concordance” is popular with some.

A BIBLE DICTIONARY is also desirable. “Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary” is used by some. This book describes people, places, and things mentioned in the Bible. It also has chronological tables and maps concerning (but as there are new archaeological discoveries, some of its place locations have been challenged).

BIBLES other than the New King James Version are sometimes valuable. The old Ambassador College especially liked the MOFFATT version. Its wording sometimes makes sections clearer than the King James. The new ENGLISH and AMERICAN REVISED versions also aid at times, as even the NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION in some verses.

A BIBLE ATLAS is a book which specializes in Bible maps. They are very helpful.

10. MISCELLANEOUS

Length of course: Many months may be required. Equip yourself accordingly. As long as God’s people hunger and thirst for His Word, this Course will continue.

Two Final Thoughts

There are two things you must always keep in mind.

1. Remember, though insignificant scribal errors have crept in now and then, the BIBLE IS INFALLIBLE.

2. The BIBLE MAKES SENSE. IT MEANS WHAT IT SAYS. Regard it as God’s Word! It deals with places, events, and beings—actual realities—and REVEALS knowledge which you need to know, but which you could not otherwise discover.

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

THE VALUE OF THIS BIBLE COURSE TO YOU!

Greetings!! – Fellow student of God’s Word:

You would be shocked to know the real “Bible I.Q.” of most professing Christians! Here is an eye-opening example of what was going on in some the churches, as REPORTED BY A STARTLED NEWSPAPER REPORTER:

“Some months ago, a protestant pastor administered a Bible quiz to members of his congregation. The questions were very simple. Anyone with a general knowledge of the Bible should have been able to answer all of them easily.

“The results staggered the pastor!

“Only five per cent of his flock made a commendable grade on the test. Fifteen per cent failed to give a single correct answer. Sixty per cent were unable to name the four gospels. Seventy-five per cent could not identify Calvary as the place where Jesus was crucified.

“Some congregations might do better than that. But not many. THE VAST MAJORITY of Americans today ARE BIBLE ILLITERATES! They simply have never read the book which they profess to regard as the ‘Word of God.’ Why?...A great many people have turned away from THE BIBLE because, when they do try to read it, they find THEY CANNOT UNDERSTAND it...To the modern reader, it has remote and antiquarian flavor. It is likely to leave him with the impression the Bible is an ancient history book that has no real relevance to his life here and now.” (Louis Cassels; Tyler, Texas; Courier-Times, April 16, 1961.)

This amazing quotation is not an isolated case! Similar quotes flood our News-Gathering offices, and jam our files. It has gotten even worse in the 21st century. Most people who

profess the name of Jesus Christ DO NOT EVEN KNOW WHAT HE SAID! Why?

Understand – and be **AMAZED!**

LISTEN to the words of Jesus CHRIST! He GIVES THE ANSWER!!

“And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says: By hearing you shall hear, and not understand; and seeing you shall see and not perceive. For this people’s ears are dull of hearing, and THEIR EYES they have CLOSED; LEST at any time they should understand with their heart, and should BE CONVERTED and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:14-15, KJV).

THE VAST MAJORITY are BLINDED TO the GOSPEL OF THE TRUE WAY TO BE SAVED!

BUT TO YOU—yes, you who are taking this course—CHRIST SAYS,

“...BLESSED ARE YOUR EYES FOR THEY SEE, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (Matthew 13:16)

THERE HAS BEEN A BLINDNESS COVERING OVER ALL NATIONS (Isaiah 25:7)! GOD TODAY IS BEGINNING TO REMOVE this BLINDNESS, BUT ONLY FROM A CHOSEN FEW!

Think of that for a moment! MOST of these professing “CHRISTIANS” ARE NOT EVEN BEING SAVED at this time because they are not seeing and receiving the words of the Bible! Jesus Christ said so!

CAN YOU REALLY GRASP the TREMENDOUS BLESSING that God has GIVEN YOU?

HE has PUT RIGHT WITHIN YOUR REACH—in a form that you are able to understand—the knowledge which really counts. You can gain this vital knowledge that is necessary for SALVATION. And it has been made so easy!

For you have found that following God’s revealed method of this course: of properly placing together again His own true intended meaning and message of His Bible—REFITTING it back into its true form and meaning, LINE UPON LINE, PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT, here a little and there a little (Isaiah 28:13), always letting God’s Word explain itself, the Holy Spirit of God guiding us—has MADE MORE OF YOUR BIBLE a living, intensely interesting, up-to-date DEPENDABLE GUIDE BOOK IN WHICH YOU MAY PLACE ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE because suddenly all has become so CLEAR and SIMPLE. You have been astonished to find that our mode of instruction is not even to be remotely compared with any other course!

You have been amazed to find that your Bible deals less with ancient history than it does with our modern, pulsating fast-moving twenty-first century ‘information age’! That it GUIDES YOU INTO a KNOWLEDGE OF the ACTION YOU MUST TAKE IN THESE PERILOUS TIMES! You have begun to find that you are being made able to understand your Bible in a way you never could before!

We are very happy to say that NONE OF the STUDENTS enrolled in the STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE REMAIN BIBLE ILLITERATES FOR LONG. Many even who are ordained ministers find—for the first time—the Bible TRUTH!

The Words of a Perceptive Minister

HERE IS WHAT one such MINISTER WROTE TO THE OLD RADIO CHURCH OF GOD—AFTER ONLY FOUR LESSONS!

“I would like to express my appreciation and let you know how much I’m enjoying the Bible Correspondence Course. I’m expecting my first test in the next day or so. I feel like the first grade student who just learned that ‘LMNOP’ is not a word but five different letters of the alphabet.

“I’VE BEEN A PREACHER OF ONE OF the LARGER DENOMINATIONS for almost two years now. All this time I really thought I was doing God a favor. I’M AMAZED AND SICKENED TO SEE HOW MANY OF GOD’S ETERNAL TRUTHS BECOME ‘LMNOP’ when studied through denominational eyes. MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON THOSE POOR SOULS I’VE SO WRONGLY INSTRUCTED.”

THE BIBLE AS TAUGHT BY THE WORLD’S CHURCHES, BECOMES NO MORE MEANINGFUL THAN MERE INDIVIDUAL LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET!!

If even ministers of the earlier version of THIS Bible COURSE so revealing, think of what it can now mean to you. IT CAN MEAN YOUR ETERNAL SALVATION! IT’S UP TO YOU!!

God LOOKS ON THE HEART!

God has given you a precious GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY! He wants you to appreciate it. MAKE Bible study—the WORDS OF YOUR BIBLE—an actual PART OF YOUR LIFE, a part of you. As much a part of YOU as your good right hand, or your constantly beating heart.

If you are already doing this, then you know what a great blessing you have already received. The comfort, the wisdom, and foresight, with supreme serenity of mind you are on the right path to the eternal life. You now KNOW WHAT THE STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE is REALLY WORTH TO YOU!

If you are one who has not yet advanced far in this practice, AN

ASTONISHINGLY GREAT GAIN AWAITS YOU. You too will learn that the time you spend studying your Bible, with the help and guidance of this Bible Course, will be the most fascinating, engrossing and rewarding pursuit you have ever engaged in. Time will literally fly! And you will realize that at long last you are finally on the one true path to joyous salvation!

TODAY we are living in the LAST DAYS OF THIS AGE—the time of the DEATH THROES of man’s CIVILIZATION! You need to realize you’re living in a time when you—yes, YOU – are being THREATENED with EXTINCTION!

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NEW BOOKLET

Where is the True Christian Church Today?

WHERE IS THE TRUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TODAY?

*18 proofs, clues, and signs to identify the true vs. false Christian church.
Plus 7 proofs, clues, and signs to help identify Laodicean churches.*



Church of England



Church of Rome



Continuing Church of God

*Jesus said that His Church would continue.
(Matthew 16:18)*

BOB THIEL, PH.D.

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This new booklet is available both in print as well as online. It can be found online at www.ccog.org.

MY FAVOURITE DAY



John Hickey Speaking at the Feast of Tabernacles

By John Hickey

I've always known somehow that the seventh day is the Sabbath. I don't know how but I guess I must have read the creation story or the Ten Commandments. Like most others, when I went to church I went on Sunday so I rationalised it to myself by telling myself that the calendars and the Seventh Day Adventists were wrong. Monday must be the first day of the week and Sunday the seventh. I mean, everybody goes to church on Sunday don't they? Well don't they???

I found out the answer to this question when I watched what I thought was going to be a science programme on TV, but the Church of God programme that I watched was so much more than that. It changed my life. I rang and ordered the booklet that was offered and when it arrived I gobbled it up – I mean, it was so new and interesting.

You know, the very first thing that God did after He finished the creation was to create the Sabbath for us, by resting and sanctifying the seventh day. This was way before the flood, way before Abraham and Moses, way before the law was given at Mt Sinai. It was not part of the rules and regulations put in force to keep the Israelites in order. And it has never been changed.

The fourth commandment starts out "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy". Remember. To start out with that word God surely knew that we would forget. He then follows that by explaining how we should remember it. In fact, it was so seriously regarded at that time by God that He said that everyone who profanes it shall be put to death, and that we should keep it throughout our generations as a perpetual covenant.

The Sabbath is a sign from God to His people that we may know that He is the LORD who sanctifies us. It is also a sign from us to Him the He may know who His faithful people are,

whether they be Israelite or Gentile. The problem is that the Hebrew priests developed so many rules and regulations governing the way that the Sabbath was to be kept, and what they could and couldn't do on the Sabbath that they made it a great burden on the people, who otherwise would have rejoiced in the rest that was provided.

According to Rabbinical ideas, the act of plucking ears of corn and rubbing them as in Luke Chapter 6 verse 1, broke the Sabbath in two respects, for to pluck was to reap and to rub was to thresh. Jesus' attitude in Mark 2:27 where He said "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath", was a way of freeing it from these burdensome traditional rules by which it was made an end in itself, instead of a means to an end.

Isaiah gives us an example of how we should act on the Sabbath in chapter 58, verses 13 & 14 where he tells us that we should consider it a delight and an honour. That we should not seek our own pleasure or do our own things. That we should delight ourselves in the LORD and He will reward us greatly.

We know that we need to meet together on a regular basis so that we can obtain encouragement and fellowship with other members of God's people. That without this encouragement maintaining our faith becomes so much more difficult.

Jesus set us an example by joining together with others of His people to worship on the Sabbath, as did the twelve apostles and later on, Paul. Paul always went to the synagogue on the Sabbath when he could. Firstly, to meet with the Jews there, and later, after they rejected him he met with the Gentiles, also on the Sabbath, as they were generally more receptive to his message. Though Paul did make some things a little easier for the Gentile converts, the bible never indicates that he ever strayed from worshipping and teaching of God on the Sabbath.

We know that we must endeavour to keep from sin. We know that sin is the transgression of the law. The fourth commandment says we must keep the Sabbath holy so that is why we obey it today.

The creation week and the seven day weeks we have today are an indication of the glory that is to come. When taking a day as a thousand years as Peter indicated, after six thousand years of man's reign on this Earth we look forward to the hope of the thousand year rest of the Kingdom of God.

In our fast paced society, the idea of spending a whole twenty-four hour day as holy time might seem impractical, if not impossible. Most people think that if they go to Church they've done their good deed and can then get back to their lives. Indeed, a previous mainstream pastor I had used to

preach long and hard against the people that came to church towing the boat – a short stopover on the way to the beach. I do believe that the majority of this world has lost it. They have busy lives and even when they're not working they're still rushing around trying to fit everything in. To be able to stop for 24 hours, once a week is a great blessing.

After I had read the booklet that I'd got from the Church of God I called on the pastor of the charismatic church I went to at that time, and asked him why we worshipped on Sunday. He didn't say because the Sabbath was changed after the crucifixion, he didn't say that Paul changed it, he didn't say that we were commemorating the resurrection. What did he say? I was amazed at his answer. He said "I don't know". Fancy doing something every week and not knowing why you do it when you do. Especially when you know what is taught in the bible as well as he did.

Unlike my previous pastor, and many others in the world today, we honour God on His Sabbath day – and we know exactly why we do it.

I named this essay "My Favourite Day" because that's what the Sabbath is. A time of rest, a time to spend with God, a time to meet with my favourite people for worship, prayer and fellowship. What a great day God has made.

FASTING AND THE DAY OF ATONEMENT



People Fasting in New Zealand

On the Day of Atonement, the Bible says to "afflict your souls" (Leviticus 23:32). Why do those who can in the Continuing Church of God fast on that day?

In Isaiah 58:5 the Bible teaches that a fasting day is a day to afflict one's soul. Furthermore, notice something else from Isaiah:

12 And in that day the Lord God of hosts
Called for weeping and for mourning,
For baldness and for girding with sackcloth.
13 But instead, joy and gladness,
Slaying oxen and killing sheep,
Eating meat and drinking wine:
"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"
14 Then it was revealed in my hearing by the Lord of hosts,
"Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you,
Even to your death," says the Lord God of hosts. (Isaiah 22:12-14)

Notice that not avoiding food when told to is equated to having no atonement. And while the word translated as atonement in Isaiah 22:14 is not the identical Hebrew word in Leviticus 23, it is similar and apparently has similar connotations.

The Day of Atonement was called "the Fast" in Acts 27:9.

Notice something that the late Herbert Armstrong wrote:

Day of Atonement, or the Fast

Next, let us read Leviticus 23:26, 27, 31-32 "And the LORD spake . . . saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an

holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls [fast]. . . . Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a Sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.” Wonderful mystery! At-one-ment with God! Man at last made one with his Maker! ...

And we find this annual holy day recognized in the New Testament. In Acts 27:9, when Paul was on his perilous sea voyage to Rome, it is recorded that “when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past. . . .” See the margin in your Bible. The fast refers to the Day of Atonement the 10th day of the seventh month. Now this day could not then have been past on that particular year unless that day was still in full effect and force and existence. Otherwise the Holy Spirit surely could never have inspired those words! Surely this strongly indicates that this day was still in existence and being recognized thus by the Holy Spirit. (Armstrong HW. Pagan Holidays or God’s Holy Days Which?)

Those in the Continuing Church of God who are faithful and able fast on the Day of Atonement. That is, they avoid all food and drink for the entire 24 hours of that day. Are there any benefits associated with that?

First notice what the Bible teaches:

5 Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the Lord?

6 “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. 9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’

“If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, 10 If you extend your soul to the hungry And satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday. 11 The Lord will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden,

And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. 12 Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In. (Isaiah 58:5-12)

So, the Bible teaches both physical and spiritual benefits and responsibilities from fasting.

Here are some comments from Herbert W. Armstrong about fasting:

FASTING AND PRAYER: There is . . . NOTHING like fasting and prayer for drawing close to God, re-establishing contact, being filled with His Spirit. For this purpose it is better to fast completely — no fruit-juice of any kind. In Bible times they sometimes fasted without even water, but sometimes water was used. Personally I think results will be obtained if one drinks water, but nothing else.

For purely spiritual purposes a fast of from one to three days is usually sufficient. You may expect headaches, and a very thick-headed feeling the first few days. It is not pleasant. It is, in Bible language, AFFLICITING THE SOUL. It takes courage and will-power, and self-denial. I recommend, for this purpose, dividing your time three ways: about one third in studying the subject of fasting in the Bible, and other Bible study. Use a good concordance, and your marginal references if your Bible has them. If not you should get one which has. Look up all you can find under fasting. Then about a third of your time in meditation — turning over in your own mind by yourself WHY you have not been closer to God, thinking out just HOW you have been letting the worldly things creep in, meditating on what you have read in the Bible, applying it to yourself and your spiritual condition. Then, spend one full third of your time in earnest PRAYER.

Did you ever spend one solid HOUR in prayer, alone with God in some private room, on your knees? Very few ever have. If you haven’t, the first time you do it you’ll find it will take as much will-power and self-denial as forcing yourself to stay on a fast and resisting that gnawing hunger feeling. In five or ten minutes, or less, every excuse in the world will come into your mind. You aren’t in the mood now — why not do it later? You just think of something that ought to be done, and you think you must go do it right now. Yes, I know what will come to your mind, for I have done it and I know by experience. But if you will resist every temptation, and STAY on your knees, even though you think your prayer isn’t going as high as the ceiling, in at least 30 or 40 minutes the devil will probably give up and let you alone and you’ll find you are establishing contact with God, and you’ll find you are beginning to really ENJOY talking to Him — just pouring

out your soul to Him — telling him all about it. Pause, once awhile, and meditate, and let God talk to you. (Armstrong HW. Importance of Fasting. July 7, 1948)

In addition to humbling ourselves and helping us to realize how much we need to rely on God and drawing closer to him, fasting is considered to have certain physical benefits. Some, though sadly not yet most, in the medical world are realizing that there seem to be health benefits from fasting:

The power of intermittent fasting

Scientists are uncovering evidence that short periods of fasting, if properly controlled, could achieve a number of health benefits, as well as potentially helping the overweight, as Michael Mosley discovered...

Calorie restriction, eating well but not much, is one of the few things that has been shown to extend life expectancy, at least in animals. We've known since the 1930s that mice put on a low-calorie, nutrient-rich diet live far longer. There is mounting evidence that the same is true in monkeys...

IGF-1 levels can be lowered by fasting. The reason seems to be that when our bodies no longer have access to food they switch from "growth mode" to "repair mode".

As levels of the IGF-1 hormone drop, a number of repair genes appear to get switched on according to ongoing research by Professor Valter Longo of the University of Southern California...

Current medical opinion is that the benefits of fasting are unproven and until there are more human studies it's better to eat at least 2000 calories a day. If you really want to fast then you should do it in a proper clinic or under medical supervision, because there are many people, such as pregnant women or diabetics on medication, for whom it could be dangerous. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-19112549>

Fasting Reduces Risk of Heart Disease and Diabetes

A study of more than 4,500 Mormons in Utah, researchers looked at behaviors that were associated with lower risk of coronary artery disease—heart disease. After taking in account other factors (smoking, alcohol use, coffee, and tea ingestion), researchers discovered that those who fasted routinely (without food or drink) were at lower risk for heart disease than those who did not fast. Fasting was also associated with lower diabetes risk (The American Journal of Cardiology, October 1, 2008)

Fasting twice a year rebuilds Immune System

A New Study Has Suggested That Fasting Could Help The Body To Fight Off Disease By Regenerating The Immune System. The Study Added That Fasting For Two Days Can Regenerate The Immune System.

For the study, the effects of fasting for two to four day periods for six months on both mice and humans were tested by the researchers. In both cases, it was found that long periods of not eating significantly lowered white blood cell counts.

And in mice, each cycle of fasting then 'flipped a regenerative switch' that led to the regeneration of new white blood cells, which in turn renews the defence system of the body.

Valter Longo, Professor of Gerontology and the Biological Sciences at the University of Southern California, said: "It gives the OK for stem cells to go ahead and begin proliferating and rebuild the entire system. And the good news is that the body got rid of the parts of the system that might be damaged or old, the inefficient parts, during the fasting."

He added that a system heavily damaged by chemotherapy or aging, fasting cycles can generate, literally, a new immune system.

The study also revealed that levels of the enzyme PKA, reduces as a result of fasting. This increases longevity in simple organisms, as well as levels of the hormone IGF-1, which has been linked to ageing, tumour progression and cancer risk. <http://www.delhidailynews.com/news/Fasting-regenerates-immune-system-1402181003/>

Fasting is a health booster for many and also seems to increase longevity.

Of course, those who risk death or major health problems should not fast. But for others, it can be a healthy thing to do from a physical, as well as spiritual, perspective.

Some people, especially those who consume caffeine regularly, find fasting difficult. Those who wean down off of caffeine sometimes find fasting easier than they would have otherwise.

Here are some Jewish tips to prepare for fasting:

Tips for Easier Fasting

Tips to prepare for the fast include: drinking at least two liters of water a day (10 cups) on the days before the fast, and eating whole grains and vegetables on the day

before, while avoiding sugar, spicy, fried and salty foods that cause thirst.

Those who drink significant amounts of beverages containing caffeine daily (coffee, non-herb teas, colas) are advised to reduce the amount gradually, starting several days before the fast to prevent caffeine addiction symptoms which can include headaches and nausea.

The last meal before the fast, known as the seudah hamafseket, should not include unfamiliar, spicy, or fried foods, and should omit vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage and broccoli.

After the fast, those who have abstained from drinking and eating are advised to rehydrate slowly, with a sweet drink, and begin eating with a snack, followed approximately one hour later by a light meal. <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/148579>

In my own case, I tend to drink more water the day before fasting and avoid saltier foods.

Also, those who fast more regularly throughout the year tend to have less difficulties fasting than those that do not (people with hypoglycemia, etc. excepted).

The Christian Day of Atonement, comes after the Feast of Trumpets (also known as Rosh Hoshana or Rosh Hashanah) and is considered to be part of God's plan of salvation as shown in the biblical (though often called 'Jewish') holy days.

The Statement of Beliefs for the Continuing Church of God states:

The Day of Atonement, called "the Fast" in the New Testament (Acts 27:9), helps show our own weaknesses and need to be closer to God (Isaiah 58:5,11). It also helps picture that Satan has a role in the sins of humankind and that he will be bound for one-thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3; cf. Leviticus 16:20-26; Isaiah 14:12-16).

Thus, because of its New Testament references, the Day of Atonement is something that should be highly relevant for Christians.

Those the Continuing Church of God tend to fast annually on the Day of Atonement as well as periodically throughout the year (cf. Mark 2:19-20).

The Day of Atonement 2014 begins at sunset October 3 and continues through sunset October 4. In 2015, the Day of Atonement begins at sunset September 22 and continues through sunset September 23.

IRAQ IN PROPHECY



By Bob Thiel

Iraq has been in the news for decades because of the Iran-Iraq war, the Kuwait war, the USA's war against it, and a rise of Sunni insurgents there.

What is does the Bible teach will happen in Iraq? Will that come to pass?

It is the objective of Al-Qaeda as well as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to establish an Islamic caliphate, or state, in Iraq and Syria. ISIS has claimed to already have done that and they named their region the Islamic State.

While that Islamic State would have to change to fulfil biblical prophecies, some type of an Islamic caliphate is consistent with prophecies in the Bible of a coming King of the South in Daniel 11:40-43.

What Does the Bible Teach?

What will biblically happen to Iraq? First it needs to be mentioned that the bulk of those in Iraq descend from the ancestors of the Arabs, such as Ishmael and his mother Hagar.

The Bible shows that near the time of the end a confederation of Arab and Turkish peoples, possibly also involving the Kurds will form.

Notice the following:

- 3 They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
- 4 They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation,

That the name of Israel may be remembered no more.”
5 For they have consulted together with one consent;
They form a confederacy against You:
6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;
Moab and the Hagrites;
7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek;
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assyria also has joined with them;
They have helped the children of Lot. (Psalms 83:3-8)

It is my view that many of the nations in Psalm 83 will conspire to use terrorism. Psalm 83 is talking about a confederation of Arabic, Turkish (Edom), and European (Assyria) peoples. This includes Iraq.

The Bible shows that terrorism is prophesied:

14 ‘But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, 15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, 16 I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. (Leviticus 26:14-17)

25 The sword shall destroy outside; There shall be terror within (Deuteronomy 32:25)

12 “Cry and wail, son of man; For it will be against My people, Against all the princes of Israel. Terrors including the sword will be against My people; Therefore strike your thigh. (Ezekiel 21:12)

12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches...19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. (Psalms 73:12,19)

25 Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, 27 When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. (Proverbs 1:25-27)

Jihadist gains in various parts of the world are a prelude to more terrorism and change. A confederation against the USA, its Anglo-Saxon allies, and Israel involving Arab and European forces is coming. And I have long believed that terrorism will have to be part of this.

The Bible shows that Iraq will end up in some sort of end type confederation with other Arab nations and the Turks (biblical Edom):

40 At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. 41 He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. (Daniel 11:40-42).

1 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, prophesy and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

“Wail and say, “Alas for that day!” 3 For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near- a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. 4 A sword will come against Egypt, and anguish will come upon Cush. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down.

5 Cush and Put, Lydia and all Arabia, Libya and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt. (Ezekiel 30:1-5, NIV).

So a confederation will form, Iraq will be part of it, and many of the nations that enter into a confederation with Egypt will suffer. Iraq will have involvement with the biblical King of the South.

Notice also something that the onetime COG writers taught:

Daniel 11 also mentions some of the Mideast peoples who will be involved in that struggle among the nations at the close of this age. The belligerents will include the “King of the North,” the leader of the European Union (or its final outgrowth, called the “Beast”). The “King of the South” (an Islamic leader—apparently from Egypt {or} some other Muslim state) is also referred to. The following lands/peoples are specifically mentioned: Egypt, the Holy Land (Israel/Palestine), the Ethiopians (modern Cushites, south of Egypt), Libya, Edom, Moab and Ammon. Many descendants of the ancient peoples known as Edomites or Idumeans now live in the West Bank, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Arabia, Yemen, the Persian Gulf states, etc. (McNair R. Solving the Arab-Israeli Impasse! Copyright Raymond F. McNair 2005).

But who is the “king of the south”?...in verse 40 we skip to “the time of the end”...The verse undoubtedly found

partial fulfillment in the offensive of 1896...But Mussolini did not finish the prophecy...Just as there is yet to be a final “king of the north”...there may very well emerge in the same manner a final “king of the south”—an overall leader of an Arab-Moslem confederation, possibly bearing the very title Mahdi...a prophetic psalm (Psalm 83) provides additional insight into the Mideast picture. Germany (Assyria in Bible prophecy) and perhaps the rest of Europe will be in league in the future with a union of Arab nations...

“They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: The tabernacles of Edom [Esau or modern-day Turkey, a non-Arab but Islamic nation], and the Ishmaelites [Saudi Arabia]; of Moab [part of Jordan], and the Hagarenes [anciently these peoples dwelt in the area known as Syria today]; Gebal [Lebanon], and Ammon [modern Jordan], and Amalek [part of the Turks]; the Philistines [the modern Palestinians] with the inhabitants of Tyre [Lebanon]; Assur [whose descendants, the Assyrians, migrated to Germany] also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot [Jordan and Western Iraq]” (Psalm 83:4-8)...

But in the end, this European-Arab alliance will prove short-lived...And the king of the north shall come against him [the king of the south]...Daniel 11:40-41...The Arab-Moslem Confederation will, of course, be thrown into chaotic disarray in the fact of invasion. (Stump K. The Arab World in Prophecy. Plain Truth, December 1979, pp. 11-12).

Some consider that the Hagarenes are better identified with Iraq—yet since Ishmael’s mother was Hagar—Genesis 16:15—they would all tend to be related. Whether they are identified better as Hagarenes or Ishmaelites, Iraq and other Arabic peoples are prophesied (along with others) to be part of a confederation that will decide to eliminate Israel.

Babylon: Past and Future

Ancient Babylon was located in the land of Mesopotamia, which is now part of Iraq.

Some well known proponents of this pre-tribulation rapture view also believe that the physical city of ancient Babylon is destined to become the Babylon the great of the Book of Revelation (LaHaye T, Jenkins J. Are We Living in the End Times? Tyndale House, Wheaton (IL), 1999, pp. 133-135 ; Walvoord J. The Prophecy Handbook. Victor Books, Wheaton (IL), 1990, pp. 608-611). This would seem to be impossible. The ancient city of Babylon has not had any religious prominence for millennia.

Geography would also seem to eliminate ancient Babylon. Ancient Babylon was built on a plain. Yet, the “Babylon the great” of Revelation is related to the city of seven mountains/hills (Revelation 17:9). It is also shown to have a history of persecuting true Christians, which simply has not been the case (in any major way) from ancient Babylon.

All should understand that the Book of Revelation specifically does refer to cities with titles other than the original ones (e.g. Revelation 11:8) and that it often adds a descriptive word (like Mystery) before the term Babylon (e.g. 17:5), that none should insist that ancient Babylon is the logical location. Furthermore, the Old Testament refers to a northern power as “the daughter of Babylon” (cf. Jeremiah 50:41-43; Zechariah 2:6-7) that resembles the Babylon of Revelation—thus a different type of Babylon is prophesied to exist in the end times.

It needs to be understood that since the people of God are specifically warned to flee from “the daughter of Babylon” in the North (Zechariah 2:6-7) as well as the Babylon of Revelation (18:2-4), it makes sense that it is not necessary for Babylon in Revelation it to be the ancient Babylon location (ancient Babylon is also almost directly due east, and only to the slightest degree north, of Jerusalem). Thus, any Protestants who teach that the ancient city of Babylon must be the Babylon of the Beast of Revelation appear to be in error.

The end time ‘daughter of Babylon’ is also called Mystery Babylon the Great:

17:4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. 5 And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

7 But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9 “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. (Revelation 17:4-10)

18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. (Revelation 17:18)

18:1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 7 In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' 8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her. (Revelation 18:1-8)

This is a place that Christians should avoid and will be based in Europe, not Iraq. Rome is the famous city of seven hills, and since Babylon in Iraq is on a plain, it is not possibly Iraq. But as most will not understand the truth about Babylon in the end, it is called Mystery Babylon in Revelation 17.

Those who believe that ancient Babylon must be rebuilt for biblical prophecies to be fulfilled will be waiting for something that is not biblically required.

Notice the following prophecy that may be related to the attack of the King of the North against the King of the South:

11 "For thus says the Lord God: 'The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you. 12 By the swords of the mighty warriors, all of them the most terrible of the nations, I will cause your multitude to fall. 'They shall plunder the pomp of Egypt, And all its multitude shall be destroyed. (Ezekiel 32:11-12)

The above is NOT a prophecy of Iraq attacking Egypt. This is an end time prophecy where the end time Babylon, the European King of the North, eliminates forces aligned with Egypt.

Notice also the next few verses:

13 Also I will destroy all its animals
From beside its great waters;
The foot of man shall muddy them no more,

Nor shall the hooves of animals muddy them.

14 Then I will make their waters clear,
And make their rivers run like oil,'
Says the Lord God.

15 'When I make the land of Egypt desolate,
And the country is destitute of all that once filled it,
When I strike all who dwell in it,
Then they shall know that I am the Lord. (Ezekiel 32:13-15)

Consider also that it may be that verse begins with the final Day of the Lord and that verse has never happened and thus these passages in the Book of Ezekiel may be related to Egypt and its coming allies in the 21st century.

Armageddon

While many have heard the term "Armageddon" it is only used once in the Bible:

12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon. (Revelation 16:12-16)

What does that have to do with Iraq?

Well, the Euphrates river runs through it. Troops coming from the east that will end up in Armageddon will go through Iraq.

How many troops? A huge army of 200 million (Revelation 9:13-19).

Iraqi territory is part of end time biblical prophecy, but just not the way that many seem to think. Iraq is not ancient Babylon, but will be affected when the Euphrates river dries up and the armies from the east will cross over its land.

A massive army will gather in Megiddo. But it will be destroyed.

But There is Good News for Iraq

Despite its prophesied defeat and involvement with the final King of the South and Armageddon, I should add that not

all is lost for the Iraqis. They too will ultimately be offered salvation, and the Bible shows that many there will take it. Defeat is not the ultimate destiny for most Iraqis. Deification is.

But how?

The mainstream “Christian” view correctly teaches that there is salvation in no other than Jesus (Acts 4:10-12), as “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (vs.12).

But what happens to the multitudes in Iraq and elsewhere who have not even heard the true name of Christ? What about those who do not respond per Deuteronomy 4:29-31? And what happens to those born before Christ’s earthly ministry? Recall that the Bible teaches that after Adam sinned, humankind was blocked from the tree of life as God had it guarded so that humans would not be able to access it on their own (Genesis 3:22-24).

Even the basic Protestant view is that unless one professes belief in Jesus prior to the first death, then salvation will be unavailable. It is perhaps because of the difference between this view and that of the Continuing Church of God, that Protestants tend to label Church of God groups as cults.

The Philadelphia remnant of the Church of God, as represented by the Continuing Church of God, teaches that God is only calling a relatively few during this age with the Day of Pentecost (also called the Day of Firstfruits, Numbers 28:26) partially explaining this. “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18).

Jesus and we in the Continuing Church of God teach, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44).

And that will be few at this time:

14 For many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14),

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it (Matthew 7:14).

Protestants and Catholics tend to feel, correctly, that God uses ministers to preach (Romans 10:14). Yet, the message is not always clear.

In Isaiah 6:9-11 God teaches:

9 “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ 10

Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.” 11 Then I said, “Lord, how long?” And He answered: “Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate”.

In other words, the bulk of the people are not to understand until after a time of great desolation.

Unless Iraqis have committed the unpardonable sin (and relatively few could have) they will be judged as other uncalled people are.

The Bible clearly teaches that salvation will be offered to all. And that includes the Iraqis.

Notice the following scripture:

6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke 3:6).

Those who were uncalled in this age (including most people and nearly all of the Iraqis, including those that have long been dead) will be offered an opportunity for salvation.

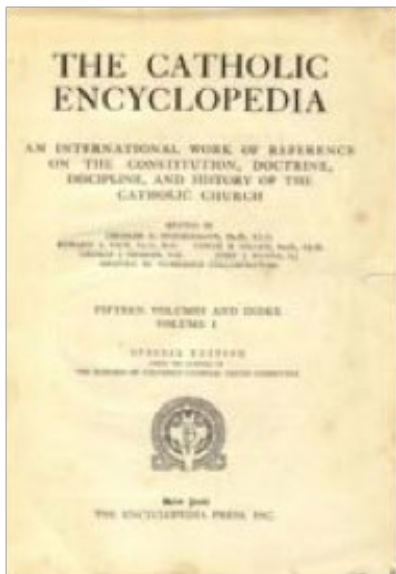
And nearly all of them will accept it. The Continuing Church of God teaches that God will ultimately give every individual an opportunity for salvation—and that nearly every individual will accept that opportunity. The vast majority of human beings will ultimately be in God’s family.

This means that ultimately nearly all Iraqis will be in the permanent kingdom of God. Notice some of the descriptions from the Book of Revelation:

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:2-4).

So, despite the bad news, there ultimately will be good news for the Iraqis, along with the rest of humanity, in the coming Kingdom of God. All should heed Jesus’ words and pray, “Your Kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10).

THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA ON CHRISTMAS



By Bob Thiel

Most who profess Christianity, as well as many who do not, now celebrate the holiday known as Christmas. It is a holiday endorsed and promoted by the Church of Rome. Since it is not enjoined in the Bible, do Roman Catholic scholars realize where it and many of its symbols came from?

Yes, they do.

The Catholic Encyclopedia teaches that:

Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church (Martindale C. Transcribed by Susanti A. Suastika. Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III. Copyright © 1908 by Robert Appleton Company. Online Edition Copyright © 2003 by K. Knight. Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York).

The above is true. Early Christians did not celebrate Christmas, and to this day those faithful in Church of God groups such as the Continuing Church of God still do not celebrate it.

Where Did December 25th Come From?

Since 25th is not specified in the Bible, where did it come from?

December 25th was observed as the birthday of the sun as part of the ancient Roman festival called Saturnalia. It was

also the alleged date of the birthday of the pagan sun-god Mithras (sometimes also spelled Mithra).

Notice the following from The Catholic Encyclopedia:

Constantine the Great... Constantine can rightfully claim the title of Great, for he turned the history of the world into a new course and made Christianity...the religion of the State... it is easy to understand that many of the emperors yielded to the delusion that they could unite all their subjects in the adoration of the one sun-god who combined in himself the Father-God of the Christians and the much-worshipped Mithras; thus the empire could be founded anew on unity of religion. Even Constantine... cherished this mistaken belief... Could not Sol Deus Invictus, to whom even Constantine dedicated his coins for a long time, or Sol Mithras Deus Invictus, venerated by Diocletian and Galerius, become the supreme god of the empire? Constantine may have pondered over this. Nor had he absolutely rejected the thought even after a miraculous event had strongly influenced him in favour of the God of the Christians... It is true that the believers in Mithras also observed Sunday as well as Christmas. Consequently Constantine speaks not of the day of the Lord, but of the everlasting day of the sun. (Herbermann C., Georg Gp. Constantine the Great. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 4. Nihil Obstat. Remy Lafort, Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

Mithraism A pagan religion consisting mainly of the cult of the ancient Indo-Iranian Sun-god Mithra. It entered Europe from Asia Minor after Alexander's conquest, spread rapidly over the whole Roman Empire at the beginning of our era, reached its zenith during the third century, and vanished under the repressive regulations of Theodosius at the end of the fourth century...Helios Mithras is one god...Sunday was kept holy in honour of Mithra, and the sixteenth of each month was sacred to him as mediator. The 25 December was observed as his birthday, the natalis invicti, the rebirth of the winter-sun, unconquered by the rigours of the season (Arendzen J. Mithraism. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X. Nihil Obstat, October 1, 1911. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

The birthday of the sun god Mithras was what Emperor Constantine observed and he wanted his followers to observe. And it ended up getting officially adopted by the Greco-Roman bishops.

Furthermore, here is even more that The Catholic Encyclopedia teaches about Christmas:

Christmas...Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists

of feasts; Origen, glancing perhaps at the discreditable imperial Natalitia, asserts (in Lev. Hom. viii in Migne, P.G., XII, 495) that in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday; Arnobius (VII, 32 in P.L., V, 1264) can still ridicule the “birthdays” of the gods.

Alexandria. The first evidence of the feast is from Egypt. About A.D. 200, Clement of Alexandria (Strom., I, xxi in P.G., VIII, 888) says that certain Egyptian theologians “over curiously” assign, not the year alone, but the day of Christ’s birth, placing it on 25 Pachon (20 May) in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus...

Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Asia Minor. In Cyprus, at the end of the fourth century, Epiphanius asserts against the Alogi (Hær., li, 16, 24 in P. G., XLI, 919, 931) that Christ was born on 6 January...

Rome. At Rome the earliest evidence is in the Philocalian Calendar (P. L., XIII, 675; it can be seen as a whole in J. Strzygowski, Kalenderbilder des Chron. von Jahre 354, Berlin, 1888), compiled in 354, which contains three important entries. In the civil calendar 25 December is marked “Natalis Invicti”...

By the time of Jerome and Augustine, the December feast is established, though the latter (Epp., II, liv, 12, in P.L., XXXIII, 200) omits it from a list of first-class festivals. From the fourth century every Western calendar assigns it to 25 December...

The Gospels. Concerning the date of Christ’s birth the Gospels give no help; upon their data contradictory arguments are based. The census would have been impossible in winter: a whole population could not then be put in motion...

Natalis Invicti. The well-known solar feast, however, of Natalis Invicti, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date. For the history of the solar cult, its position in the Roman Empire, and syncretism with Mithraism, see Cumont’s epoch-making “Textes et Monuments” etc., I, ii, 4, 6, p. 355... The earliest rapprochement of the births of Christ and the sun is in Cypr., “De pasch. Comp.”, xix, “O quam præclare providentia ut illo die quo natus est Sol . . . nasceretur Christus.” - “O, how wonderfully acted Providence that on that day on which that Sun was born . . . Christ should be born.”... (Christmas, The Catholic Encyclopedia)

So, The Catholic Encyclopedia teaches that early leaders did not observe Christmas, that it was impossible that the census of Luke was done in the winter (hence it is impossible that Jesus was born on December 25th), and that compromise with paganism is the strongest source for the date of December

25th being selected.

What About the Symbols Associated with Christmas?

While it is clear that December 25th came from paganism and not the Bible, what about the symbols associated with Christmas?

The Catholic Encyclopedia teaches:

Cards and presents. Pagan customs centering round the January calends gravitated to Christmas...

The yule log. The calend fires were a scandal even to Rome, and St. Boniface obtained from Pope Zachary their abolition (Martindale C. Christmas, 1908). Hence it is clear that even early Roman writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen did not endorse Christmas, nor did Augustine even list it as an important holiday. And that even later Catholic sources recognize that it is not logical that a census (as shown in Luke 2:1) would be done during the winter—making a December 25th date of birth unlikely (it was also too cold for shepherds to spend the night with their flocks out in an open field, as shown in Luke 2:8, making a December 25th birth basically impossible).

It should also be noted that wreaths, according to the one-time Roman Catholic supporter Tertullian, were part of pagan celebrations in the early portion of winter. He warned against their use, but they were adopted as well by those who observe Christmas.

Notice also something that Cesare Baronius, a ‘venerable’ Catholic of the 16th century, wrote:

If the candles which were formerly distributed at the Saturnalia are now identified with the feast of the Purification of our Lady? What, I ask, is there so surprising if holy bishops have allowed certain customs firmly rooted among pagan peoples, and so tenaciously adhered to by them that even after their conversion to Christianity they could not be induced to surrender them, to be transferred to the worship of the true God? (Baronius, “Annales”, ad ann. 58, n. 77). (as cited in Thurston, Herbert. “Lights.” The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 9. Nihil Obstat. October 1, 1910. Remy Lafort, Censor. Imprimatur. +John M. Farley, Archbishop of New York. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910.21 Dec. 2009 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09244b.htm>>)

Thus, Baronius basically said that Saturnalia lights are a pagan practice, yet using them is acceptable. Christmas is basically a repackaged form of the pagan holiday called Saturnalia. It was adopted because of compromise with paganism.

Yet even the Rheims' version of the New Testament (a Catholic approved translation) states the following:

15. And what agreement with Christ and Belial? or what part hath the faithful with the infidel? 16. And what agreement hath the temple of God with Idols? For you are the temple of the living God. as God saith, Then I will dwell, and walk in them, and will be their God: and they shall be my people. 17. For the which cause, Go out of the midst of them, and separate yourselves. saith our Lord, and touch not the unclean: and I will receive you (2 Corinthians 6:15-17, The Original And True Rheims New Testament Of Anno Domini 1582. Prepared and Edited by Dr. William von Peters, Ph.D. Copyright © 1998, Dr. William G. von Peters. Ph.D. 2004, copyright assigned to VSC Corp.).

Notice that unclean practices associated with idols are prohibited by God. Does not that include celebrating as the idolaters celebrate?

The Roman Saturnalia and the Persian Mithraism themselves were adaptations of an even earlier pagan religion – that of the ancient Babylonian mystery cult. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Babylonians also celebrated this rebirth during the season of the winter solstice. Jeremiah condemns ancient Israel for copying this type of paganism, and condemned the pagan use of trees in Jeremiah 10:2-4 and the evergreen tree in Jeremiah 3:13.

To take this a step further, notice that using green trees as part of worship was condemned by God thousands of years ago:

2 'You must completely destroy all the places where the nations you dispossess have served their gods, on high mountains, on hills, under any spreading tree; 3 you must tear down their altars, smash their sacred stones, burn their sacred poles, hack to bits the statues of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. (Deuteronomy 12:2-3, New Jerusalem Bible, NJB, a Catholic translation)

2 Destroy all the places in which the nations, that you shall possess, worshipped their gods upon high mountains, and hills, and under every shady tree: 3 Overthrow their altars, and break down their statues, burn their groves with fire, and break their idols in pieces: destroy their names out of those places. 4 You shall not do so to the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 12:2-4, DOT, a Catholic translation).

16 Beware lest perhaps your heart be deceived, and you depart from our Lord, and serve strange Gods, and adore them (Deuteronomy 11:16, DOT).

9 When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee, beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of those nations...12 For the Lord abhorreth all these things, and for these abominations he will destroy them at thy coming. (Deuteronomy 18:9,12, DOT)

24 God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24, NJB)

Catholic translations of the Bible show that spreading shady trees, like evergreens, were not to be part of the worship of the true God—and that people should not be deceived and serve such strange practice or other pagan practices. The truth is that Christmas reminds us that people are often unwilling to worship God as He intended, but instead often prefer pagan substitutes that they rationalize as somehow acceptable if they pretend the holiday is about Jesus.

Catholic Scholars Know

The modern Rheims Bible teaches:

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (James 1:22)

Catholic scholars know that Christmas did not come from the Bible, that December 25th was an ancient pagan birthday celebration, and that many of the trappings associated with Christmas come from pagan sources.

But they and their church endorse its observance anyway. They are knowingly deceiving themselves.

Those who truly believe Jesus' words, "Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4, NJB) will not celebrate a compromised pagan holiday such as Christmas because it contains practices and symbols warned against in the Bible and was never enjoined upon true believers to practice.

We in the Continuing Church of God do not celebrate Christmas.

*Fulfilling
Matthew 24:14
and
Matthew 28:19-20*



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CCOG.ASIA This is a website targeted towards Asia. It has articles in Mandarin Chinese as well as some in English, plus other Asian languages.

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CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the Spanish language website for the Continuing Church of God.

PNIND.PH Patuloy na Iglesia ng Diyos. This is a website targeted towards those in the Philippines or those of related heritage.



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