

BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

*How Will Middle East
Peace be Brought About?*



Pentecost & ISRAEL

*Ancient Israel kept this Feast,
as did Jesus' followers.*

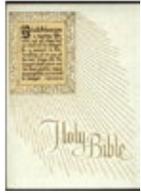
Does ASTROLOGY Work?

*Many follow their horoscopes.
Should they?*

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9



17



26



27



28



29



32

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 3 How Will Middle East Peace be Brought About?** Will we have peace in the Middle East? Is bombing, "Mary," or terrorism the way to bring it about? When is real peace expected?
- 9 Building Character and Going on To Perfection** Should Christians do that? Why?
- 17 Study the Bible Course: God's Millennial Government** Do you know about it? Is it now being taught against?
- 26 Pentecost and Israel** Ancient Israel kept this Feast, as did Jesus' followers.
- 27 Pentecost — The Coming of the Holy Spirit** What does that mean?
- 28 Does Astrology Work?** Many follow their horoscopes. Should they?
- 29 Getting the Gospel Out is More than a Local Job** Should we be satisfied only reaching those in our local area or does God have a bigger plan for end time Christians?
- 32 The Holy Days for 2015 to 2024** This is a calendar for when the Holy Days fall on the commonly used Roman Calendar.
- 33 What You Should Know About the Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread** Originally published in the Good News magazine, March 1979.

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

About the Front Cover: The Bible tells of a confederation of Arabic, Turkish, and Cushite peoples. The rises of extremists elements in Islam seems to be encouraging the West to support this type of coalition.

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How Will Middle East Peace Be Brought About?

Will we have peace in the Middle East?

Certainly.

How will it be brought about?

Many have ideas. And many ideas have been tried. Will Jesus' mother Mary or Pope Francis bring real peace? Will supporting or fighting Islamists bring peace?

What does the Bible teach?

U.S. Presidents Nixon and Carter

U.S. President Richard Nixon hoped to bring in a generation of peace:

PEACE -- "a generation of peace" -- was President Nixon's theme on his election-year barnstorming tour of the United States in the fall of 1970.

"We have not had a generation of peace in this century," said Mr. Nixon, "but we shall have a generation of peace."

How long is a generation? Webster's -- dictionary says "usually 33 years"-- three to a century. What are our actual chances for thirty-three years of world peace? (Dorothy C. Will we ever have "Our Generation of Peace"? Plain Truth, February 1971)

This still has not happened.

After U.S. President Carter encouraged talks between Egypt and Israel, some agreement happened. The resulting Camp David Accords were signed by Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on September 17, 1978. They both got the Nobel Peace prize for that, but that did not bring peace to the Middle East, only a reduction of hostilities between Egypt and Israel. And one that seems to have been maintained by the USA sending billions of dollars to Egypt to keep its part of the accord, as well as billions sent to Israel by the USA.

Pope's Vigil to Mary

Late last Summer, when the USA indicated it would bomb Syria because of its alleged use of chemical weapons (see

US Senate committee approves military action against Syria), Pope Francis held a vigil to fast and pray to Mary for peace (see Pope Francis' 'solution' to Syrian crisis will not work and Francis prays and fasts to 'Mary'). The U.S.A. ended up not bombing Syria at that time.

So, did that bring peace?

No. Instead, because the U.S.A. had indicated to its anti-Assad regime allies it would intervene, and then failed to do so, many of the Sunni rebels became even more disillusioned with the U.S.A. This helped plant the seeds for the dramatic rise of the group now calling itself the Islamic State (also known as ISIS). That group has killed and terrorized many in Iraq and Syria. It has greatly concerned the West, including those in the U.K. and U.S.A.

The Islamic State believes that it knows the way of peace--its way is to kill all it can who will not agree to support it. But the crooked ways of the Islamic State will not bring real peace (Isaiah 59:8).

Bombing the Islamic State?

So, is the solution more bombing of forces that are part of the Islamic State? While some in the U.S.A. think that will solve the problem, many others, including its President Obama, do not believe it will solve the problem. Bombing the Islamic State will affect it, but will not bring peace.

U.S. President Obama has stated that the U.S.A. cannot bring peace to Iraq. While that is true, it is also true that the U.S.A. intervened in Iraq under its President George W. Bush.

Is the solution bombing terrorist groups like the Islamic State out of existence? No.

In the past, the U.S.A. bombed and invaded Iraq, captured and then killed its dictator Saddam Hussein. Yet, that did not truly bring peace to Iraq.

Destroying the Islamic State leadership will not result in real peace as well.

Is the solution flying surveillance over Syria? No.

Is the solution the newest humanly proposed Iraqi government? No.

There are also problems in Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East that violence will not resolve.

A Peace Will Come

Will we have any peace in the Middle East before Jesus returns?

Yes, but it may take a lot more war and conflict first. The Bible shows that a temporary deal will bring a type of peace to the Middle East per Daniel 9:27:

27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is determined,
Is poured out on the desolate. (Daniel 9:27)

Notice that this deal will, however, be broken 3 ½ years after the prince, who becomes the King of the North by Daniel 11:31, breaks it. Because of passages in Daniel 8:25 and 11:22-23, it is believed that this is a type of peace deal. The Bible prophesies about various false proclamations of peace (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Ezekiel 13:9-16).

Is the solution to conflict in the Middle East some type of cease-fire agreement that those of Israel and Hamas have sometimes agreed to? No. While not fighting is a good first step, the reality is that those two sides have differing objectives for the territory that both sides believe will cause future conflict. A cease-fire is mainly a rest between warring campaigns—not real peace.

However, since many of the ‘cease-fires’ have had times associated with them, they could set a precedent that may lead to the temporary deal in Daniel 9:27 (see also The ‘Peace Deal’ of Daniel 9:27).

Confederation of Arabic and Turkish Peoples

Many within Islam believe a type of confederation or caliphate will solve the problems. They believe that this is consistent with Islamic writings and prophecies, as well as history.

Even some in the West seem to be leaning slightly that way.

French President Hollande is one who is proposing something like that:

France said on Wednesday it wanted the permanent

members of the U.N. Security Council and regional countries, including Arab states and Iran, to coordinate action against the militant group Islamic State, the insurgents who control parts of Iraq and Syria.

“In our minds and we hope that it will be possible ... we want not only all the regional countries, including Arab states and Iran, but the five members of the Security Council, also to join this action,” Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told lawmakers.

Earlier Wednesday, French President Francois Hollande called for an international conference to discuss IS. (Voice of America, August 20, 2104)

Some type of cooperation between Europe (King of the North) and the Arabs (King of the South) will take place (cf. Daniel 9:27; Psalm 83:3-8) and President Hollande has been calling for some cooperation.

Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has proposed regional cooperation as the solution:

Libya is in civil war, fundamentalist armies are building a self-declared caliphate across Syria and Iraq, and Afghanistan’s young democracy is on the verge of paralysis...The concept of order that has underpinned the modern era is in crisis...

The contemporary quest for world order will require a coherent strategy to establish a concept of order within the various regions and to relate these regional orders to one another. (Wall Street Journal) <http://online.wsj.com/articles/the-assembly-of-a-new-world-order-1409328075>

While cooperation can be a good thing, the Bible teaches that the type of cooperation he is advocating will result in disaster (Daniel 11:40-43).

Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, seems to be endorsing the rise of an Arabic and Turkish confederation:

ABOARD A MILITARY AIRCRAFT – U.S. air strikes on Islamic militants in Iraq have blunted their momentum, but defeating them will require a broad regional approach that draws support from Iraq’s neighbors and includes political and diplomatic efforts, the top U.S. military officer said.

The long term strategy for defeating the militants includes having the United States and its allies reach out to Iraq’s neighbors, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Sunday.

"This is not just about us," Dempsey said.

Such a coalition could "squeeze ISIS from multiple directions in order to initially disrupt it and eventually defeat it," he said. (USA Today, August 25, 2014)

Such a coalition could lead to the fulfilment of certain biblical prophecies (e.g. Ezekiel 30:2-8).

Here is something related to U.S. President Barack Obama:

"Our goal is to act with urgency but also make sure that we're doing it right, that we have the right targets, that there's support on the ground ... that we have a strong political coalition," Obama said at a news conference...

One major piece of the strategy for weakening the threat from Islamic State, Obama and aides said, will be the support and participation of the neighbors of Syria and Iraq.

"It is absolutely critical that we have Arab states, and specifically Sunni-majority states, that are rejecting the kind of extremist nihilism that we're seeing out of ISIL, that say, 'That is not what Islam is about', and are prepared to join us actively in the fight," Obama said, using one of the acronyms for Islamic State. (Los Angeles Times, September 5, 2014) <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-obama-islamic-state-20140905-story.html>

I have been warning for some time that because of ISIS (now called the Islamic State), that the West would likely encourage the formation of the confederation that the Bible refers to as the final King of the South (Daniel 11:40-43). The King of the South is basically an Arabic and Turkish confederation consisting of predominantly Sunni-Muslim states.

It seems that many are promoting this. The Bible shows that this confederation will end in disaster (Daniel 11:40-44; Ezekiel 30:2-8).

Notice a couple of verses that tell that:

7 "They shall be desolate in the midst of the desolate countries,
And her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are laid waste.
8 Then they will know that I am the Lord,
When I have set a fire in Egypt
And all her helpers are destroyed. (Ezekiel 30:7-8)

An Islamic confederation or caliphate will not bring peace.

Does Roman Catholicism Have the Answer?

What about Catholicism?

Pope Francis in 2013 and 2014 advocated turning to Mary for peace.

Pope Francis made an appeal for peace...

"The news coming from Iraq leaves us in disbelief and dismay:....," he said. "All this greatly offends God and greatly offends humanity. You cannot bring hatred in the name of God. You cannot make war in the name of God!"...

Pope Francis concluded his appeal by inviting all present to pray for peace. "Let us pray to the God of peace, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary: Give peace, Lord, to our days and make us builders of justice and peace. Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us," he said. (Estevés JA. Pope Francis: You Cannot Make War in the Name of God! Zenit, August 10, 2014. <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-you-cannot-make-war-in-the-name-of-god>)

No verse in the Bible says to pray to, turn to, or call upon, the name of Mary, or have her cause world peace. No verse in the Bible calls Mary the Queen of Peace.

The Douay-Rheims Bible (DRB), a Roman Catholic Bible, in both the Old and New Testament teaches to turn to God:

13 And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil. (Joel 2:13, DRB)

20 I preach, that they should...turn to God (Acts 26:20, DRB)

It also connects Jesus and His message with peace:

6 For a CHILD IS BORN to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear, without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they be sent, as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel

of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things!
(Romans 10:13-15, DRB)

The Bible never says to turn to Mary for peace. Six times, the DRB (Challoner version), uses the expression “God of peace” (Romans 15:33; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20)—there are no similar statements related to Mary.

But is not just Pope Francis that believes that ‘Mary’ is the way of peace. People I have termed as ‘Fatimists’ (those who erroneously believe that the apparition that appeared in Fatima, Portugal before 3 young children in 1917 was Jesus’ mother Mary and had an important message) believe ‘Mary’ will bring peace if the Pope takes certain actions. Fatimists observe May 13th of each year to honor this demonic apparition (and yes, the apparition was demonic—some details are in the article What Appeared in Fatima? in the Apr-June 2014 edition of this magazine).

Notice something that came out in 2013 after Pope Francis prayed to Mary for peace in Syria:

Father Gruner noted that the Pope has just completed a worldwide day of prayer and fasting for the intention of avoiding war in Syria. “Pope Francis’ Friday message regarding the threat of war invoked the very theme of our conference. As the Pope said: ‘Let us ask Mary to help us to respond to violence, to conflict and to war, with the power of dialogue, reconciliation and love. She is our Mother: may She help us to find peace; all of us are Her children!’”

“Indeed, Mary is our Mother — the Mother of the Redeemer — and thus the Mother of all humanity,” said Father Gruner. “And She can indeed help us find peace. The Catholic Church calls Her the very Queen of Peace, and She gave the whole world a peace plan at Fatima. That is what the Message of Fatima is all about.”

The Message of Fatima is contained in a series of Church-approved apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. Two of the children, Francisco and Jacinta, were beatified — declared blessed, the final step before canonization — by Pope John Paul II. The last surviving Fatima visionary, Sister Lucia, died in 2005. In the Message, the Virgin promises a period of world peace if and when Russia is specifically consecrated to Her Immaculate Heart, which ceremony would, the Virgin said, bring about the religious conversion of Russia and with it a time of peace for all humanity.

“God has chosen Russia as the object of this consecration because Russia is where so much of the suffering of the

20th century began, following the Bolshevik Revolution,” Father Gruner noted. “Furthermore, Our Lady warns that if Her request for the Consecration is not heeded, the world will face even worse chastisements than the two world wars, including what She warned would be the ‘annihilation’ of ‘various nations.’”

“In fact,” said Father Gruner, “Pope Francis has had his entire pontificate consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima by the bishops of Portugal. This shows how seriously the Pope takes the Fatima message, as did his two predecessors, who both made pilgrimages to Fatima.”

A brochure that Fatimist Priest Gruner put out in 2013 states:

And Our Lady has told us that if the consecration is delayed, we risk “the annihilation of nations” and great suffering for the Pope and persecutions of the Faithful. She has also told us “Only I can help you.” WE HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN! OUR LADY IS OUR ONLY HOPE AND HELP!

While the above is blasphemous and many will think that this is only the view of certain Fatima extremists, let me state the Pope Francis continually brings up his version of ‘Mary’ and tells people to pray to her to intervene for peace. He even had his pontificate consecrated to the ‘Lady of Fatima’ on May 13, 2013. On October 13, 2013 (another day that Fatimists observe), Pope Francis also consecrated the world to the ‘immaculate heart of Mary’ in front of the Fatima statue that had been flow into Vatican City from Portugal for that purpose.

No verse in the Bible says to pray to, turn to, or call upon, the name of Mary. Notice also that the only two times the DRB (a Roman Catholic Bible) uses the term intercession it is referring to Jesus, not Mary:

34 Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus that died, yea that is risen also again; who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. (Romans 8:34, DRB)

25 Whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him; always living to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25, DRB)

Mary is not the intercessor of the Bible, nor was she considered to be by the early Christian church (see also Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Apparitions). Considering that Mary provides intercession is not biblically-proper and has other negative consequences.

We are not to call on, or turn to, Mary, but on the Lord God Jesus:

22 But flee thou youthful desires, and pursue justice, faith, charity, and peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22, DRB)

Notice who is the Lord of peace according to the Apostle Paul:

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you everlasting peace in every place. The Lord be with you all. 17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand; which is the sign in every epistle. So I write. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (2 Thessalonians 3:16-18)

Mary is NOT the way to peace.

Despite what the Bible teaches about the end times (Matthew 24:4-30), in late 2014 Pope Francis taught that peace is what is prophesied for the end times, and he does NOT mean the millennial peace. (His church officially teaches that any version of the millennium is a doctrine of Antichrist; see Catechism of the Catholic Church. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1995, p. 194).

Pope Francis believes that his ecumenical agenda will lead to peace in the world and the Middle East, yet the Bible warns that the world ecumenical religious cooperation leads to disaster (per Revelation 13, 17, & 18).

The Bible teaches that some will proclaim peace, just prior to destruction, and true Christians should realize this:

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. (1 Thessalonians 5:3-4)

Disaster and destruction will come to the Middle East before Jesus returns (Daniel 11:40-43; Ezekiel 30:2-8).

Israel and the Jews?

If the secular and Roman Catholic approaches discussed here will not work, do any of the Jews have any ideas?

Well, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu believes that bombing places like Iran, and sometimes other lands like Gaza, is necessary for peace. While those type of actions can affect the world for a time, they also tend to drive many to become more radical in their determination to eliminate the State of Israel.

What about religious Jews? Well the Temple Institute has its own proposed solution:

ARE YOU READY?

Are you ready for the peace we all long for in the Middle East?

The Third Temple in Jerusalem will be the House of Prayer for all nations. Every prophet of Israel, without exception, prophesied that the Temple would be rebuilt, ushering a new era of universal harmony and peace. The "movement" to rebuild the Holy Temple was born almost 2,000 years ago, at the moment of the Second Temple's Destruction.

After millennia of yearning, only one organization is paving the way for the rebuilding of the Temple. The Temple Institute, located in the Old City of Jerusalem, is a research organization dedicated to the preparing for the construction of the Third Temple, including the recreation of 60 sacred Temple vessels ready for use once the Temple is rebuilt. These include the High Priest's breastplate featuring the twelve precious stones of the tribes of Israel, the half-ton golden menorah, and the musical instruments of the Levitical choir.

Now is time for one of its most ambitious projects yet: completing architectural plans for the actual construction, fusing ancient texts and modern technology. While strictly adhering to the religious requirements set forth in Biblical texts, the Third Temple will also be equipped with every modern amenity: full computerization, underground parking, temperature control, elevators, docks for public transportation, wheelchair access, and much more.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO WAIT AND PRAY FOR THE THIRD TEMPLE. IT IS A BIBLICAL OBLIGATION TO BUILD IT. <https://www.templeinstitute.org/events.htm> viewed 08/26/14

The 'third temple' that the Bible tells of does not get built until after Jesus returns. This does not mean that the Jews cannot possibly build another one prior to that, but it will NOT lead to peace in the Middle East.

When Will True Peace Come?

Notice the following from the late David Jon Hill:

There will be no peace until King Christ personally rules all earth in His Kingdom soon to come.

Peace is ever elusive. Men speak peace and make war. Peace treaties are for the purpose of giving men time to gather strength for the next war -- and are of themselves all too often the very cause of the next war! We forget the prophet's stern warning to beware of those who say, "Peace, peace!" when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14; 8:11).

We forget the repeated maxim: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:21). We forget that Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).

We forget that one of the main signs that heralds the returning Christ is "wars and rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6) -- which sign, if we look around today's world, we see fulfilled to its greatest extent in history! We forget the blood drenched prophecies of the book of Revelation which culminate in that horrible word "Armageddon" -- all of which must come to pass before the Prince brings peace to earth! Why do we have wars? The answer is given very plainly by James: "Isn't it because there is a whole army of evil desires within you? You want what you don't have, so you kill to get it. You long for what others have, and can't afford it, so you start a fight to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it. And even when you do ask you don't get it because your whole aim is wrong -- you want only what will give you pleasure" (James 4:1-3, The Living Bible).

As long as there is even one group of men left on earth who covets what some other group has, we will continue to have wars. When one person within a society exercises this lustful desire, it is called a crime; when one society exercises that desire against another society, it is called a "just war"! Just war -- that's all! ...

It is not a peaceful world -- and it will get increasingly less so with each passing year. But you can achieve peace as an individual, even in the midst of a war-torn world. Christ's peace is available now to all who seek it -- and will be available to all mankind when He comes to establish His Kingdom, after the many wars yet to come.

Please make your individual choice of peace on earth! Why not? (Hill DJ. WHY NOT? WHY NOT PEACE ON EARTH? Plain Truth, December 1978)

Individuals can make decisions now.

Society will be fixed later, irrespective of what political leaders now decide.

Notice something the Bible teaches that is to happen after Jesus returns:

3 Many people shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;

He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3)

Keeping God's laws properly does lead to peace.

The Bible teaches:

8 The way of peace they have not known,
And there is no justice in their ways;
They have made themselves crooked paths;
Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. (Isaiah 59:8)

Notice that unless people will change their ways, they will not know peace or the way of peace.

Interim steps by governments and leaders will have various affects, but they will not prevent the coming of the Great Tribulation and the destruction of nations such as the U.S.A, U.K, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (see Will the Anglo-Saxon Nations be Divided and Have People Taken as Slaves?).

John the Baptist was prophesied to be involved with peace:

79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:79)

John the Baptist taught that soldiers should do violence to no one (Luke 3:14, KJV) and people should turn to Jesus (John 1:29-34).

Most people do not really want to do both.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
16 Destruction and misery are in their ways;
17 And the way of peace they have not known."
18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:15-18)

Short of worldwide repentance, the ONLY WAY to bring peace to the Middle East and the rest of the world is the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

The world will get so bad, that despite proclamations of peace (), humanity will get close to the point of total annihilation:

21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this

time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:21-22)

But those days will be shortened. The time of no more war will also come:

4 He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)

But humans, apart from submitting entirely to God will not bring peace about, even though they will apparently bring about a temporary multi-year peace in the Middle East—that too will be broken (Daniel 9:27, 11:31).

Humans, apart from God, do not know the way of peace. IT WILL TAKE THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST TO BRING REAL PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

BUILDING CHARACTER AND GOING ON TO PERFECTION



By Bob Thiel

Are Christians to stay as they are? What are we supposed to strive to do? What is character? Why is it important to build it in this life?

This article will attempt to answer those questions.

Going on to Perfection

Notice what the New Testament Book of Hebrews teaches:

1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1)

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19-20)

Christians are to go on to perfection, and Jesus is our example.

Notice also some things that Jesus taught:

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

9 ... "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

While we are not perfect in this life (cf. 1 John 1:10), we are to strive for perfection. God will perfect us if we submit to

His mercy:

8 The Lord will perfect that which concerns me;
Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands. (Psalms 138:8)

The Apostle Paul taught that he was striving towards perfection as he had not yet attained it:

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

Part of the purpose of the ministry is to help Christians become perfect. Notice some of the Apostle Paul's writing:

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)

28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. (Colossians 1:28-29)

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. (Colossians 4:12-13)

9 For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, 10 night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith? (1 Thessalonians 3:9-10)

These passages help demonstrate that perfection takes time, teaching and effort.

Notice that even Jesus was made "perfect" through His sufferings:

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10)

And what about us? Notice what James was inspired to write:

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, 10 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:2-12)

Christians have to endure.

Faith Without Works is Dead

Some who profess Christ think that they have faith and that they do not need to build character or truly strive for perfection. James apparently ran into that argument.

So, let's notice something else that James was inspired to write:

18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not

Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:18-26)

Notice something the Apostle Peter wrote:

10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Peter 5:10)

It takes effort AND God's help to become perfect.

Notice what the Apostle John taught:

17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:17-19)

Love is to be perfected in us. The Apostle John also wrote:

God is love (1 John 4:8,18)

We are to be like God. God is love and love is to be perfected in Christians (for more on the destiny of Christians, please read the article [What is Your Destiny? Deification? Did the Early Church Teach That Christians Would Become God? and/or view the video sermon \[What is Your Destiny?\]\(#\)](#)).

God's Law is Perfect

The Bible teaches that God's law, if properly understood, is perfect:

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the

eyes;

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold,

Yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward.

12 Who can understand his errors?

Cleanse me from secret faults.

13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;

Let them not have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,

And I shall be innocent of great transgression. (Psalms 19:7-13)

Converting the soul is a way of saying that if you practice God's laws as you should you will change for the better. You will be getting closer to perfection.

Notice how James referred to the law:

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22-25)

8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; 9 but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:8-13)

James said that this was the perfect law of liberty, the royal law was to love one's neighbor, and this was a reference to God's commandments.

The Protestant reformer Martin Luther referred to James' writing as an "epistle of straw" (Luther, M. Preface to the New Testament, 1546). Why? Because he believed his own views above what the Bible teaches.

Many modern Protestants do the same thing. Last year, I caught a couple of minutes of a Protestant minister (did not catch his name) on television explaining the following passages:

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18)

At first, I thought he was actually going to tell his followers to keep God's law. Instead, he ended up saying that Jesus fulfilled the law when He was killed therefore, he basically taught that Jesus came to destroy the law of God.

Sadly, it seemed like his followers were accepting his explanation--despite it being contrary to the rest of the Bible. Perhaps I should also add that this is another area where lack of knowledge about church history is hurting many, especially Protestant leaders. Other than certain recognized apostates and heretics such as Simon Magus, Marcion, and Gnostic leaders, those known to have professed Christ in the first and second centuries A.D. believed that the law, at least the Ten Commandments (see our free booklet, Continuing History of the Church of God) was still in effect. Those people understood the Greek better than later Protestant scholars who often have tried to reason around what Jesus actually taught.

Jesus did not teach that He was about to do away with the Ten Commandment law. He denounced those that would teach otherwise. Notice what Jesus says that He will say to various ones who claimed to follow Him:

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matthew 7:21-23)

Those who practice lawlessness are obviously not going on to perfection. Lawlessness is sin:

4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4, NKJV)

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

The Apostle Paul wrote:

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. (Romans 6:15-19)

You might be wondering about sin, the law, and righteousness.

So, is there anywhere that the Bible defines righteousness?

Certainly. Notice the following:

172 My tongue shall speak of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness. (Psalms 119:172)

8 I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law is within my heart."

9 I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness

In the great assembly;
Indeed, I do not restrain my lips,
O Lord, You Yourself know. (Psalms 40:8-9)

Notice a prophecy about Jesus:

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (Revelation 19:11)

Well, when Jesus judges in righteousness, will that not be based upon the laws of God and the word of God?

Certainly:

12 ... And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. (Revelation 20:12)

Hebrews 11 is often referred to as the 'faith chapter' of the Bible. Notice something from it:

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and

Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. (Hebrews 11:32-34)

Notice that righteousness is something that the faithful worked. And thus, out of their weaknesses were made strong.

Some have been deceived that they do not need to keep God's commandments. And apparently that was a problem with some heretical apostates around the time of the Apostle John who wrote:

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. (1 John 3:7-12)

Christians were to practice righteousness, avoid sin, and strive to be perfect.

This was also the position of early Christians such as Polycarp of Smyrna who wrote:

But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing", or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing ...

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness ... if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our

neighbour, "is the mother of us all". For if any one be inwardly possessed of these graces, he hath fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he that hath love is far from all sin ...

For I trust that you are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures, and that nothing is hid from you; but to me this privilege is not yet granted. It is declared then in these Scriptures, "Be you angry, and sin not," and, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath". Happy is he who remembers this, which I believe to be the case with you. But may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Son of God, and our everlasting High Priest, build you up in faith and truth, and in all meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, forbearance, and purity; and may He bestow on you a lot and portion among His saints, and on us with you, and on all that are under heaven, who shall believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ, and in His Father, who "raised Him from the dead. Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings, and potentates, and princes, and for those that persecute and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest to all, and that you may be perfect in Him. Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapters II, III, XII. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1 as edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson; American Edition, 1885; Reprint Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, pp. 33-36)

Living righteously, keeping the commandments, and striving for perfection is something that Christians realized was important from the beginning.

Developing Character

While the Bible mentions that striving for perfection is important for Christians, it also indicates that such striving leads to the development of character.

Character includes reputation, but it is more than that. But let's first look at some scriptures related to reputation:

11 Even a child is known by his deeds, Whether what he does is pure and right. (Proverbs 20:11)

2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; (Acts 6:2-3)

1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must

be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Of course, some have false reputations. Jesus condemned people for that:

25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:25-28)

Character, while manifested in reputation, is real, whereas some reputations are not. Some appear real when they are not:

14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

However, those who truly strive for perfection and not hypocrisy will, with God’s help, build the type of genuine character that God wants His people to have.

Here are some passages from the Apostle Paul about character:

1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:1-4)

Notice also that Paul commended Timothy for having proven character:

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. (Philippians 2:19-22)

Character is built as one strives for perfection and endures to the end.

In the early 2nd century, Ignatius of Antioch taught about love, character, and Christ living His life in Christians:

...the believing have, in love, the character of God the Father by Jesus Christ, by whom, if we are not in readiness to die into His passion, His life is not in us. (Ignatius’ Letter to the Magnesians, Chapter 5. Roberts & Donaldson, Anti-Nicene Fathers)

So, early Christians valued character and believed that they needed to demonstrate proper character.

Proper character must be developed. It requires the free choice and decision of each of us in whom God is working. It must be instilled by and from God who, only, has such righteous character to endow.

It requires belief, repentance, and action (Acts 2:38; James 1:17-24).

Perfect, holy and righteous character has been defined as the ability in such separate entity to come to discern the true and right way from the false, to make voluntarily a full and unconditional surrender to God and His perfect way - to yield to be conquered by God - to determine even against temptation or self-desire, to live and to do the right. And even then such holy character is the gift of God to His spiritually chosen people. Godly character comes by yielding to God to instill His law (God’s right way of life) within the entity who so decides and wills.

Christians need to follow Christ and physical sufferings help us go toward perfection in this life so that we can be after the resurrection. Character to always do right--character to truly lead a life of love is why God created humans. God wants us to build character (Romans 5:4). Christians are not to sin, but live the way of love, the give way of life--God’s way!

Building proper loving character is what God is doing with us--this is what your life is all about.

Because those called of God will strive to live according to His law, they will have tests and trials that will build a certain type of “character” (Romans 5:1-4, NJB/NKJV) (δομική; Biblesoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.). This character could be considered a type of the “testimony of our conscience” (2 Corinthians 1:12, RNT) that God wants his children to possess.

Why Build Character and Strive for Perfection?

Why would God want Christians to build character to be like Him and to strive to be perfect like Him?

Because deification is part of the plan of God.

Jesus taught deification:

34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods” ‘? 35 If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36 do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? (John 10:34-36).

And this was not only referring to His deification as He quoted from Psalm 82:6 which also is in the plural:

6 I said, “You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High...” (Psalm 82:6).

God wants godly offspring, and that is why God made humans male and female and created marriage, as the Prophet Malachi was inspired to write:

14...she is your companion And your wife by covenant.
15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. (Malachi 2:14-15)

Paul also taught that we are God’s offspring:

28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ 29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. (Acts 17:28-30)

Additionally about real Christians, the Apostle Paul specifically taught “we have the mind of Christ” (1

Corinthians 2:16)--we do and strive to have that more.

Paul wrote that Jesus was to be the firstborn of many brethren:

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

Some will exercise hard their physical bodies to try to resemble what they believe will be a better physical image of themselves. And while that is fine, it is godliness that needs to be developed:

7 But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

Many will endure hardships for physical rewards, but we need to endure and develop spiritual ones:

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Even the Apostle Paul did not think he could simply coast, because of his past service--neither should we.

Notice also the following:

12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. (2 Timothy 2:12)

10 And we shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:10).

If we are to be like Him and reign with Him, then we need to endure and truly build character. God cannot have future rulers who cannot be trusted.

Yet, since He will be able to trust the resurrected saints, all will be fantastic in the future as it says in Revelation:

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 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."

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:1-8)

God cannot have another future Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-15), who turned away (Ezekiel 28:14-15).

As the Apostle Paul wrote (Galatians 2:20), we need to allow Christ to live His life in us. We need to go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1).

Are We Finished?

Are Christians finished once they accept Jesus as Savior and are baptized?

No. We must endure (e.g. Matthew 10:22). We must strive for perfection and allow God to build proper character within us.

Those who actually live as a Christian realize that the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days teach us that we are not yet complete.

The seven day week ends with the weekly Sabbath of rest which is a holy convocation (Leviticus 23:3). It is a time to rest (Exodus 20:8-11) and a time to learn the word of God (Acts 13:44).

The annual Passover is a reminder to us that Christ had to die for our sins (1 Corinthians 5:7, 15:3). The Days of Unleavened Bread pictures that we need to live sincerely and in truth (1 Corinthians 5:8). It lasts seven days (Exodus 12:15-20), which, like the weekly cycle, indicates a completion--we should strive to be completely without sin.

If you have kept the Days of Unleavened Bread, you realize

that leaven is pervasive in society--and hopefully, the spiritual lesson of the fact that sin pervades society has also been impressed on your mind so that even when these days are over, you realize that you need to watch out for sin and go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1). And if you did not keep the Days of Unleavened Bread you did not learn that as you should have. The Apostle Paul taught:

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (Ephesians 6:11-14)

Obedying God and living as God wants us to live girds our waists with truth and puts on the breastplate of righteousness. The Apostle Paul also taught:

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

And by obeying God and living as Jesus and Paul did, we are imitating Christ.

Notice something else that the Apostle Paul wrote about how Christians should live:

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised,

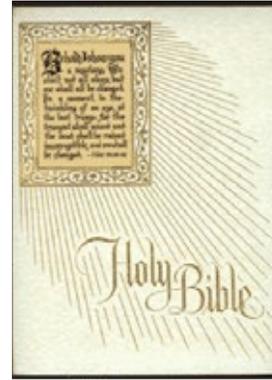
barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:1-17)

Brethren, are you doing that?

Will you do that?

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE



LESSON 5, PART I: GOD'S MILLENNIAL GOVERNMENT

Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

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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 are other translations.

WHY should universal peace and prosperity be impossible? Why can't we have a world bubbling over with joy and happiness?

Ever since the dawn of civilization, HUMANITY HAS longed to live in a place where all desires would be fulfilled; But even as humans have LONGED FOR such a place, many have been secretly positive such A UTOPIA could never be found on this earth. "Utopia" brings to the minds of the so-called "practical" people the same idea which the term "fairy tale" would bring-an impossibility. Many RIDICULE the IDEA THAT SUCH A PLACE COULD OCCUR HERE.

"All you have to do is to look at history to see that such a thing could not happen," many say. "Through the ages

HUMANS have tried to bring about this utopia by almost every conceivable means—yet without success. Humans have tried no government at all, anarchy. All attempts have FAILED MISERABLY. Utopia is impossible,” many conclude.

Yes, people today are basically right in drawing this conclusion. Disease, fears, worries uncertainties, lack of necessities, poverty, hate, oppression, and injustice are taken for granted. The people of this age can view past history and know that mankind has failed to accomplish this objective. BUT WHY SHOULD UTOPIA BE IMPOSSIBLE?

Must our only hope be in poor, erratic, weak efforts of humans to bring this condition about? If this is true, we are lost. The human race is doomed!

People today have become self-centered! THEY FAIL TO REALIZE THERE IS ANY POWER OTHER THAN THEIR OWN THAT CAN BRING THIS CONDITION ABOUT! What is the power that can do this?

God!

He has the POWER and the WISDOM to make UTOPIA a reality! This is the very message God sent His son, Jesus Christ, to bring to us—the Good News—the GOSPEL—that Christ would soon return with POWER to make a utopia of this earth! We will soon begin to have, for the first time, what we have all desired! Christ, through the POWER OF GOD, and by the wisdom of God, will come to this earth, and through HIS efforts BRING us universal peace and prosperity!

Humans Lack Wisdom

You may have heard that in order to have world peace, we must have world government. But the NATIONS LACK THE WISDOM TO CREATE a workable world government and lack the power to enforce its decisions. Christ will be KING OVER THE WHOLE EARTH and His law, the LAW OF GOD, will be the law of the world (Zechariah 14:9; Micah 4:2). His government will be strong enough to do what the governments of our day cannot do. It will prevent the strong from enslaving the weak. Justice will be received by all. The laws of God will be taught and practiced by those who administer the government. The high and the mighty who rebel against Christ will be forever removed.

GOD HAS ALLOWED A SIX-THOUSAND-YEAR PERIOD FOR HUMANKIND TO RULE itself. During this time, God has kept hands off many of the affairs of this world. Humans have pursued the course that “seems right” to them. But this TIME is now ALMOST UP! The new order—THE WORLD TOMORROW—is about to begin!

Just what changes will really good government bring to the world which we know today? Will unprincipled, scheming politicians hold the power over the earth’s nations? Will there be great political machines to back them as they run for office? Will the Vatican help usher in true world peace? Will wars be fought then, as now, because some power-mad dictator wishes to enlarge his/her sway of government? And what about the Jews—those people who have wandered over the face of the earth for hundreds of years—will they ever have peace? Will people have to labor as hard then as they do now for what they receive? Will people be happy?

On the earth today, there are hundreds of confusing religious denominations. Will there be as many in that day? These and many other questions crowd into our minds as we hear that a new world order is soon to be established.

We are a privileged people. God has made it possible for us to be able to peer into the future through His prophecies. We can know now what will happen then. This age we are in is soon going to pass away and the new one will take its place. Christ will soon force the world to cease from its labor of wars, sickness, heartache and death. A NEW TYPE OF CIVILIZATION IS AHEAD—a millennial UTOPIA. It will be a time of genuine rest—a time of spiritual and physical rejuvenation and boundless peace and prosperity! It will be a time of re-education.

Prophecy tells us about the world to come—the Utopia of tomorrow which God will establish. Compare it with this world in which we now live. God wants you to do this. Then you make the decision WHO CAN RULE BEST—GOD OR MAN?

Christ Will Establish God’s Government

Many people today believe this is not such a bad world. They have not seen too much wrong with this world’s governments in the past. But GOD KNEW FROM THE BEGINNING WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEM!

HE KNEW THAT AS THE PEOPLES OF THE EARTH WOULD BECOME DRAWN CLOSER AND CLOSER TO EACH OTHER BY MORE RAPID MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND TRAVEL, MIGHTY MEN THROUGH THEIR FORM OF GOVERNMENT, WOULD MAKE SLAVES OF THE WEAK! THEY WOULD NOT AND COULD NOT LIVE WITH EACH OTHER PEACEABLY. LOOK ABOUT YOU TODAY!

It was for this very reason that at the tower of Babel, when the people all the earth were living close to each other, He scattered them by giving them different languages (Genesis 11:8). One man—Nimrod (Genesis 10:8-9)—was then bringing all the known earth under his subjection

(Genesis 11:4-6). BUT WHERE IS THERE A PLACE TO SCATTER MANKIND IN THIS MODERN AGE WHEN PEOPLE CAN RAPIDLY MOVE TO ALL PARTS OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE?

What different means will CHRIST use TO PREVENT A HUMAN DICTATOR from enslaving the world? Or if He allows it, will He later stop it?

Remember that GOD IS NOW ALLOWING PEOPLE the opportunity to establish their own forms of human government—communism, democracy, fascism, socialism—TO the end that the nations LEARN THEIR woeful shortcomings!—their BASIC HUMAN WEAKNESSES.

WE MUST HAVE A COMPLETELY NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT—WORLD GOVERNMENT with Christ as supreme ruler—if there is to be PEACE, or else all life will cease.

IT MUST BE A GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS THE WISDOM TO PLAN FOR THE GOOD OF ALL AND THE POWER TO ENFORCE ITS WISE PLAN ON ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT CHOOSE TO ABIDE BY IT! God, the Father, will supply His wisdom in the NEW FORM of government, and Christ is coming with power to enforce it! "The Kingdom of God [the all-wise] will come with POWER" (Mark 9:1, KJV).

Oddly, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, that contrary to the Bible, teaching any version of the millennial Kingdom of God is a doctrine of Antichrist! In the years to come, Christ's gospel of the kingdom message will not be received well as we take it to the world—but it will be done and it will trigger the end according to Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14.

ONCE JESUS RETURNS, PEOPLE WILL BE INDUCED BY FORCE TO LIVE BY A BETTER CODE OF LAWS than they live by today—a code which will BRING PEACE, HAPPINESS, AND ETERNAL LIFE. THIS CODE OF LAWS HAS ALWAYS BEEN HERE, BUT THE WORLD HAS NEVER LIVED BY IT! For this purpose Christ will set up GOD'S FORM OF GOVERNMENT. Christ's government will administer these laws and rule the earth. How will this government be fashioned? Let's understand!

Final Instructions

We are about ready for the actual lesson. But first, read this instruction.

This lesson is intended to direct you to the Bible—to help you learn how you can better study the Bible. Here is the METHOD OF STUDY.

Have your Bible in front of you. If not, don't read another word until you GET YOUR BIBLE—or BIBLES, if you have

more than one translation. Have a good dictionary, a CONCORDANCE if you have one, and your pen and paper, all placed in front of you on a desk or table.

Remember—you must OPEN your Bible TO EVERY PASSAGE. Never say to yourself, "Oh, I think I know what the lesson is referring to"—and then pass over the scripture. You need to "keep your nose in the Bible," so to speak. You must READ AND RE-READ and THINK OUT EACH PASSAGE you read. MEDITATE ON IT in your leisure time in the following 24 hours, and your time of prayer—before you forget it. MAKE IT APART OF YOU! Don't forget, this is a Bible Study Course—not just a study of these words we send you.

Here is the method of making EFFECTIVE NOTES:

WRITE down neatly on your paper the SUBJECT OF THE LESSON and underscore it.

Next write down the LESSON NUMBER.

Then as you come to each QUESTION SECTION, write down its TITLE and underneath, NUMBER EACH QUESTION as you come to it.

For each QUESTION WRITE DOWN THE ANSWER, together with any pertinent ideas that come to your mind.

Be sure to WRITE OUT THE SCRIPTURE which answers each question. This will AID you greatly in reviewing and REMEMBERING.

Now READ THE LARGE TYPE WORDS IN THIS FINAL INSTRUCTIONS SECTION right down to the end of this section—pay no attention to the small type. AND SUDDENLY—YOU HAVE A FLASH REVIEW OF ALL THE IMPORTANT POINTS! These serve as an INDEX, too. Simple and effective. All the material in the lessons is written this way. USE THE LARGE WORDS FOR THIS PURPOSE!

HAVE YOU PRAYED to God that He will give you an understanding of this lesson? If not, don't read any further. Go to a private place, kneel down, and ask Him for the understanding and wisdom so that you may properly grasp and apply the material in this lesson you are about to study!

LESSON 5

PART I

GOD'S MILLENNIAL GOVERNMENT

1. Who will be higher than Christ in the new ONE WORLD? When Christ was on earth, what did He say? John 5:19. Was he able to do anything without the Father's aid? Who sent Him? John 5:36. Whose message did He bring? John 7:16; John 8:28.
2. Where is the FATHER'S THRONE? Matthew 5:34.
3. How does God compare Himself with the despotic leaders of today's nations? Isaiah 40:15-31. Is there any RULER besides Him? Or is He the supreme God? Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 45:21.
4. Is the FATHER INTERESTED IN WHO RULES OVER THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH? Daniel 2:21; 4:17, 25, 32.
5. Is it the Father who will give Christ the authority to judge when He comes to rule? John 5:22, 27. Did the FATHER SAY IT IS HE WHO WILL GIVE CHRIST RULE OVER THE EARTH AND THE HEATHEN IN IT? Psalm 2:7-9.
6. Does the New Testament confirm this? Read Hebrews, Chapters 1 and 2. Note especially Hebrews 1:2. Did Isaiah also verify it? Isaiah 53:12. Did Christ EARN this right to rule? Read the whole chapter of Isaiah 53.

Christ Next in Authority under the Father

1. We have seen that the Father on His throne in heaven will be in supreme command of the government of the earth when Christ establishes it. Will CHRIST also have a THRONE? Matthew 19:28; 25:31.
2. Will it be located at Jerusalem? Jeremiah 3:17.
3. Whose throne was this in former times? Luke 1:32. Note that David's throne was located at Jerusalem. It is a historical fact. Although it is not there at this time, it will be transferred there at the time Christ establishes His rule. (See Dr. Thiel's article: Anglo-America in Prophecy & The Lost Tribes of Israel <http://www.cogwriter.com/britishisrael.htm>).
4. Did God promise David his throne would continue after he was dead? Psalm 89:3-4.
5. Will CHRIST RULE THE EARTH? Zechariah 14:9.
6. Is there to be only ONE King on the earth who will be the ruler of all the earth? (Recall that the Father's

throne is in heaven, and Christ's millennial throne will be on earth.)

Comment: Today, as never before people are becoming increasingly aware of the NECESSITY OF GOOD GOVERNMENT. Notice the vast amount of space given over to discussions of the actions of governments—whether local, state, or national—of this world!

7. Will He rebuke the nations gently if they do wrong or will He punish them so they will remember their transgressions? Revelation 19:14-19. Will He execute justice? Jeremiah 23:5.
8. Does Psalm 72:11 show that Christ will finally obtain complete mastery over the earth? What will the people figuratively do? Psalm 72:9 last half.
9. Under CHRIST, who WILL BE IN DIRECT CONTROL OF the MODEL CITY AND NATION that will be set up as a PATTERN FOR THE WORLD? Will it be David? Jeremiah 30:9. What did Jeremiah mean by "raise up"? Compare with 1 Corinthians 6:14. David will rule over the descendants of "Jacob." Jeremiah 30:9-10. Jacob's descendants—both Israel and Judah—will be back in Palestine verse 3.
10. Will DAVID be recognized as A PRINCE? Ezekiel 34:24.
11. Will Christ be directly over David? Isaiah 9:7. Notice especially Moffatt's translation: "Great is His [Christ's] authority, endless is His peace, over David's throne and his dominion, to base it firm and stable."
12. Will God place a weak man over His nation which will be praised by all the earth? How can we know? We can examine David's past record.
13. Did he slay Goliath even as a youth? 1 Samuel 17:42, 49. Did the FEAR OF HIM fall upon ALL NATIONS IN THAT AREA? 1 Chronicles 14:17. What was his former position? 1 Samuel 17:34.
14. Will the TWELVE APOSTLES BE PLACED OVER THE 12 TRIBES THAT CONSTITUTES ISRAEL? Matthew 19:28. Will each Apostle have a throne? Luke 22:29-30.

It can now be seen why Palestine/Israel will have the BEST GOVERNMENT ON EARTH. Why it will be the place to which representatives of the world's nations will journey to learn more of the new way of living. Jesus will reign and, under Him, have David and the apostles reigning as well.

DUTIES OF THE SAINTS

1. What duties will the saints, who will be raised immortal

at Christ's second coming, have after they have aided in subduing the armies of the nations? Will they REIGN with Christ? Revelation 20:4. Sit on Christ's throne? Revelation 3:21.

2. Will the SAINTS have the WHOLE EARTH TO RULE? Daniel 7:27.
3. Will SOME BE KINGS and have power over NATIONS? Revelation 2:26; 5:10.
4. How will the CITIES be GOVERNED? Let us see: Jesus spoke a parable recorded in Luke 19:11-27. Why? Was it that some of the people thought He had come then to take over the rule of the world? Luke 19:11. What did He tell them would be the reward of those who managed WISELY the abilities God has given them now? Luke 19:16-19. When will the deserving be given rule over these cities? Verse 12.

Comment: Christ compares Himself to this nobleman who has gone off and will return to set up His kingdom. Christ returns at the last (seventh per Revelation 11:15) trump. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

5. Will the resurrected saints be PRIESTS? Revelation 5:10; 20:6. Will they be JUDGES? Revelation 20:4. All saints will be priests and will, in addition, have other offices, such as RULERSHIP and JUDGESHIP.
6. Does Jude speak of this time? Jude 14, 15.
7. Will many saints who become immortal when Christ returns appear in a material form when necessary? Isaiah 30:20-21. What will they do? Verse 20.

Comment: In at least one sense, this has been done before. For Christ, who has existed in the spirit form since His resurrection, appeared in a material form afterward in order to become visible to His disciples. John 20:17, 19-28.

8. What will be some of the WAYS OF PUNISHING those WHO DISOBEY God's commandments? Zechariah 14:17-19.
9. What will be done with those who will not obey God? 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.
10. And again, what will be CHRIST'S GENERAL POLICY OF GOVERNING THE UNRULY? Psalm 2:9; Revelation 12:5.

Summary

When God really starts to save mankind it will be done under the very strongest possible kind of government. Humans, influenced by our own carnal minds, must be

held under rigid rule until they truly become conscious of a BETTER way of living. THE GREAT CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OF THE EARTH IN THE FUTURE WILL BE COMPOSED OF DIVINE BEINGS. David, among others, the apostles, and the resurrected saints will be changed into divine spirit beings (1 Corinthians 15:50-54) that can properly rule.

God the Father, the Supreme, having all power and wisdom, will be at the head of this government. Never again will we have to depend on a human being, with all his frailties, to guide us—WE WILL HAVE PERFECT GOVERNMENT. WE WILL BE RULED PERFECTLY.

Christ, the very Son of God, will be in direct control of the earth. Having been both human and divine, He will know man's frailties perfectly (Hebrews 2:9-10); but having been divine, He will know what God expects us to measure up to, even without present weak bodies. He will rule with a ROD OF IRON (Revelation 19:15).

David, who in God's sight ruled as wisely as had been humanly done, will be ruler over God's model city and nation: JERUSALEM and Palestine/Israel respectively.

Each of Christ's own twelve apostles will have a throne of his own, and each will rule over one of the twelve tribes of Israel which will inhabit Palestine/Israel. With their former training under Christ, and under His guidance in the future, they will make Palestine/Israel become the WORLD'S CENTER of religious knowledge; "All nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2).

The saints—those being called at this time—are now receiving their instruction in the work they will do then as kings, rulers, priests, and judges. In those days, "The EARTH shall BE FULL of the KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). Wickedness will not be tolerated. All nations will live by the TEN COMMANDMENTS.

But will humanity constantly live under the threat of force from God? Is God a harsh, stern, cruel monster—as the churches have represented Him? Doesn't He enjoy having active and willing cooperation from humanity at all times?

How will God begin to instill VOLUNTARY cooperation in place of forced submission?

Government is far more effective with a cooperative citizenry; but there is only one way to achieve it—through RE-EDUCATION—unlearning this world's unsatisfactory ways and learning God's better ways.

Now let's study God's RE-EDUCATION program.

How People Will Be Re-Educated

GOD, the Creator of heaven and earth, HAS set in motion various IMMUTABLE LAWS which inexorably govern the things He has created. The stars, the moon, and the sun are all governed by His laws. They go along in the paths or ways which have been ordained for them by the laws of God.

Humanity, also, has been created by the same God. God has also ordained paths IN WHICH HUMANITY SHOULD GO—ways which would bring him great peace and happiness. But, unlike the sun and the moon, there are OTHER PATHS or ways which are open to humans. God has made man a creature who CAN CHOOSE!

Down through the ages man has exercised choice. He has chosen to do what he thought was right. Having chosen these things as the best course, man has established his own EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS to teach these choices, whether right or wrong, to the following generations.

The greatest cause of the world ills TODAY is MIS-EDUCATION. Humans are the highest mortal being God has created. The human MIND elevates humans above dumb animals. Did not God intend our minds then, to be developed, trained, used to HIS honor and glory?

Today we live in a confused, misguided, deceived, chaotic world. This world is not happy. It's filled with strife, fear, ignorance, deception, injustice, crime, suffering, anguish, woe and DEATH!

Why?

Because this whole worldly civilization is BASED on a system of false education—A SYSTEM OF MIS-EDUCATION!

Another System Needed

Modern education is almost wholly materialistic. It rejects the basic revelations of God. In

many states in the U.S.A. the reading of the Bible in public school classrooms is barred!

INCONSEQUENTIAL DETAILS ARE TAUGHT instead of teaching the on-coming generation the BASIC KNOWLEDGE OF LIFE—what life is, why we are here, where we are going, and how to live successfully, usefully, happily, joyfully!

Yes, something is WRONG with this world's education, as well as with its religion, its politics, its economics, and its society! And wrong education is a basic cause of ALL the world's wrongs today!

Our first parents REJECTED THE REVEALED KNOWLEDGE of God. To Adam and Eve, God revealed certain definite facts, principles, laws. This knowledge they rejected. Immediately they broke four of the Ten Commandments in the "original" sin. They DEPARTED FROM GOD'S REVEALED WAY OF LIFE. Down through the centuries man has continued to reject God's revealed KNOWLEDGE.

Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the TRUTH shall make you free" (John 8:32). Notice "...you shall KNOW—knowing is KNOWLEDGE—EDUCATION! Ignorance, and a false education in error have enslaved the human race in poverty, fear, inequality, discontent, unhappiness, sickness, suffering and DEATH!

And what is TRUTH? "Thy Word," Jesus said, "is TRUTH" (John 17:17, KJV). It reveals the WAY to WORLD PEACE. It leads man out of sickness into HEALTH; out of suffering and death into LIFE! It reveals the LAWS OF LIFE, which alone can lead to peace, prosperity, happiness, joy and finally eternal life!

But this precious fund of KNOWLEDGE the wise of this world REJECT! GOD'S LAWS AND WAYS they flout and disobey! Instead, the learned of this world have become so steeped in the fables of a God-rejecting materialism masquerading falsely under the attractive names of "rationalism," "modern science," "higher education," etc., that it has become impossible to UNlearn these deceptions and come to a knowledge of the TRUTH!

What does God say of the wisdom of this world? "For the WISDOM OF THIS WORLD IS FOOLISHNESS WITH GOD" (1 Corinthians 3:19).

We have been born into a world steeped with traditional ideas—and we usually accept them without question. We seldom, if ever, investigate to see where they came from and if they are true. Almost everyone takes for granted what is spoken or written. The majority can't be wrong!—so it is mistakenly thought.

Our educational system has not dared to examine the fundamental concepts underlying human society—the false traditions that have led us into political and religious strife, world-wide confusion, impending chaos, and death. God says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge [true knowledge]" (Hosea 4:6).

What WE NEED is a COMPLETE CHANGE—RE-EDUCATION—ENFORCED BY THE AUTHORITY of an infallible world government—the Kingdom OF GOD.

LESSON 5

PART 2

MIS-EDUCATION TODAY

1. The present generation has witnessed a tremendous increase in LEARNING. Is it possible to learn new facts and YET NEVER TO ARRIVE AT THE RECOGNITION OF TRUTH? 2 Timothy 3:7.

Isn't this exactly what has happened in this age of scientific advancement and mass education? Has scientific education secured peace, or has it brought the threat world-destruction?

2. Today are ALL NATIONS DECEIVED? Revelation 17:1-2; 18:3. Is faulty education, which has CLOUDED their understanding, like a veil that hides the mind from truth? Isaiah 25:7.
3. Who is fundamentally guilty of deceiving the whole world? Revelation 12:9. Does that not make him basically the author of wrong education? Will he be allowed to deceive the nations when Christ commences to re-educate the world? Revelation 20:1-3.
4. SHOULD we PROVE ALL THINGS before accepting them? 1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV. Does this include our religious beliefs, our political concepts, or merely scientific facts? Does modern education really teach us to PROVE everything? Would the present-day confusion exist if everything were proved? What are we to do once we conclusively prove an idea to be right and good? Verse 21, last part.

What is True Education?

A common misconception, especially in the U.S.A. and Canada, is that EDUCATION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH A WAY OF LIFE! The biggest controversy today is whether RELIGIOUS education should be taught in public schools. In most of the western world, the Bible is either politely passed over or totally rejected from the academic educational system. Why?

Is it not due to religious CONFUSION?—and due to the fear that one false religion will force its beliefs upon another? Who suffers from this attitude?

The WORLD TODAY DOES NOT REALLY BELIEVE that GOD, through Christ and THE BIBLE, HAS GIVEN US THE BEST PRECEPTS by which to govern each event in our daily lives! In Christ's time a group of people lived their daily lives by

following every rule and teaching of the Scriptures. That group was under the direct guidance of Christ's twelve disciples whom He had personally trained for this duty. That group was called the CHURCH OF GOD (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 15:9).

The word "church" is translated from the Greek word ecclesia which is defined as a crowd or group or called out group. There is nothing sanctimonious about the word church. A crowd or church is holy only if it is God's Church.

But the hundreds of churches or crowds which follow this present evil world as worldly churches—following worldly ways, customs and traditions.

1. Today GOD'S CHURCH IS THAT GROUP WHICH TRULY FOLLOWS GOD'S BIBLE. It follows God in ALL phases—in political, social and economic, even in food and clothing—it practices His WAY OF LIFE. It is a Church—or—crowd—which has been re-educated to the RIGHT way—the Bible's way.

Do we have a record that the true apostolic Church preached God's way of life? Acts 16:17; 19: 9, 23. Does this world approve of GOD'S WAY OF LIFE? What does the world call it? Acts 24:14, KJV. Isn't God's way of life a matter of re-education? Of unlearning the false concepts of this world and learning the true values which can make life worth living?

2. Is the WORLD soon COMING TO A CLIMAX which will shock people into realizing something is radically wrong? What will they then acknowledge? Jeremiah 16:19. Would they be desiring to learn another way if their present way were better? Have the people INHERITED LIES subconsciously from birth—profitless ideas funneled into their minds, without ever questioning them, so that as adults they accept fallacies learned in childhood? When Christ rescues them from annihilation, will they ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR IGNORANCE—their lack of sound education? Will they be ashamed? Isaiah 44:9-11. Won't these confessions of error actually be steps towards repentance (Acts 2:38)?
3. What does REPENTANCE really MEAN? Notice Isaiah 55:7. Is it TURNING FROM THE WRONG WAY WE HAVE BEEN LIVING? Is it forsaking the wrong thoughts we have taken for granted without proof?
4. Are God's ways and His thoughts superior to ours? Isaiah 55:8-9. If His ways are superior, doesn't that prove that OUR OWN WAYS ARE INFERIOR and should be replaced?
5. REPENTANCE IS A MATTER OF CHANGE, OF UNLEARNING

FALSE CONCEPTS—OF RENEWING THE MIND WITH SOUND IDEAS and practices.

Are we then to be conformists to the ways of THIS world? Are most people going along with the crowd—conforming to the latest fad? Romans 12:2.

6. What are we to do instead? Are we to have a change take place in our minds—to be transformed in the way we think and live? Philippians 2:5. Then doesn't repentance, which occurs in the mind, involve RE-EDUCATION to be a better way? Does the Bible show what should we think about now? Colossians 3:2; Philippians 4:8.

Objective of RE-EDUCATION

1. Since world ills can be solved only by re-education, will GOD'S WAY OF LIFE REMOLD even the creation and our own life? Romans 8:18-25; 12:2. Does it remold our social life? 1 Peter 4:3-4. And in all other areas of our life? 1 Corinthians 10:31.
2. In brief, does this way of life demand that we DEVELOP PERFECT CHARACTER? Romans 5:4; Compare Matthew 5:48 with Ephesians 4:13. Are we not to become re-educated in all things—mature in every way—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually? Ephesians 4:15. Note the words "grow up."
3. Can we accomplish unless God's way regulates our whole life? Are we to become SOUND MINDED individuals? 2 Timothy 1:7. How many leaders who have this world's destiny in their hands, are really educated by God's standards?
4. Read Ecclesiastes 12:13. If we acknowledge God's authority—fear Him—and obey Him, we are fulfilling "the whole duty of man" (KJV). According to the original Hebrew, the proper rendering of this verse should be "this is the WHOLE MAN" or "the whole of man" (Young's Literal Translation). The word "duty" is inserted in italics indicating it was not in the original. So total obedience to God makes each of us completely educated—a WHOLE INDIVIDUAL, fully developed, BALANCED and well rounded. Obedience to God properly educates us!
5. Does Jesus Christ promise us JOY in this life if we yield to His way? John 15:11. Is joy a fruit of the Spirit? Galatians 5:22? Is it the Apostle's wish that we prosper and be healthy? 3 John 2. Did Christ come so that we might have LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY? John 10:10, 2nd half. Should Christianity be a drab religion—a yoke of bondage—or an ever expanding, happy WAY of life?

God's System of Re-education

Now let us understand GOD'S PROGRAM OF RE-EDUCATION. Although human beings generally act in accordance with what seems right to them (Proverbs 14:12), do they really know what is right? Do they know how to govern and educate themselves properly? How to stamp out crime? How to guarantee justice at home and world peace abroad?

All forms of HUMAN government HAVE FAILED MISERABLY. Humans are beginning to realize their shortcomings! Since human beings—from the leaders down to the ordinary citizens—cannot adequately govern or educate themselves, then it means we must look to the Creator—the one who knows all—to do it.

1. When GOD intervenes in human affairs, WILL He permit the people to vote for their rulers or allow school boards to choose their TEACHERS?—or will He APPOINT them Himself? 1 Corinthians 12:28; Isaiah 30:20-21. Who will give Christ the authority to rule and teach the nations? Luke 1:32.
2. Under the apostles will be the great body of faithful Christians. Will they be voted into office by the people? Revelation 2:26. Will they be accountable to the people, or to Christ for administration of their office? Luke 19:17, 19; John 15:16.
3. Will the Kingdom of God be run by school boards, POLITICAL PARTIES and the VOTE of the people? Or by God Himself? Ezekiel 20:33. Will it be GOVERNMENT FROM the bottom up, or will the people learn to obey the will of their divine rulers during the millennium? Isaiah 30:20-21.
4. How plain that IN GOD'S PATTERN the CHURCH AND the GOVERNMENT ARE NOT SEPARATE! What two great offices will Christ exercise? Revelation 19:16. Will Christ also teach? Isaiah 2:3 and Psalm 25:8-10. Christ then will unite all these functions in Himself for God's WAY governs all phases of life.
5. Are we also to become a KINGS AND PRIESTS—to execute the same duties of Christ under Him? Revelation 5:10.

Comment: The proper translation of Revelation 5:9-10 according to the original Greek is that Christ purchased with His blood men "...Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, v.10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

6. What is one of the DUTIES of priests? Malachi 2:7.

As ministers and teachers, Christ and the saints shall re-educate every nation. But they must carry authority to enforce God's educational program. Therefore they are a government with absolute power to overcome any type of opposition easily.

7. Will Christ make the mistake of not having an adequately TRAINED TEACHING STAFF before He sets out to re-educate the people? Will Christ and the saints appear and disappear for the purpose of rebuking those who turn from the right way? Isaiah 30:20-22. Will the ABILITY TO APPEAR on the scene of action be a strong factor in preventing crime?

Universal Education

1. Will leaders SEE EYE TO EYE after Christ has established His Kingdom and instructs the nations in peaceful channels? Isaiah 52:7-8.
2. Doesn't this indicate that the process of RE-EDUCATION WILL BE UNIVERSAL? Jeremiah 31:34. Also compare Habakkuk 2:14.
3. Will the people acquire a NEW OUTLOOK on life—a new attitude—a new spirit—brought about by the power of God? Ezekiel 36:26-27; Isaiah 59:20-21.
4. Will scientific inventions and the latest technologies be used for war or PEACE? Isaiah 2:4. Will military academies for training officers be allowed? Micah 4:3.
5. Will the nations be taught the economic rules for prosperity?—the way to make an honest profit? Isaiah 48:17. Will everyone ultimately be educated to DEAL JUSTLY with their neighbor? Isaiah 26:9. Notice also Psalm 25:8-9. Out of what will God teach the people? Psalm 94:12. How does this verse correspond with Isaiah 2:3?
6. Will those who grumble against God learn instruction? Isaiah 29:14.
7. Will there be a need of special schools for the handicapped and the blind? Isaiah 29:18; 35:5-6.
8. Is KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD essential to proper educational training? Proverbs 1:7; Romans 1:21, 28. How will the nations in the 1000 years acquire it? Proverbs 15:23; Isaiah 30:20-21. Will representatives of all nations ultimately come to worship and be instructed in the Lord's presence in Jerusalem? Psalm 86:9.
9. Shall the Egyptians KNOW THE LORD in that day? Isaiah 19:21.

Comment: How does one come to really know God? 1 John 2:3-5. How can the disobedient know God if they are separated from Him? Isaiah 59:2, 10.

10. Will instruction of the Almighty and a divinely imparted new attitude on life soon begin to produce MATERIAL BENEFITS? Isaiah 32:15-20. How about the Assyrians? Isaiah 19:23-25.

Will Cushite Africans (often translated as Ethiopians) also seek to gain the benefits from a relationship with Christ? Psalm 68:31. These prophecies refer to a few nations near Israel as types of all nations. True Christianity pays!

11. Will Gentile rulers bring presents to Christ in acknowledgment of His educational and material benefits? Psalm 68:28-29. Upon what condition has God always promised to shower material prosperity? Malachi 3:10-12.

Isn't it plain that the BASIS OF RIGHT EDUCATION IS GOD'S LAW? It is what PRODUCES PROSPERITY, peace and HAPPINESS! Notice the words of the prophecy:

“Many people shall come and say,
'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths.’
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.’ Isaiah 2:3.

GENERAL SUMMARY

Since the days of Adam, people have been living the WRONG WAY (Genesis 3:6-10). Wrong methods of meeting the problems of life are promoted, even to the point of EDUCATING MANKIND IN THE USE OF FORCE AND VIOLENCE to take from others what is not rightfully theirs!

This is the world you and I were born into! From childhood WE HAVE KNOWN NOTHING ELSE. Our subconscious minds have normally accepted, without much question, the teachings of our parents and the education system of our time.

You now BEGIN TO REALIZE this world's way is often mentioned in the Bible: “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). This is the way which tradition and this world's educational systems have furthered. This destructive WAY, feeding upon itself, is about to destroy itself along with its educational system by which it is promoted. This world's “way of life” is about to cause the death of the people it deceives!

PENTECOST AND ISRAEL



Summit of Mt. Sinai

By Leroy Neff (*Originally published as part of the article God's Holy Days: The Master Builder's Blueprint in the Good News, August, 1980*)

About seven weeks after leaving Egypt, upon their arrival at Mt. Sinai, God Himself spoke the Ten Commandments for all Israel to hear. He also wrote them with His fingers on two tables of stone. Historically, the Jews have said that this occurred on the next Feast — Pentecost.

Now Israel had a special historical reminder as they observed Pentecost year by year. On that day, years before, God Himself had spoken His great law for all Israel to hear. But very soon after this great occasion, even after promising to do otherwise, Israel sinned grievously in making and worshiping the golden calf.

A short time later they again rebelled and believed the negative report of 10 of the spies sent in to look over the promised land. God then sentenced them to spend 40 years in the wilderness, a day for a year (Num. 14:34).

Pentecost also has great significance for Christians. After we repent, are baptized and begin to put sin out of our lives, we find that another ingredient is necessary — God's Holy Spirit. It is a power emanating from God, a portion of His very own character. It begets us to eternal life. It was on Pentecost in A.D. 31 that God sent the Holy Spirit to beget, inspire and strengthen His servants.

Pentecost is a Greek word and is commonly used in the New Testament for this third Festival of God. But this Festival was called by other names such as the "Feast of Weeks," because it was necessary to count seven weeks from Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread to determine

What does God say? "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). FOR LACK OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE, THE TIME WILL COME WHEN NO FLESH WOULD BE LEFT ALIVE, IF GOD DID NOT INTERVENE! (Matthew 24:21-22, 29-31).

Christ must intervene with another—a different—a better—educational system if man is to continue to live on this earth!

Under God's government, which Christ will soon establish, education will be different! CHRIST WILL RE-EDUCATE the world in the right WAY, God's way—a way which humankind has never tried in all his six thousand years of existence. God will re-educate US FROM HUMANITY'S WAYS which develop evil, competitive, dictatorial Babylonish systems. He will re-educate us TOWARD HIS WAYS. He, the Creator of all things, knows the way which will work out best for us.

What will be the objective of the coming world's new educational program? It will seek to develop a fully balanced individual—THE WHOLE HUMAN. No longer will there be unbalanced one-tracked individuals—the Hitlers, Mussolinis, and Stalins. People will live and let live! The type, who are the trouble makers of today's world, will be no more.

FULLY BALANCED individuals will be those who recognize they have found a perfect set of standards—the LAWS of GOD—which best serve their own interest and the interest of those around them. They will be desirous of abiding by these laws. In coming to this attitude they will have developed, as near as is humanly possible, an extremely necessary thing—"perfect character."

Christ is coming to RE-EDUCATE ALL WHO REPENT—all who DESIRE to TURN FROM THEIR OWN WAYS—to be 'WHOLE MEN'. The least of people will receive individual instruction—none will have an excuse for failing. Then, at long last, people will come to realize that their proper actions do influence favorably both men and nature toward them. They WILL PRODUCE a UTOPIA!

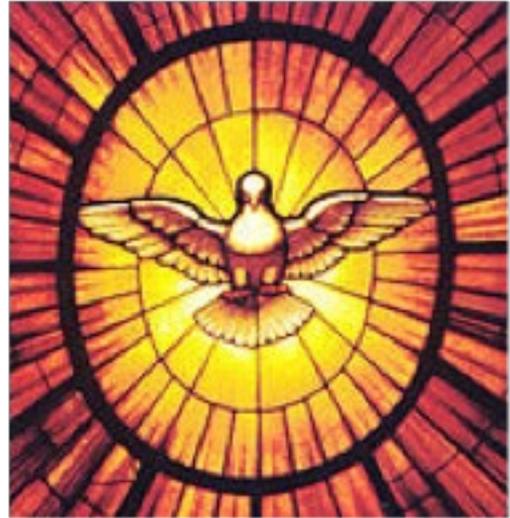
This world is on its way out! The time has now come that God's plan is going to move forward—like it or not. "THE WORLD TOMORROW," the millennial reign of God is NEAR. It is AT OUR VERY DOOR. It will influence your life tremendously. What will "The World Tomorrow" be like?

God has allowed those who really believe His Word to glimpse a view of this exciting, MUCH-TO-BE-DESIRED PLACE! God allows us to see what this earth can really be like when it is filled with "whole humans"—men and women of character! You can glimpse a view of this coming Utopia in the next lesson.

when it would be observed.

It was also called the “feast of the harvest, the firstfruits of your labors,” because it was connected with an important harvest. Actually it was the early harvest in Palestine, starting during the Days of Unleavened Bread. This was a much smaller harvest than the fall harvest and included primarily grains. A much larger harvest ended just before the Feast of Tabernacles. This smaller harvest, or harvest of “firstfruits,” reminds us that the spiritual harvest God is reaping now is the smaller harvest. The much larger spiritual harvest will come later, when God will save the world.

PENTECOST — THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



The Holy Spirit Descended Upon Jesus like a Dove (Matthew 3:16)

By John Ross Schroeder (Originally published as part of the article *God's Annual HOLY DAYS: Sneak Preview of Your Future!* in the *Plain Truth*, March, 1979)

The term Pentecost means “fiftieth” in the Greek language. This is the only annual sabbath whose exact calendar date is determined by counting. The first New Testament Pentecost (see Acts 2) occurred on the fiftieth day after Christ’s resurrection.

However, the vital meaning is more important than the exact date. The very first Pentecost after Christ’s death and resurrection marked the beginning of the New Testament Church of God. The Holy Spirit was then poured out on all repentant believers.

In the Old Testament, this festival was termed the “Feast of Firstfruits.” The Israelites observed it for some 1500 years before the name of the day was actually fulfilled. But with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the harvest of the firstfruits began. Whereas God had only called a very few in Old Testament times, thousands received the Holy Spirit (the mark of conversion) in the first few weeks of the New Testament Church.

Pentecost teaches us that this is not the only day of salvation. Many think it is. They believe that “probation shall be closed” at the second coming of Christ. Presumably this means that God will “burn up” the billions in Asia and elsewhere who have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ.

DOES ASTROLOGY WORK?

The true meaning of the day of Pentecost runs counter to this false, paganized teaching. As Herbert W. Armstrong has written: "God gave this festival to His people in order to reveal, and to keep them continually informed, that the present dispensation is only the first, preliminary 'harvest of souls'."

All who have been called from the days of Jesus Christ until now represent the firstfruits of God's salvation. But they only constitute a minute portion of all who have lived from then until now.

Pentecost is a festival of transition. It is in the midst of the three main festival seasons. Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread largely symbolize events now already past. All of the fall festivals represent things to come. Pentecost symbolizes that part of the process of fulfillment of God's plan which is underway right now — in this "Church age" — but also that function of the Holy Spirit which is both past and future. This day not only marks the coming of the Holy Spirit in A.D. 31, it also shows that there is a great fall harvest of salvation yet to come.

Indeed, one of the present functions of the Holy Spirit itself is to reveal "things to come." Jesus Christ said to His disciples: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).

This same Holy Spirit has revealed the full meaning of God's annual holy days for, so far as we know, the first time in the history of the Church. Previous Church ages have not understood the fullness of their importance. But let's understand the vital significance of the first fall festival, the first annual autumn holy day.

Note: Pentecost in 2015 is from sunset May 23 rd to sunset May 24 th. Pentecost in 2016 is from sunset June 11th until sunset June 12th.



Astrological Signs

By Robert A. Ginskey (Originally published as Does Astrology Work?, The Plain Truth, November 1976, pp. 12-13)

Does astrology have a rational scientific basis? Is there any conceivable way that the celestial location of stars, planets, and nebulae at the time of one's birth could influence an individual's personality, health, marriage, career, and a host of other personal events?

The origin of astrology lies in pagan superstition. But does astrology work?

Until the sixteenth century, the earth was believed to be the center of the universe, with the sun, moon, planets, and stars revolving around this all-important center of activity.

But the heliocentric universe of Copernicus (1543) dethroned the earth. And since then, the advance of astronomical knowledge has relentlessly pushed the earth farther and farther from any privileged position in the cosmos. The sun, too, has been demoted to an inconspicuous suburb in a rather unexceptional galaxy in a relatively small group of galaxies in a universe of uncounted billions of stars.

In such a universe, it becomes increasingly difficult to believe the heavens were created to have a specific influence on the earth and on individual humans in particular. How would such an influence occur? Through gravity? Radiation?

The immense distances counted in the universe — usually measured in light years — ruled any such influences. The gravitational attraction of the doctor standing at the delivery table will be far greater than the gravitational influence of any star or galaxy on a new-born baby.

And the radiation from even the brightest star will be thousands of times weaker than a single light bulb in the delivery room.

The conclusion seems inescapable: No known force emanating from the constellations of the heavens could be expected to exert a unique, life-long influence on anyone.

Even if the stars did exert an ever-so-subtle influence at the time of an individual's birth, can anyone seriously believe their influence is important when compared to the multitude of much stronger environmental forces on earth that directly affect our lives?

All life on earth is affected by periodic changes, in the environment. Such cyclic variations are often the basis for natural rhythms called biological clocks. The most obvious example is the rising and setting of the sun, a daily cycle of light and dark which directly affects the activities of virtually all plants and animals.

The conclusion seems inescapable: No known force emanating from the constellations of the heavens could be expected to exert a unique, life-long influence on anyone.

GETTING THE GOSPEL OUT IS MORE THAN A LOCAL JOB



Pieter Bruegel's Landscape with the Parable of the Sower, 1557

By Bob Thiel

What is the Church's responsibility to get the Gospel out? Has this already been done? Are we to not worry about it and "stay in our caves" until Jesus returns as one non-Philadelphia remnant "COG" elder told me? Should we rely on statements of men or the word of God?

Jesus said:

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14).

Since the end has not yet come, it would suggest that it is still time for "this gospel of the kingdom" to "be preached in all the world as a witness."

Jesus' last statement in the book of Matthew was:

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the names of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20).

While statements such as "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" certainly has local implications, Jesus' statements "preached in all the world" and "go therefore and make disciples of all nations" strongly suggest that evangelistic efforts are to go beyond our local groups/areas.

Notice that both scriptures mention together preaching/teaching, "all the nations," and "the end." Interestingly, in

Mark 13:10 it says, "the gospel MUST be preached to all the nations."

Notice also the following:

2 Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:

3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. 5 Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. 7 And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

9 And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable...

13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. 18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." (Mark 4:2-20)

The sower, above, went to sow in many areas. Some who heard the message gave up. We need to support the sowing of the seed in these end times, as well as to personally endure to the end (Matthew 24:13-14).

Preachers Should Be Sent Out

Who should be getting the message out?

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

It takes a ministry backed by dedicated true believers to get the gospel out.

Yet, "even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14); "...those who labor in the word and doctrine...is worthy of his wages" (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Much of the income of the Continuing Church of God goes for costs associated with sending preachers out (mainly travel expenses in Africa, North America, and elsewhere) as well as sending out literature and reaching people over the internet. People in over 220 countries and territories have come across our materials.

The concept of a paid ministry to get the gospel out is not a recent invention. It is clearly biblical. At some point, I, myself, may take a salary, although because of the 'present distress' I still have not (nor is this article intended as some type of monetary pitch to do so).

Lest anyone question my own financial motives, I am not now, nor have I ever been a paid minister; the only time I ever received any payments for labor from the Church of God (former WCG, GCG, LCG, or any other branch) was when the old Worldwide Church of God was required for a short while to pay minimum wage to WATS line volunteers in Pasadena when my wife and I worked there on Sundays {my gross pay for the entire time was probably less than \$200, which probably paid for our transportation as we did not live that close to Pasadena}. We still, of course, were unpaid for the Sabbath, which was when we performed most of our WATS service.

The Apostle Paul also supported himself financially when he felt that was what was best for the church (1 Corinthians 9:11-18; Acts 18:1-3). Reportedly, so also did a COG minister in the 17th century.

Why does Romans 10:15a say, "And how shall they preach unless they are sent?," unless some group (or organization) is sending them? The second half of verse 15 says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things."

It really is not focused on actual feet. Now as far as I know, I have only washed the feet of one minister (during Passover service, probably in 1981). His feet did not impress me as being more physically beautiful than any non-minister. Thus, it would seem that the beauty of "the feet of those

who preach the gospel of peace” is because those feet are carrying those who “are sent” to “preach the gospel of peace.”

Therefore it can be seen that preaching the gospel involves travel or at least somehow reaching distant lands. It also involves having some not accept it:

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord who has believed our report?’ (Romans 10:16).

Even so, the word of God has to be taught by a preacher so they can believe (Romans 10:15,17). This is consistent with what we in the Continuing Church of God have generally referred to as the Ezekiel warning (Ezekiel 3:17-21). The message needs to go out.

Some large and small groups have implied that preaching the gospel to the world precludes doing a local work. That is not so.

All Nations, All Tongues

Most of the time when I have heard people use the expression “charity begins at home,” it seems that they believe that it ends there. But we are not only to be interested in reaching our own families or communities.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:4)

What if the others do not even understand your language?

While many realize that God instilled multiple languages at the time of the construction of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:9), not all seem to understand that end time Christians are to reach people in all languages possible.

This will be successful per Matthew 24:14. Notice also:

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9-10)

In the Continuing Church of God we strive to go through whatever doors Christ will open for us (Revelation 3:7-10), and that includes producing materials in whatever languages we can. We have volunteer translators (with more being added) who assist us in reaching people in several languages.

Coordinating that can be complex, but we have been, so far, able to do it.

Fulfilling the Bible’s commands to preach the gospel to all nations is not an easy task, but must be done. It takes teamwork and cooperation. It certainly includes local efforts, but clearly it “must” (Mark 13:10) go beyond that.

Notice that some of the first to be called may be cast out and that people will come to God’s kingdom from all over the world:

28 There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

29 They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. 30 And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last. (Luke 13:28-30)

Let’s truly support the work of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, lest we be amongst those who fall away and are cast out.

Preaching the gospel cannot be limited to local efforts as some believe. That is why we in the Continuing Church of God are striving to reach (and are reaching) people in all the inhabited continents.

But more needs to be done.

Jesus taught:

37... The harvest truly is plentiful and the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out more laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37b-38).

Let us all pray and support the Church’s efforts to get the gospel out to all nations. Getting the gospel of the kingdom out is much more than a local job (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20). The proclamation work has many parts, but they are intended to be working together for good (cf. Romans 8:28).

THE HOLY DAYS FOR 2015 TO 2026



By Bob Thiel

The Bible teaches:

'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts. (Leviticus 23:2)

Here is a listing of them for ten years:

Holy Day*	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Passover	Apr 3	Apr 22	Apr 10	Mar 30	Apr 19
Unleavened Bread	Apr 4-10	Apr 23-29	Apr 11-17	Mar 31-Apr 6	Apr 20-26
Pentecost	May 24	Jun 12	Jun 4	May 20	Jun 9
Trumpets	Sep 14	Oct 3	Sep 21	Sep 10	Sep 30
Atonement	Sep 23	Oct 12	Sep 30	Sep 19	Oct 9
Feast of Tabernacles	Sep 28-Oct 4	Oct 17-23	Oct 5-11	Sep 24-30	Oct 14-20
Last Great Day	Oct 5	Oct 24	Oct 12	Oct 1	Oct 21

** All Holy Days start the Evening Before at Sunset.*

Holy Day*	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Passover	Apr 8	Mar 27	Apr 15	Apr 5	Apr 22
Unleavened Bread	Apr 9-15	Mar 28-Apr 3	Apr 16-22	Apr 6-12	Apr 23-29
Pentecost	May 31	May 16	Jun 5	May 28	Jun 16
Trumpets	Sep 19	Sep 7	Sep 26	Sep 16	Oct 3
Atonement	Sep 28	Sep 16	Oct 5	Sep 25	Oct 12
Feast of Tabernacles	Oct 3-9	Sep 21-27	Oct 10-16	Sep 30-Oct 6	Oct 17-23
Last Great Day	Oct 10	Sep 28	Oct 17	Oct 7	Oct 24

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE PASSOVER AND FESTIVAL OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Herbert W Armstrong

Most churches teach that Christ finished the plan of redemption on the cross. But the very FIRST event in God's great PLAN for man's redemption was the death of Christ on the cross. We find the operation of this great sacrifice beginning in Eden, when God killed a lamb or goat, in order to COVER the nakedness (type of sin) of Adam and Eve with skins. We find it operating when Abel sacrificed a substitute lamb. And so the PASSOVER is the FIRST of these events picturing to God's children year by year His great PLAN.

Let us understand it.

Egypt is a type of SIN. As God's people Israel are today in "BABYLON," and soon are to be delivered after God pours out His PLAGUES upon Babylon, so they once were in Egypt and were delivered after the pouring out of the plagues.

And, as Rome has changed times and seasons and days, professing Christians have been deceived and have lost sight of true TIME and God's DAYS, as well as the true WORSHIP of God. So it was with the children of Israel in Egypt.

For years they had been in severe BONDAGE in Egypt -forced to work with taskmasters over them. There was no Bible — no written Word of God. They were not permitted to worship God as He had ordained. They were forced to work seven days a week. They had lost sight even of the true Sabbath — and that is why God REVEALED to them the Sabbath in the wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16). Just as Rome has changed times and seasons, so had Egypt.

Passover only the start

And so, on delivering His people from Egypt (sin), God straightened them out as to TIME. And, as the BEGINNING of our salvation was wrought by Christ's death on the cross, so God said, "THIS month [in the spring] shall be unto you the BEGINNING of months..." (Exodus 12:2).

Some few keep the BEGINNING of this first Feast of salvation in observing Passover, but never go on to know the "depth of the riches" of God's grace pictured by the following feasts! Christ is not only the author or beginner, but the FINISHER of our salvation!

On the 10th day of this first month the Israelites were instructed to take a lamb without blemish. They kept it UNTIL — not after — the 14th day of the same first month, AT EVEN, at DUSK as the Jewish translation has it — between the two evenings, or between sunset and dark, when it was killed.

This was IN, not AFTER the 14th day. They shed the blood of the lamb, picturing Christ's sacrifice to come. They ate the flesh IN THAT NIGHT. At midnight the death angel came, but PASSED OVER every house where the BLOOD had been sprinkled.

Not abolished with old covenant

Observe that the Days of Unleavened Bread are a PERIOD, having two high-day SABBATHS. And this PERIOD is established FOREVER — while the Israelites were still in Egypt — before the ceremonial law of Moses had been given or written — before God even proposed the old covenant! What the law of Moses, or the old covenant, did not bring or institute, THEY CANNOT TAKE AWAY! In Fenton's translation, the 16th verse is translated: "consequently KEEP THIS PERIOD AS AN EVER-LASTING INSTITUTION." The whole period is included.

This ALONE ought to prove that the HOLY DAYS — and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread — are binding today, and FOREVER!

Now, if these texts apply to the 15th, not the 14th, as they assuredly do, and is here conclusively proved, then is the Passover established FOR-EVER? Indeed it is! But THESE texts above refer to the FEAST and not the PASSOVER. In the paragraph beginning Exodus 12:21 the PASSOVER is again referred to, and verse 24 establishes it FOREVER!

Purpose of Festival

But let us learn the full significance of this. WHY did God ordain these feast days? What was His great PURPOSE? Turn now to Exodus 13, verse 3: "...Moses said unto the people, Remember THIS DAY, in which ye CAME OUT from Egypt..." This was the 15th of Abib. Verse 6: "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and the seventh day shall be a FEAST unto the Eternal... This is done BECAUSE of that which the Eternal did [a MEMORIAL]... and it shall be for a SIGN" — (miraculous PROOF of identity) — "unto thee upon thine hand, and for a MEMORIAL between thine eyes" — WHY? — "that the LORD'S LAW MAY BE IN THY MOUTH... Thou shalt therefore KEEP this ordinance..."

Oh, beloved brethren, do you see the wonderful meaning? Do you grasp the true significance of it all? Do you see God's

PURPOSE? The PASSOVER pictures the DEATH OF CHRIST for the remission of sins that are past. The accepting of His BLOOD does not forgive sins we SHALL commit — it does not give LICENSE to continue in sin — therefore WHEN we accept it, our sins are forgiven only up to that time — PAST SINS.

But shall we stop there? Past sins forgiven. But we are still flesh beings. We still shall suffer temptations. Sin has held us in its clutch — we have been SLAVES to sin, in its power. And we are powerless to deliver ourselves from it! We have been in BONDAGE to sin. Let us understand the picture — the meaning.

Quitting sin utterly

To what extent shall we put away sin? Not partially, but COMPLETELY! And, as leaven is also a type of sin — leaven puffs up, and so does sin — and, as SEVEN is God's number symbolizing COMPLETENESS, we are to follow the Passover with the seven Days of Unleavened Bread!

The picture — the meaning — the symbolism, is not complete with Passover alone. Passover pictures the acceptance of Christ's blood for the REMISSION of past sins. It pictures the CRUCIFIED — the DEAD — Christ.

Shall we leave Christ hanging on the cross? The seven Days of UNLEAVENED BREAD, following Passover, picture to us the COMPLETE putting away of sin, the KEEPING of the Commandments — after past sins are forgiven. They picture the life and work of the RISEN CHRIST — who ascended to the throne of God where He is actively at work in our behalf as our HIGH PRIEST, cleansing us of sin — delivering us completely from its POWER!

To observe Passover alone, and then fail to observe the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, means, in the symbolism, to accept Christ's blood, and to continue on in sin — to say with the Sunday churches the LAW is done away, we are under grace, meaning license, to continue in sin!

The seven Days of Unleavened Bread picture the keeping of the Commandments, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin.

And, as Rome's followers have the MARK of the BEAST in their right hand and forehead, so God's true Church is to have these feast days, the first of which is a MEMORIAL picturing deliverance from sin, in OUR right hand and forehead, as God's SIGN, in order that we shall KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. And since the forehead is the seat of the intellect and symbolizes ACCEPTANCE, and the right hand symbolizes WORK, we have this SIGN OF GOD thereby accepting this truth about the Holy Days and Days of Unleavened Bread, and by NOT WORKING on these Holy Days! Not only is the weekly Sabbath God's SIGN (Exodus 31:12-17) but annual Sabbaths are SIGNS as well!

The perfect picture

While Israel was IN EGYPT they were Pharaoh's slaves, helpless and powerless under his taskmasters — just as the sinner is in the power of the devil. But when Israel took the blood of the Lamb when God acted, and as a result of God's act of the plague of the firstborn, Pharaoh released Israel. When we accept Christ's blood, GOD ACTS, and the devil must release us.

And, as the Israelites went out WITH A HIGH HAND (Numbers 33:3), probably in great exultation and elation over their deliverance from bondage, so does the newborn Christian start out his Christian life — up in the clouds of happiness and joy. But what happened?

Exodus 14:5 — Pharaoh immediately began to pursue after them with soldiers in 600 chariots. So the devil immediately pursues after the new-born child of God with his demons — and soon the new and inexperienced Christian finds he is down in the depths of discouragement and tempted to give up and quit.

Notice, beginning verse 10 — as soon as the Israelites saw this great army pursuing them, they lost their courage. Fear came over them. They began to grumble and complain. They saw it was IMPOSSIBLE for them to get away from Pharaoh and his army, because he was too powerful for them. And they were helpless. So it is with us.

Our strength not sufficient!

But notice the message of God to them through Moses: “.. Fear ye not, STAND STILL, and SEE THE SALVATION OF THE ETERNAL... for the Egyptians... ye shall see them again NO MORE for ever. THE ETERNAL SHALL FIGHT FOR YOU!... How wonderful!

Helpless, we are told to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. He shall fight for us. We cannot conquer Satan, but He can. It is the risen Christ — our High Priest — who will cleanse us — sanctify us — deliver us — who said He would never leave us or forsake us! We cannot keep the Commandments in our own power and strength. But Christ IN US can keep them! We must rely on HIM, in faith.

Notice verse 19. The angel who had gone before, showing the Israelites the way, now went behind them, getting between them and their enemy, protecting them. And then God parted the waters of the Red Sea. “...and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left” (verse 23). In Isaiah 55:1 and John 7:37-39, the WATERS are a symbol of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The LIVING WATERS, of God are a wall to us, on our right hand and on our left, guiding us in the true path, making the path, protecting us in it. But when Pharaoh and his army attempted to follow Israel in this divinely created path, these same waters completely COVERED THEM, as the Holy Spirit removes and covers our sins, and the Israelites SAW THEM NO MORE! What

a wonderful picture!

No sacrifices originally

Thus we see, the FEAST of Unleavened Bread as well as the PASSOVER, was ordained and established FOREVER, PRIOR to the ceremonial law of Moses — PRIOR to the old covenant. Let us be consistent about this. Opponents tell us these are IN THE LAW OF MOSES. We reply they existed before the law of Moses, are carried over in the New Testament, and therefore are binding today.

Notice especially, that originally there were NO SACRIFICES — no MEAT AND DRINK ordinances — held on these days. See Jeremiah 7:22-23. These days were not instituted FOR THE PURPOSE of the sacrifices as some have wrongly supposed. These Holy Days are not shadows — they are MEMORIALS, and twice called such. Where do we find such plain language calling the Sabbath a memorial? (See also Leviticus 23:24.)

When the law of Moses came, with its sacrificial ordinances, its meat and drink ordinances, then THESE SACRIFICES AND MEAT AND DRINK OFFERINGS WERE INSTITUTED, TEMPORARILY — until Christ — TO BE HELD, some daily, SOME ON THE WEEKLY SABBATH, AND SOME ON THE FIRST OF EACH MONTH AND SOME ON EACH OF THE ANNUAL HOLY DAYS.

But, mark well this fact! Where we find these sacrifices and meat and drink offerings instituted on the Holy Days we find them also on the weekly Sabbath. The same chapters in the law of Moses adding them to the annual days ALSO ADD THEM TO THE WEEKLY DAYS.

Commanded in New Testament

And now we wish to show a NEW TESTAMENT COMMAND — more plain, more direct, than any we can find for the weekly Sabbath — to keep these annual HOLY DAYS!

Observe again Numbers 28:16-17: "...IN the fourteenth day of the first month is the PASSOVER of the Lord. And IN the fifteenth day of this month is the FEAST: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten."

This FEAST was not the 14th, but the 15th. It was the PASSOVER, when the LAMB was killed, the 14th. The daylight part of the 14th was the PREPARATION for the FEAST. (Mat-thew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14.) (NOTE, in Jesus' day the Jews celebrated their Passover one day late according to the tradition of the elders — John 18:28.)

Let us get this point thoroughly established in our minds, for if this is true, as it is, THEN ALL OF THESE DAYS ARE STILL BINDING UPON US BY NEW TESTAMENT as well as Old Testament AUTHORITY!

Notice Matthew 26:5: The Jews, conspiring to kill Jesus, said: "...Not on the FEAST DAY, lest there be an uproar among the

people." They hastened so they could take and kill Him the day before the feast, or on the 14th Nisan.

Mark 14:2 says the same thing. Now to establish that the Feast day was the day after the Passover Festival, and that it was the high-day Sabbath — the day AFTER Jesus was crucified, notice John 13:29: "For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag — was treasurer — Fenton, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the FEAST..." This was at the Passover supper. They thought Jesus was sending Judas out to buy provisions to prepare for the FEAST. Surely this proved the FEAST was the following day — the 15th Nisan, as all these scriptures positively affirm.

Now let us examine carefully I Corinthians 5:7-8. Churches have applied this to the PASSOVER. Notice it does not say, or apply to, PASSOVER at all. Let us willingly, prayerfully, study to see what it does say:

"...For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore LET US KEEP THE FEAST..." Notice it. Because Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed, therefore let us of the NEW Testament dispensation — BECAUSE Christ has died — keep, WHAT? Notice it! NOT the Passover, which was on the 14th Nisan — but let us keep the FEAST — which was the 15th! The high-day Sabbath of John 19:31! The annual HOLY DAY. And, in a large sense, the FEAST included all seven of the Days of Unleavened Bread including the SECOND Holy Day or Sabbath on the 21st Nisan! We cannot escape this, if we are yielded to the Lord and the Word of God! There it is, in plain language, in the New Testament! Because Christ was crucified, therefore let us keep the FEAST! The 14th was the Passover, but in the 15th day of this month is the FEAST! Let us no longer apply that to the Passover, for it SAYS "feast."

Days of Unleavened Bread kept by Paul and New Testament Church

It is faithfully recorded in the New Testament that, during the period its history covers, the Church was keeping those days!

In Acts 20:6, "...we sailed away from Philippi AFTER THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD..." Paul and companions plainly had observed the Days of Unleavened Bread at Philippi. The Holy Spirit could never have inspired such words otherwise.

Notice also Acts 12:3-4: "... Then were the days of unleavened bread... intending after PASSOVER [see Greek] to bring him forth to the people." Could the Holy Spirit have inspired the direct affirmation, "Then WERE the days of unleavened bread" if those days had, in God's sight; ceased to exist?

Notice, it is not any blinded Judaizers, ignorant of what was abolished, making this statement — it is Almighty God saying it through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This was YEARS after the crucifixion. The Days of Unleavened Bread still existed, or the Holy Spirit could not have inspired "Then WERE the days of unleavened bread."

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



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