

January – March 2014

[www.ccog.org](http://www.ccog.org)

# BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



## Blood Moons

Will Jesus Return in 2014?

Mardi Gras:

*The Devil's Carnival?*

What Did Jesus Mean

*"I Will Have Mercy, And Not Sacrifice"?*

# BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY



3



8



14



24



28

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- 3 Christians Have Taught the Gospel of the Kingdom** Did first and second century Christians understand and teach about the kingdom of God? What about Christians in the 20th and 21st centuries?
- 8 Blood Moons: Will Jesus Return in 2014?** “Blood moons” are expected in 2014. Do they possibly mean that Jesus will return in 2014?
- 14 Study the Bible Course Lesson 1: Why Study the Bible?** This is the first lesson of the course to help people study the Bible.
- 24 Mardi Gras: The Devil’s Carnival?** Mardi Gras appear to be growing in popularity. Some believe it is a party for Christians. But is it?
- 28 What Did Jesus Mean – “I Will Have Mercy, And Not Sacrifice”?** According to Jesus, mercy is one of the “weightier matters of the law” (Matthew 23:23). Here is an old Good News article (which cites the KJV) about it.
- 31 Keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread** How and when?

**Back Cover: Internet and Radio** Where people can find the message from the *Continuing Church of God*?

**About the Front Cover:** Some believe that “blood moons” in 2014 and/or 2015 are a signal that Jesus is about to return. But what does the Bible teach?

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

©2013 *Continuing Church of God*. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. We do respect your privacy and we do not rent, trade, or sell our mailing list. If you do not want to receive this magazine, simply contact our Arroyo Grande office. Scripture references are from the New King James Version (©Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers, used by permission) unless otherwise noted.

*Bible News Prophecy-*

SUPPORTED BY YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

*Bible News Prophecy* has no subscription or newsstand price. This magazine is provided free of charge by the *Continuing Church of God*. It is made possible by the voluntary, freely given tithes and offerings of the membership of the Church and others who have elected to support the work of the Church. Contributions are gratefully welcomed and are tax-deductible in the U.S. Those who wish to voluntarily aid and support this worldwide Work of God are gladly welcomed as co-workers in this major effort to preach and publish the gospel to all nations. Contributions should be sent to: *Continuing Church of God*, 1248 E. Grand Avenue, Suite A, Arroyo Grande, CA, 93420.

**Editor in Chief:** Bob Thiel

**Copy/Proofing Editor:** Joyce Thiel

**Proofreader:** Kayla Morgan

**Layout Editor:** Burdine Printing

**Photos:** All photos come from the Thiel family or public domain sources such as *Wikipedia* (if an attribution is not given, it is because it is believed that the source released the photo into public use without any conditions).

## CHRISTIANS HAVE TAUGHT THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM



We all should know that Jesus taught the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 1:14-15), sent the apostles to do it (Luke 9:1-2), and they did (2 Peter 1:10-11; Acts 19:8).

But are there indications that later professors of Christ did or understood that?

Yes.

The oldest preserved apparently Christian writing (late first century) is the Letter to the Corinthians which states:

The Apostles for our sakes...went forth...preaching the gospel that the Kingdom of God was about to come (xlii).

Hence the early Christians understood that the apostles went forth to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God was also a significant part of what is believed to be "the oldest complete Christian sermon that has survived" (Holmes M.W. Ancient Christian Sermon. The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations, 2nd ed. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2004). This sermon contains these statements about it:

5:5 Moreover you know, brothers, that our stay in the world of the flesh is insignificant and transitory, but the promise of Christ is great and marvelous: rest in the coming kingdom and life eternal.

The above statement teaches that the kingdom is not now, but will come and be eternal. Furthermore, this ancient sermon states:

6:9 Now if even such righteous men as these are not able, by means of their own righteous deeds, to save their children, what assurance do we have of entering the kingdom of God if we fail to keep our baptism pure and undefiled? Or who will be our advocate, if we have not been found to have holy and righteous works?

9:6 Therefore let us love one another, that we all may enter into the kingdom of God.

11:7 Therefore, if we know what is right in God's sight, we will enter his kingdom and receive the promises which "ear has not heard nor eye seen nor eye seen nor the heart of man imagined."

12:1 Let us wait, therefore hour by hour for the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of God's appearing.

The above statements show that we still have not entered the kingdom of God, and that it occurs after the day of God's appearing--that is after Jesus returns again. This ancient sermon also states.

12:6 he says, the kingdom of my Father shall come.

The above statement teaches that it is the Father's kingdom and it still has to come. The kingdom is not just Jesus.

It is interesting, to me at least, that the oldest apparently Christian sermon (it is possible that it could be Church of God, but my limited knowledge of Greek limits my ability to make a firmer declaration) that God has allowed to survive teaches the same kingdom of God that the New Testament taught and the Continuing Church of God now teaches.

### Second Century Church Leaders and the Gospel of the Kingdom

It should be noted that Papias, who was a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp (and is considered to be a saint by Roman Catholics), in the early second century taught of the kingdom. Eusebius recorded that Papias (an early 2nd century leader) taught:

...there will be a period of a thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth...(Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book III, Chapter XXIX, Verse 12, p. 69)

Papias taught that it would be a time of great abundance:

In like manner, [He said] that a grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour; and that apples, and seeds, and grass would produce in similar proportions; and that all animals, feeding then only on the productions of the earth, would become peaceable and harmonious, and be in perfect subjection to man." [Testimony is borne to these things in writing by Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John and a friend of Polycarp, in the fourth of his books; for five books were composed by him...] (Fragments of Papias, IV).

Polycarp of Smyrna was an early Christian leader, who was a disciple of John, the last of the original apostles to die. Around 120-135 A.D. Polycarp taught:

"Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God" (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter II. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1 as edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885).

Knowing, then, that "God is not mocked," we ought to walk worthy of His commandment and glory ...For it is well that they should be cut off from the lusts that are in the world, since "every lust warreth against the spirit; " and "neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God," nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming (Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter V. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1 as edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885).

Thus like Paul and others in the New Testament, Polycarp taught that the righteous, not the commandment breakers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Melito of Sardis, who was a successor of Polycarp, around 170 A.D., taught:

For indeed the law issued in the gospel—the old in the new, both coming forth together from Zion and Jerusalem; and the commandment issued in grace, and the type in the finished product, and the lamb in the Son, and the sheep in a man, and the man in God...

But the gospel became the explanation of the law and its fulfillment, while the church became the storehouse of truth...

This is the one who delivered us from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light, from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal kingdom (Melito. Homily On the Passover. Verses 7,40,68. Translation from Kerux: The Journal of Online Theology (<http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV4N1A1.asp> 09/14/05)).

Thus the kingdom of God is something eternal, and not simply the current Christian or Catholic church and includes God's law.

Another mid-late second century writing exhorts people to look to the kingdom:

Wherefore, let no one of you longer dissemble nor look backwards, but willingly approach to the Gospel of the kingdom of God (Roman Clement. Recognitions, Book X, Chapter XLV. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1886. Online Edition Copyright © 2005 by K. Knight).

Furthermore, while it was probably not written by one in the true church, the mid-second century writing titled The Shepherd of Hermas in the translation by Roberts & Donaldson uses the expression "kingdom of God" fourteen times.

True, and even many only professing, Christians knew about the kingdom of God in the second century.

Even the heretic Irenaeus understood that after the resurrection, Christians would enter the kingdom of God. Notice what he wrote, c. 180:

For such is the state of those who have believed, since in them continually abides the Holy Spirit, who was given by Him in baptism, and is retained by the receiver, if he walks in truth and holiness and righteousness and patient endurance. For this soul has a resurrection in them that believe, the body receiving the soul again, and along with it, by the power of the Holy Spirit, being raised up and entering into the kingdom of God (Irenaeus, St., Bishop of Lyon. Translated from the Armenian by Armitage Robinson. The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, Chapter 42. Wells, Somerset, Oct. 1879. As published in SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN CO, 1920).

## Problems in the Second and Third Centuries

In the second century, an anti-law leader named Marcion rose up who taught against the law, the Sabbath, and the literal kingdom of God. Although he was denounced by Polycarp and others, he had contact with the Church of Rome for quite some time and seemed to have influence there.



In the second and third centuries, allegorists were becoming established in Alexandria (Egypt). And they opposed the doctrine of the coming kingdom. Notice the report about Dionysius and the Allegorists:

Dionysius was born of a noble and wealthy pagan family in Alexandria, and was educated in their philosophy. He left the pagan schools to become a pupil of Origen, whom he succeeded in the charge of the catechetical school of Alexandria...

Clement, Origen, and the Gnostic school were corrupting the doctrines of the holy oracles by their fanciful and allegorical interpretations...they obtained for themselves the name of "Allegorists." Nepos publicly combated the Allegorists, and maintained that there will be a reign of Christ on the earth...

Dionysius disputed with the followers of Nepos, and by his account..."such a state of things as now exists in the kingdom of God." This is the first mention of the kingdom of God existing in the present state of the churches...

Nepos rebuked their error, showing that the kingdom of heaven is not allegorical, but is the literal coming kingdom of our Lord in the resurrection unto eternal life...

So the idea of the kingdom come in the present state of things was conceived and brought forth in the Gnostic school of Allegorists in Egypt, A.D. 200 to 250, a full century before the bishops of the empire came to be regarded as occupants of the throne...

Clement conceived the idea of the kingdom of God as a state of true mental knowledge of God. Origen set it forth as a spiritual meaning hid in the plain letter of Scriptures (Ward, Henry Dana. *The Gospel of the Kingdom: A Kingdom Not of this World; Not in this World; But to Come in the Heavenly Country, of the Resurrection from the Dead and of the Restitution of All Things*. Published by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1870. Original from the New York Public Library, Digitized Jul 18, 2006, pp. 124-125)

Thus, while Nepos taught the gospel of the kingdom of God, the allegorists tried to come up with a false, less literal, understanding of it. Apollinaris of Hierapolis tried to fight the errors of the allegorists about the same time.

## **Herbert W. Armstrong Taught the Gospel of the Kingdom**

In the 20th century, in his book titled *The Mystery of the*

*Ages*, the late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

Jesus went everywhere preaching the GOOD NEWS of the KINGDOM OF GOD. He taught in parables about the KINGDOM OF GOD. He sent out seventy men preaching, and commanded them to preach THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 10:9). He sent the apostles, on whom the Church of God was founded, to preach only THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Luke 9:1-2). After the resurrection, before ascending to heaven, Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

Isn't it amazing that the world has LOST the knowledge of what it is?

The apostle Paul preached THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31)...

Because they rejected Christ's gospel 1,900 years ago, the world had to supplant something else in its place. They had to invent a counterfeit! So we have heard the kingdom of God spoken of as merely a pretty platitude—a nice sentiment in human hearts—reducing it to an ethereal, unreal NOTHING! Others have misrepresented that the "CHURCH" is the kingdom. Others confuse it with the millennium. Still others have, earlier in our century, claimed the British Empire is the kingdom of God. But no one makes that claim any longer. HOW DECEIVED CAN THIS WORLD GET? The prophet Daniel, who lived 600 years before Christ, knew that the kingdom of God was a real kingdom--a government ruling over literal PEOPLE on the earth...

Here, in PLAIN LANGUAGE, is God's explanation of what the KINGDOM OF GOD IS: "And in the days of these kings..."—it is here speaking of the ten toes, part of iron and part of brittle clay. This, by connecting the prophecy with Daniel 7, and Revelation 13 and 17, is referring to the new UNITED STATES OF EUROPE that is now forming, out of the European Common Market, before your very eyes! Revelation 17:12 makes plain the detail that it shall be a union of TEN KINGS OR KINGDOMS that (Rev. 17:8) shall resurrect the old ROMAN EMPIRE. So, mark carefully the time element! "In the days of these kings"—in the days of these then nations or groups of nations that shall, IN OUR TIME, resurrect briefly the Roman Empire--notice what shall happen: "...shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed...but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"!

...When Christ comes, he is coming as KING of kings, ruling the whole earth (Rev. 19:11-16); and HIS KINGDOM--the KINGDOM OF GOD—said Daniel, is to CONSUME all these worldly kingdoms. Revelation

11:15 states it in these words: “The kingdoms of this world are become THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD, AND OF HIS CHRIST: and he shall reign for ever and ever”! This is THE KINGDOM OF GOD. It is the END of present governments—yes, and even the United States and the British nations. They then shall become the kingdoms—the GOVERNMENTS—of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, then KING of kings over the entire earth. This makes completely PLAIN the fact that the KINGDOM OF GOD is a literal GOVERNMENT. Even as the Chaldean Empire was a KINGDOM—even as the Roman Empire was a KINGDOM—so the KINGDOM OF GOD is a government. It is to take over the GOVERNMENT of the NATIONS of the world. Jesus Christ was BORN to be a KING—a RULER!...

The same Jesus Christ who walked over the hills and valleys of the Holy Land and the streets of Jerusalem more than 1,900 years ago is coming again. He said he would come again. After he was crucified, God raised him from the dead after three days and three nights (Matt. 12:40; Acts 2:32; I Cor. 15:3-4). He ascended to the Throne of God. Headquarters of the Government of the Universe (Acts 1:9-11; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; Rev. 3:21)... he is in heaven until the “times of restitution of all things” (Acts 3:19-21). Restitution means restoring to a former state or condition. In this case, the restoring of God’s government on earth, and thus, the restoring of world peace, and utopian conditions.

Present world turmoil, escalating wars and contentions will climax in world trouble so great that, unless God intervenes, no human flesh would be saved alive (Matt. 24:22). At its very climax when delay would result in blasting all life from off this planet, Jesus Christ will return. This time he is coming as divine God. He is coming in all the power and glory of the universe-ruling Creator. (Matt. 24:30; 25:31.) He is coming as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16), to establish world super-government and rule all nations “with a rod of iron” (Rev. 19:15; 12:5)...

Christ is coming...

Christ Unwelcome?

But will humanity shout with joy, and welcome him in frenzied ecstasy and enthusiasm? Will even the churches of traditional Christianity?

They will not! They will believe, because the false ministers of Satan (II Cor. 11:13-15) have deceived them, that he is the Antichrist. The churches and the nations will be angry at his coming (Rev. 11:15 with 11:18), and the military forces will actually attempt to fight him to

destroy him (Rev. 17:14)!

The nations will be engaged in the climactic battle of the coming World War III, with the battlefield at Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-2) and then Christ will return. In supernatural power he will “fight against those nations” that fight against him (verse 3). He will totally defeat them (Rev. 17:14)! “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives,” a very short distance to the east of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4).

So, Jesus will return and He will win, even though many will claim (based upon improper understanding of Bible prophecy, but partially because of false prophets and mystics) that Jesus is the final Antichrist.

The Bible teaches that “God is love” (1 John 4:8,16) and Jesus is God (John 1:1,14). The kingdom of God will have a King who is love and whose laws support love.

The following is also from Herbert Armstrong’s book *The Mystery of the Ages*:

True religion—God’s truth empowered with the love of God imparted by the Holy Spirit...JOY UNSPEAKABLE of knowing God and Jesus Christ--of knowing TRUTH—and the warmth of God’s divine LOVE!...

The teachings of God’s true Church are simply those of “living by every word” of the Holy Bible...

Men shall turn from the way of “get” to the way of “give” - God’s way of love.

A NEW CIVILIZATION shall now grip the earth!

The NEW CIVILIZATION is the Kingdom of God. Proclaiming that new civilization is to come and be based upon love is a major part of what the true gospel of the kingdom that Jesus and His followers taught is all about. And that is something that we in the Continuing Church of God preach as well.

Herbert Armstrong realized that Jesus was teaching that human society, even when it thinks it wants to obey, has rejected the give way of life, the way of love. Almost no one seems to properly grasp the significance of what Jesus was teaching.

To help us become part of that kingdom, God loved humans so much that He sent Jesus to die for us (John 3:16-17).

## **The Gospel of the Kingdom is Something the World Needs, But...**

Although humankind needs the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom, many in the world will not

pay attention to this message in the 21st century. But the world will receive a witness.

Recall that Jesus taught:

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)

Notice that the gospel of the kingdom will reach the world as a witness, then the end will come.

There are several reasons for this.

One is that God wants the world to hear the true gospel before the start of the Great Tribulation (which is shown to start in Matthew 24:21). Hence the gospel message is both a witness and a warning (cf. Ezekiel 3; Amos 3:7).

Another is that the gist of the message will be contrary to the views of the rising Beast, King of the North power, along with the False Prophet, the final Antichrist. They will basically promise peace through human effort, but it will lead to destruction (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:3).

Because of signs and lying wonders associated with them (2 Thessalonians 2:9), the world will choose to believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) instead of the gospel message.

The faithful Philadelphians (Revelation 3:7-13) will be telling the world what these worldly leaders will be up to. They will support telling the world the message that the Beast, King of the North power, along with the False Prophet, the final Antichrist, will ultimately destroy (along with some of their allies) the USA and the Anglo-nations of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Daniel 11:39). That they will shortly thereafter destroy an Arabic/Islamic confederation (Daniel 11:40-43), function as instruments of the demons (Revelation 16:13-14), and will fight Jesus Christ upon His return (Revelation 16:14; 19:19-20). The faithful Philadelphians (Revelation 3:7-13) will be announcing that the millennial kingdom will be coming soon.

And these leaders (likely some 'new' type of top leader of Europe along with some type of pontiff) will not like that. They will not want the world to learn what they will really do (and may not even believe it themselves at first, cf. Isaiah 10:5-7). They and/or their supporters will also, likely, falsely teach that the faithful Philadelphians will be espousing a doctrine (millenarianism) of a coming antichrist.

Whatever condemnations that they and/or their followers make towards the Philadelphian faithful and the Continuing Church of God will trigger persecution (Daniel 11:29-35, Revelation 12:13-15). This will also lead to the end--the start of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21; Daniel 11:39; cf.

Matthew 24:15; Daniel 11:31) as well as a time of protection for the faithful Philadelphia Christians (Revelation 3:10; 12:14-16).

The Beast and False Prophet will try force, economic blackmail, signs, lying wonders, murder, and other pressures (Revelation 13:10-17, 16:14; Daniel 7:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) to have control.

Yet, Jesus will return and the millennial kingdom of God will be established on the earth. God and the faithful Christians will win.

## Concluding Comments

The kingdom of God is a literal kingdom that will be established on the earth. It will be based on the loving laws of God and a loving God as leader. This kingdom will include those truly in the Church of God, but no scripture states that the kingdom of God is actually the Church (Catholic or otherwise).

In its initial phase, the saints will reign with Christ for a thousand years over the nations. In its final phase, it will include the "New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" and of its increase there will be no end. There will be no more unrighteousness, no more sorrow, and no more death.

Preaching and understanding the gospel of the kingdom of God is an important theme of the Bible. Old Testament writers taught about it. Jesus, Paul, and John taught about it. The oldest possibly Christian sermon to survive outside the New Testament taught about it. Early second century Christian leaders, like Polycarp and Melito, taught about it. We in the Continuing Church of God teach it (see also the YouTube sermon *The Gospel of the Kingdom*).

Recall that the kingdom of God is the first subject that the Bible shows Jesus preached about. It was also what He preached about after the resurrection. The gospel is not just about the life and death of Jesus (though as scripture and early writings show, He is a major part of it), the emphasis of the gospel that Jesus and His followers taught was the coming kingdom of God. The gospel of the kingdom includes salvation through Christ, but it also does include the teaching of the end of human governments.

Furthermore, Jesus taught that the end would not come until after the gospel of the kingdom was preached to the world as a witness to all the nations (Matthew 24:14), and various ones will not want to hear or believe it. Yet, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God is an important subject. This is something that we in the *Continuing* Church of God are serious about.

# BLOOD MOONS: WILL JESUS RETURN IN 2014?



*Blood Moon*

By Bob Thiel

Might Jesus return in 2014? Some people seem to think so. Protestant Pastor John Hagee, and Mark Blitz have pointed to the appearance of blood moons in 2014 as possible proof.

What are blood moons? What can cause them? What does the Bible teach about them? What about Jewish teachings? Does NASA predict any blood moons?

Will there be a major blood moon that is a sign from God? Will Jesus return in 2014 or 2015? What about the 'rapture'?

This article will answer those questions and more.

## What are Blood Moons?

What is a blood moon?

The science of the "blood moon" phenomenon is fairly simple. It is created by a partial lunar eclipse. When the Earth's shadow covers the moon completely, we get a total eclipse. A partial lunar eclipse happens when the Earth's shadow covers the moon only partially. The earth atmosphere bends light around its edge, and scatters out shorter-wavelength light (green through violet), leaving longer-wavelength light (red, orange, and yellow) in the Earth's shadow. This is also why sunsets and sunrises generally appear red. As is the case with most miraculous events that can be explained scientifically, the miracle is not in the natural phenomenon, but rather in its timing. (Yanover Y. Messianic 'Blood Moon' Rising on Passover Seder Night. Jewish Press. <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/messianic-blood-moon-rising-on-passover-seder/2013/10/06> viewed 10/07/13)

A blood moon is also called a Hunter's Moon. It is the first full moon after Harvest Moon. The Harvest Moon is the full moon nearest to the autumnal equinox.

(What is a blood moon? [http://answers.ask.com/Society/Ethnicity/what\\_is\\_a\\_blood\\_moon](http://answers.ask.com/Society/Ethnicity/what_is_a_blood_moon) viewed 10/08/13)

A Blood Moon is when a total lunar eclipse makes the moon appear red. (What is a blood moon? <http://www.chacha.com/question/what-is-a-blood-moon#sthash.CACJZ0Wd.dpuf> viewed 10/08/13)

Basically the general definition of a 'blood moon' is when the moon appears reddish because of how light can appear.

Lunar eclipses are not the only cause. Notice the following:

There are few situations that can cause a red moon. The most common way to see the Moon turn red is when the Moon is low in the sky, just after moonrise or before it's about to set below the horizon. Just like the Sun, light from the Moon has to pass through a larger amount of atmosphere when it's down near the horizon, compared to when it's overhead. The Earth's atmosphere can scatter sunlight, and since moonlight is just scattered sunlight, it can scatter that too. Red light can pass through the atmosphere and not get scattered much, while light at the blue end of the spectrum is more easily scattered. When you see a red moon, you're seeing the red light that wasn't scattered, but the blue and green light have been scattered away. That's why the Moon looks red.

The second reason for a red moon is if there's some kind of particle in the air...

A third – and dramatic – way to get a red moon is during a lunar eclipse. During a lunar eclipse, the Moon passes behind the Earth's shadow, which darkens it. If you could take a look at the Earth from inside its shadow, you would see that the atmosphere around the edge of the entire planet glows red. (Cain F. Red Moon. Universe Today, October 23, 21008. <http://www.universetoday.com/19969/red-moon/> viewed 10/09/13)

And I would add here that God can cause the moon to appear as blood in other ways.

## NASA and Blood Moons

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has reported about 'blood moons' in the past.

Here is something I found at NASA's website years ago:

When four consecutive lunar eclipses are all total eclipses, the group is known as a tetrad. The following tetrads occur during this century:



Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2003 - 2004  
Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2014 - 2015  
Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2032 - 2033  
Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2043 - 2044  
Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2050 - 2051  
Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2061 - 2062  
Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2072 - 2073  
Tetrad (Four Consecutive Total Eclipses): 2090 - 2091  
(<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEcat/LE2001-2100.html>  
viewed 5/01/08)

Since I do not believe that the Bible allows for Jesus to return or the Day of the Lord to begin in 2014 or 2015 then it is not obvious that Jesus' return is directly related to the above table in those years.

At this moment, it would appear that the prophecy in Revelation and Joel about the blood moon will NOT be related to any NASA blood moon prediction (unless NASA comes up with a different table or something else) or if Jesus' return is not until after 2032. The blood moon of biblical prophecy could be related to some natural phenomena that is unclear to scientists at this time or it could be a miracle from God--or it could be that God will affect some natural phenomena to make it happen.

Notice the following claims from one who visited NASA's website site:

NASA's website predicts a total lunar eclipse will occur on the 15th of April 2014. The Red Blood Moon eclipse falls on the Jewish Passover...(<http://redmoonrapture.com/2014-2015/2014-passover-ecilpse.html> viewed 10/09/13)

NASA's website predicts a total lunar eclipse known will occur on the 8th of October 2014. The Red Moon eclipse falls on the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles...(<http://redmoonrapture.com/2014-2015/2014-tabernacles-eclipse.html> viewed 10/09/13)

NASA's website predicts a total lunar eclipse will occur on the 4th of April 2015. The Red Moon eclipse coincides with the Jewish Passover holiday...(<http://redmoonrapture.com/2014-2015/2015-passover-eclipse.html> viewed 10/09/13)

NASA's website predicts a total lunar eclipse will occur on the 28th of September 2015. The Blood Moon lunar eclipse falls on the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles...(<http://redmoonrapture.com/2014-2015/2015-tabernacles-eclipse.html> viewed 10/09/13)

The dates related to Passover are late by a couple of days and not truly the biblical ones (see Holy Day Calendar). The

Feast of Tabernacles dates are closer; 2014 aligns with the start date, while 2015 seems to be after the start date, though because of time of day possibly could be on the start date.

## The Bible and Blood Moons

The first time the Bible mentions blood and the moon together is in the Book of Joel as follows:

30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. (Joel 2:30-31, NKJV throughout, unless otherwise specified)

Some seem to think that the above is referring to normal "blood moons," others believe this is a more unique event.

The next time the Bible mentions blood and the moon together is in the Book of Acts, where the Apostle Peter states the following:

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.' (Acts 2:17-21)

In the Book of Revelation we read:

12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. (Revelation 6:12-14)

The events involving the moon turning into blood are also tied into with the sun becoming black. While some seem to believe this is a reference to some type of normal eclipse, it would seem to be more than that. Notice that those occur after the sixth seal is opened, which is after the opening of the fifth seal (Revelation 6:9), which is the start of the

Great Tribulation, which has not started yet and cannot start until at least 2018 (cf. Daniel 9:27,11:31; Matthew 24).

The events mentioned above in Joel 2, Acts 2, and Revelation 6 are also similar to those Jesus discussed in Matthew 24. Notice:

29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:29-31)

Some who believe in a “pre-tribulation rapture” have suggested that the moon turning into blood is a sign that Jesus is to return. And while Jesus will return, notice that the time period is AFTER the tribulation according to what Jesus taught. Notice also:

25 “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” (Luke 21:25-28)

Notice that there is also supposed to be roaring seas--this type of roaring sea will not happen in 2014 or 2015--that is too early (cf. Revelation 16:12-16,18).

Also, at least one has claimed that the crucifixion was tied to blood moons:

A series of 4 Red Blood Moon lunar eclipses occurred on the Jewish Passover and Feast of Tabernacles in 32 & 33 AD. Jesus personally witnessed the first 2 blood moon lunar eclipses in 32 AD. Christ descended into Hell just prior to the Jewish Passover partial lunar eclipse in 33 AD having just been crucified only a few hours before, and had all ready ascended to the father in Heaven by time of the 33 AD Feast of Tabernacles blood moon partial lunar eclipse. (<http://redmoonrapture.com/crucifixion.html> viewed 10/09/13)

But as the crucifixion was not in 32 or 33 A.D. 31 or possibly

30 A.D. is what works based upon the biblical calendar, accounts on information in the Gospels, etc., while 32 or 33 A.D. does not. The above contains many claims that are in error.

## Jewish Tradition and Lunar Eclipses and Blood Moons

Some are focused on the coming blood moons as they believe that they show something will come to pass, because of Jewish tradition and some historical events.

Here is something from the Talmud of Jewish traditions:

Succah 29a Our Rabbis taught, When the sun is in eclipse, it is a bad omen for the whole world. This may be illustrated by a parable. To what can this be compared? To a human being who made a banquet for his servants and put up for them a lamp. When he became wroth with them he said to his servant, ‘Take away the lamp from them, and let them sit in the dark’. It was taught: R. Meir said, Whenever the luminaries are in eclipse, it is a bad omen for Israel since they are inured to blows. This may be compared to a school teacher who comes to school with a strap in his hand. Who becomes apprehensive? He who is accustomed to be daily punished. Our Rabbis taught, When the sun is in eclipse it is a bad omen for idolaters; when the moon is in eclipse, it is a bad omen for Israel, since Israel reckons by the moon and idolaters by the sun. If it is in eclipse in the east, it is a bad omen for those who dwell in the east; if in the west, it is a bad omen for those who dwell in the west; if in the midst of heaven it is bad omen for the whole world. If its face is red as blood, [it is a sign that] the sword is coming to the world; if it is like sack-cloth, the arrows of famine are coming to the world; if it resembles both, the sword and the arrows of famine are coming to the world. If the eclipse is at sunset calamity will tarry in its coming; if at dawn, it hastens on its way: but some say the order is to be reversed. And there is no nation which is smitten that its gods are not smitten together with it, as it is said, And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments.

Although this is a Jewish tradition, it needs to be understood that it is simply a tradition. While there are certain signs that Jesus pointed to, the Bible condemns certain types of omen interpretation (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Furthermore, remember that Jesus sometimes chastised Jews who believed their traditions above what the Bible teaches:

9 He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. (Mark 7:9)

Thus, Christians should be careful not to believe Jewish traditions or other teachings if they are in conflict with the Bible. There were not world wars or massive famines every time there were certain eclipses, blood moon or not.

Some have claimed that because there was a blood moon in 1967 (and some other years) this shows that various events affecting the nation of Israel happen when there is a blood moon.

Now I am not disputing that events affecting the nation of Israel happened in 1967, for example, the 6 Day War was an historical event. Yet, this does not mean that Jesus will return in 2014 or 2015 or that the Day of the Lord will begin in those years.

On the other hand, I do believe it is possible, if not likely, that we will see significant events that will affect the nation of Israel in 2014 or 2015.

## The Coming Four Blood Moons By John Hagee

At the beginning of the article I mentioned John C. Hagee. He is the founder and Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas.

In a December 2012 YouTube video titled Coming Four Blood Moons By John Hagee part 1, he expected 'blood moons' for Passover and Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles) to occur on them both each in 2014 and 2015.

After quoting Joel 2:30-31 and Acts 2:, John Hagee stated "God... He is sending signals to planet earth, but we have not picked them up."

John Hagee said NASA has said it is coming, Joel and Peter said its coming, and that God is warning us with signs like the upcoming blood moons for 2014 and 2015.

Here is what his publisher has up at Amazon related to his book, Four Blood Moons Something is About to Change:

"...There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars...Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." Luke 21:25a, 28

It is rare that Scripture, science, and history align with each other, yet the last three series of Four Blood Moons have done exactly that. Are these the "signs" that God refers to in His Word? If they are, what do they mean? What is their prophetic significance?

In this riveting book, New York Times best-selling

author, Pastor John Hagee, explores the supernatural connection of certain celestial events to biblical prophecy—and to the future of God's chosen people and to the nations of the world.

Just as in biblical times, God is controlling the...

Here are some comments from a reviewer of John Hagee's book:

"Four Blood Moons: Something Is About To Change" uses scripture from the Bible, NASA data, and recorded history to conclude the end of the world – as we know it – might be right around the corner...

The first time it happened, in the year 1493, the four blood moons occurred on the Hebrew holidays of Passover and the Feast of Trumpets. Pastor Hagee writes, "This signified the beginning of the fall of Spain following the expulsion of the Jews a year earlier and was God's announcement to the world that 'the mantle of prosperity had thusly been placed on the shoulders of the infant nation that would become the United States' since it became a refuge for the Jewish people."

The second appearance of four blood moons appearing on Hebrew holy days was 1949-1950. They occurred on Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles and the next day Israel was declared a nation. The third time was in 1967-1968, when the Six-Day War took place, uniting the city of Jerusalem for the first time in 2,000 years, "a monumental prophetic event," according to Hagee's new book...

The world-renowned minister further states, "There are no solar or lunar accidents; every heavenly body is controlled by the unseen hand of God to send signals to humanity of coming events."

Hagee is convinced God will use the blood moons to signal that He is getting ready to change the course of human history. "No one knows the mind of God but the anticipation of these events tells us something will happen." (Exum R. Roy Exum: Rev. Hagee's 'Blood Moons'<http://www.chattanooga.com/2013/10/8/260792/Roy-Exum-Rev.-Hagees-Blood-Moons.aspx> viewed 10/09/13)

Basically he is saying that Jesus is coming soon and these blood moons are trying to tell us something.

The Bible does not support that the occurrence of these blood moons are teaching that Jesus will return or the Day of the Lord start in 2014 or 2015.

How can I be so certain?

Because Jesus listed a variety of events that precede His return and the events of the sun and moon in Matthew 24, and they cannot happen prior to the end of 2015. Furthermore, the seven-year deal of Daniel 9:27 has not taken place as of the date I am writing this. Notice:

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)

Since this deal has not happened, there are at least seven years until Jesus returns. Since the deal is to be broken in the middle of it, there is least 3 1/2 years before the start of the Great Tribulation (cf. Matthew 24:15-21; Daniel 11:31.

So, when Jesus does not come, the Great Tribulation does not start, and the Day of the Lord does not begin in 2014 or 2015, some people may sadly point to people like John Hagee to attempt to prove that various prophecies will not come to pass.

But, there is “a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed” (2 Peter 1:19, KJV), it is just that neither John Hagee nor Mark Biltz truly have it.

## Mark Biltz and Blood Moons

In 2008, *World News Daily* reported the following:

A minister who promotes the Old Testament roots of Christianity suggests a rare string of lunar and solar eclipses said to fall on God’s annual holy days seven years from now could herald what’s come to be known as the “Second Coming” of Jesus.

“God wants us to look at the biblical calendar,” says Mark Biltz, pastor of El Shaddai Ministries in Bonney Lake, Wash. “The reason we need to be watching is [because] He will signal His appearance. But we have to know what to be watching as well. So we need to be watching the biblical holidays.”...

Biltz began focusing on the precise times of both solar and lunar eclipses, sometimes called “blood moons” since the moon often takes on a bloody color. He logged onto NASA’s eclipse website which provides precision tracking of the celestial events.

He noted a rare phenomenon of four consecutive total lunar eclipses, known as a tetrad.

(Blood moon eclipses: 2nd Coming in 2015? Minister uses NASA forecasting to study signals of Jesus’ return WorldNetDaily – April 30, 2008. <http://www.worldnetdaily.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=63076>).

So, there was a claim that Jesus could return in 2015 based upon the red moon calculations that Mark Biltz researched. While God does want us to use His calendar, Mark Biltz does not fully understand it, nor can Jesus come in 2015.

## Red Moon Rapture

Some believe that Jesus will come to ‘rapture’ the church either before or shortly after a red moon.

And while it is true that Jesus will return after the blood moon that the Bible refers to in Joel 2 and Revelation 6, the return of Jesus Christ is not until after the Great Tribulation. Notice the account from the Matthew’s Gospel:

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you...”

15 “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), 16 “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 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...”

29 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:3, 4, 15-21, 29-31)

Many have been deceived in the past and others are deceived



now. Jesus will return with the sound of a great trumpet and Christians will be gathered with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). And although this should be comforting to Christians, Jesus will not be returning in 2014 or 2015. Any rapturists who believe Jesus will return in 2014 or 2015 are bound to be disappointed as that will not happen.

word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19, KJV) realize this. But some who are looking at some Protestant teachings and traditions are overlooking various facts and what the Bible really teaches.

## Concluding Comments on Blood Moons

There is a phenomenon known as a blood moon. They have occurred over the centuries and more are expected. As would be expected, some historical events have occurred in red moon years, but that does not prove that all red moons are prophetic.

NASA knows of the upcoming red moons in 2014 and 2015. One or more of them may tie to a date of a biblical observance.

The Bible does tell of a time when the moon becomes blood just prior to the Day of the Lord, which is also prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

These particular blood moons in the projections for 2014 and 2015, however, are just those in the normal expected cycle and are not telling us anything about the return of Jesus Christ, some type of rapture, or the Day of the Lord occurring in 2014 or 2015.

- The covenant deal that is to be confirmed for seven year in Daniel 9:27 had not happened by October 2013, hence there is at least 3 1/2 years before that deal is broken.
- The abomination of desolation that Jesus said that Daniel taught would be standing in the Holy Place, has not happened. And that does not happen until the Daniel 9:27 treaty is broken.
- The Great Tribulation that Jesus taught in Matthew 24:21 has not began yet.
- The fifth seal of Revelation 6:9 has not been opened.
- Jesus will return, but 2014 and 2015 are simply too early as too many preceding signs have not happened.

Although there will be events of prophetic interest that will occur in those years, Jesus will not return in 2014 or 2015. The Great Tribulation will not start in 2014 or 2015. The final "Day of the Lord" will not begin in 2014 or 2015.

Those who believe otherwise are misled. Jesus will, however, return some day. Those of us who believe the "more sure

# STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE

## LESSON I: WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?



Bob Thiel, Editor-in-Chief

Published 2014 by the Continuing Church of God

*Preface: This course is based upon the personal correspondence course initially 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 New King James Version (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 Study the Bible?

WHY SHOULD we want to study the Bible in the 21st century? What is the Bible? How shall we study it, in order to understand it? At the very beginning of this course we need to ask, and answer, these questions.

The Bible teaches, “STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD” (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV) and “Learn to do good” (Isaiah 1:17). So, Christians should study and learn from that study.

But WHY should we want to learn and be approved unto God? And is this study to be a tiresome, uninteresting DUTY which we force ourselves to undertake because of the stern command of a harsh God or is this study to become the most INTERESTING, the most THRILLING, the most ENJOYABLE and PROFITABLE interest that ever entered our lives?

WHY is the study of the Bible a dull, uninteresting, irksome task to most people, if at all, only as a duty out of fear of a harsh God?

Simply because these people have not KNOWN God, or what He is like and because they have never started to really UNDERSTAND the Bible!

Why study the Bible?

There are many reasons.

Humanity apart from God is leading to the destruction of this planet as humans have cut themselves off from the Creator God (Matthew 24:22). Few people truly realize, what the Apostle Peter stated, that Jesus has “the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Significant portions of the Bible were written to contain Jesus’ direct words when He walked in the flesh (e.g. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and other portions were written so we would truly know what He taught and how we should live (Proverbs 1:1-7).

Notice also:

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

If you truly wish to be a follower of Jesus, and be complete, you need to study and accept the instructions, corrections, and reproofs that the Bible contains. The truth is that many who claim to be Christians and claim that the Bible is truly the foundation of their faith, have more of a human tradition, than a biblical faith.

In this study we shall come to really see that God is LOVE (1 John 4:8, 16) not a harsh, stern God. God wants every one of us to be happy, to ENJOY life to the very full and to make life interesting. The law of God shows love (Mark 12:28-33;

James 2:8) and the way that leads to life (Deuteronomy 10:13; 30:19). And we shall, once we begin to UNDERSTAND the Bible, come to find it the most fascinating, the most INTERESTING, as well as of profitable and enjoyable INTEREST.

Once you get really into it, many of you will enjoy this study so much you will hardly be able to wait until the next lesson. You'll find that NO FUN, no PLEASURES, no sports, entertainments or worldly interests so spiritually SATISFYING! Because God is LOVE. He is your Creator who loves you, and wants you to be happy and healthy and prosperous. He gives you the Bible. It is HIS WORD by which He reveals to you THE WAY out of boredom, fear and worry, sickness and disease, poverty and want, emptiness and discontent, and into the happy, healthy, prosperous ABUNDANT life which He will give you to enjoy for all eternity!

We should realize, before even starting to study the Bible itself, that the CONDITION to understanding is a complete SUBMISSION to its teachings, its laws and instructions. Jesus said we must LIVE by it (Matthew 4:4). We must study so that we can pattern everything we do according to the Bible instructions. It is our guide to life whether in our business, social and political relations, educational or religious life. God commands us to STUDY the Bible "to show thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). One who does not study for that purpose—who has not surrendered fully to God so that God can rule his life, can never truly UNDERSTAND the Bible, no matter how much or how diligently he/she studies.

It is absolutely true that a "good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Psalms 111:10). Those who will not obey God do not get the proper understanding! And it is in the Bible that His commandments are mentioned and expounded upon.

We feel that this Bible course will mean more to you if you understand its vital relation to your life and events that are happening in the world. Its direct connection to EVENTS you read every day in your newspaper, hear every day in newscasts, see on television, and/or find out about over the internet. To learn what many of these events will lead to, we must understand, first, that JESUS GOSPEL was the divine MESSAGE sent FROM GOD TO MANKIND

## **You Live in a World in Chaos!**

Many today are fearful, while others are complacent.

Even many secular commentators today recognize there is something radically wrong with this world. How may they

bring world peace? There are various proposed human solutions, but they, apart from God, will not work (cf. Romans 3:17-18).

Many scientists and others frankly say that unless we have WORLD GOVERNMENT at some point in time super destructive weapons will annihilate humanity from the earth. But nations have FAILED peaceably TO AGREE to world government! The League of Nations, Hague Conference, the Pact of Paris, the meetings of Berchtesgaden, Munich, Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam did not bring peace. Neither has the United Nations nor the United States (despite various claims of "Pax Americana").

Between atomic and hydrogen bombs, neutron bombs, chemical weapons, biological weapons, electro-magnetic pulse weapons, and other high-tech weaponry that is less known (as well as future weaponry which is currently under development), we are getting close to the time Jesus warned of nearly 2,000 years ago, when "unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved" (Mark 13:20).

Neither human nor animal, fish nor bird would be spared.

Yes, this world's civilization is coming to a CRISIS! Will the terrible destructiveness of such weapons prevent their use by some power-mad group? It never has prevented the use of new weapons when the opportunity was considered right by certain ones! Even outlawed chemical weapons have been used to kill many. It is time to be concerned! Humankind is showing that it is utterly incapable of governing itself. Formerly, the power-seeking madness of a nation usually came to an end with the death of its leader—but now other equally power-mad candidates are trained far in advance to take the place of the leader at his demise and the race to destruction goes on unabated!

What is the answer?

HUMANKIND WILL DESTROY ITSELF FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH, IF LEFT TO CONTINUE WITHOUT GOD'S DIRECT INTERVENTION (Revelation 11:18)!

While many wish to discount prophecy and do not believe in a soon end of this age, this subject was important enough to Jesus that He answered His disciples' questions about it:

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name,

saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 And you "...will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows". (Matthew 24:3-8).

We seem to be in the time that Jesus referred to as "the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8). And it is not to be followed by a truly good time as, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22).

If we cannot save ourselves WHO CAN SAVE US? THE ANSWER to this question comes from One whose word has been tested hundreds of times by events foretold by His prophets - events which have ALWAYS come true.

Who was this? Jesus (Mark 13:20). We need to not only believe on Him, we need to believe what He said and abide by His words (John 8:31, KJV).

What he said should deeply concern you and me and everyone - for the time is short! You will certainly not be wasting your time when studying the lessons of this course. On the contrary, you will LEARN YOUR ONLY WAY TO AVOID THE DIRE EVENTS SHORTLY TO FALL. You will gain knowledge which will richly reward you in future happiness. You will be repaid far more generously for your effort than for anything you have ever accomplished before! So put all your effort into the study of these lessons. How you study them may well have an effect on your future here on this earth and on your future in the life to come also.

## WHY God Must Intervene in World Affairs

COUNTLESS intelligent, well-educated men and women scoff at the idea that Jesus Christ is soon to return. They can see no sense whatever in such an idea! You've likely personally known such people, haven't you?

In the 21st century, biblical ignorance and scoffing seem to have increased as the Apostle Peter prophesied it would in the last days (2 Peter 3:3-4).

They are the typical product of an age that has lost sight of the reality of God. They mock and discount the word of God which is the very "word of truth" (2 Corinthians 6:7).

Notice the following passages from the Book of Proverbs:

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7).

29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord, 30 They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. 31 Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. 32 For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them; (Proverbs 1:29-32).

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; 20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 21 Therefore let no one boast in men. (1 Corinthians 3:19-21).

This age prides itself on being the most intellectual, the most cosmopolitan and "worldly wise" that has ever existed, yet, it has completely lost sight of the very basis of all knowledge: what we are, why we are, what the PURPOSE of human existence is! If these intellectuals and others knew the answers to these questions, they would understand the completely logical reason and in fact, the ABSOLUTE NECESSITY, for the soon-return of Jesus Christ to rule this earth.

Because few do, most will perish (Matthew 24:24).

## World Chaos INEVITABLE!

In spite of earnest attempts to bring about a lasting peace, TOTAL WAR looms just ahead. With the emergence of the hydrogen bomb, the possibility of GLOBAL DESTRUCTION is now a reality! Although WE are warned that the only solution is world government, human attempts at achieving this objective HAVE FAILED MISERABLY.

Various statesmen and scientists are realizing what this means. Some are beginning to fear! The cold, hard fact is that HUMAN BEINGS HAVE ABOUT REACHED THE END OF THEIR ROPE. Humans have reached the place where they are no longer capable of protecting themselves against horrifying weapons of their own devising. THE INTERVENTION OF A HIGHER POWER IS THE ONLY REAL SOLUTION WE HAVE FOR THIS WORLD'S ILLS.

When Jesus was here on earth, He knew what the ideas of men would lead to in years to come. Jesus knew that in this end time men would be groping in the dark for the way to peace, but would actually be on the verge of human annihilation. "unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved," He warned (Matthew 24:22, Moffatt uses the expression "saved alive").



## The Cause of World Ills

In this same momentous prophecy, Jesus gives us a key to WHY our present world is in such a terrible state. He warned: "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37).

What were men doing in Noah's time thousands of years ago that brought on them such terrible destruction?

Turn in your Bible to Genesis 6:12-13 where we find the answer: "So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. God said... the earth is filled with violence through them."

Carnal men had used their own human reason and had already departed from the way of life God had originally given. This substitution of PERVERTED HUMAN REASON for the WAY of God threatens world destruction. Jesus said the very same conditions would prevail just before His second coming.

Look about you in this world.

Notice something that the Apostle Paul was inspired to write:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error

which was due.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. (Romans 1:18-32).

Notice that many behaviors that are now being publicly approved will lead to destruction. Not just for those that do them, but for those that approve them!

Have men been seeking and practicing God's way-or do they always use human reason to justify continuing in their own way? As the apostle Paul wrote of all carnal-minded men: "Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:16-18). Study this whole passage carefully.

A vital point in understanding God's plan is revealed here.

Note that God speaks of a definite WAY of peace-and that He links ignorance of it to one thing: a lack of the right kind of fear - a godly FEAR. The basic attitude of irreverence and even CONTEMPT FOR THE WILL AND AUTHORITY OF GOD is a prevalent characteristic among people of every station in life today. In our "enlightened age," men no longer fear to do wrong.

Where has this led us?

In the USA, to cite one example, lying is considered to be a protected right under its constitution according to its supreme court. There are locks for everything, including electronic ones (passwords) for information access. There are crimes of blood and violence (Ezekiel 7:23).

People are beginning to realize that something is basically wrong with this world's society. But even more ominous than the GROWING MENACE of individual crime is the realization that in our generation and the ENTIRE EARTH IS ENDANGERED by super-criminals and mad dictators in warmongering nations who now have the means to erase humanity from this planet. And it is not just from nations and groups of nations that appear to be warmongers that pose this threat (cf. Isaiah 10:5-11).

## It is Prophesied!

These fearful times are prophesied and described in your Bible. Open your Bible now to 2 Timothy 3:

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Paul was inspired to write Timothy about the last days-

## Only One Hope

The basic cause of world chaos, and--in principle--the solution, has been dramatically stated by two deceased American statesmen. In his inaugural address, President Dwight D. EISENHOWER STATED:

"In the swift rush of great events, we find ourselves groping to know the full sense and meaning of the times in which we live . . . How far have we come in man's long pilgrimage from darkness toward light? Are we nearing the light - a day of freedom and peace for all mankind? Or are the shadows of another night closing in upon us? . . . Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, THE POWER TO ERASE HUMAN LIFE FROM THIS PLANET."

Yes, he understands--realizes that humankind can destroy itself. Then, after setting forth the nine principles which were to govern our international relations, he stated a truth which--IF properly supplied--would be a big step toward the solution, not only of our problems, but those of the entire world. He said, "For this truth must be clear before us: Whatever America hopes to bring to pass in the world must first come to pass in the HEART of America."

Whether he realized it or not, President Eisenhower agreed exactly with God's word in his statement that in America--as in every nation--the heart, the CHARACTER of men must be changed if we are to have world peace.

Let us now refer to a unique and striking statement made by the late General Douglas MacArthur in this regard. When he was relieved of his command and ordered to return to this country by President Truman, GENERAL MACARTHUR made a historic ADDRESS before the assembled Congress of the United States. In that dramatic speech, he made some pointed statements which revealed the depth of his understanding, he said:

"I know war as few other men now living know it, and nothing to me and nothing to me is more revolting... Men since the beginning of time have sought peace... Military alliances, balances of power, Leagues of Nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blocks this alternative. WE HAVE HAD OUR LAST CHANCE. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, our Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is THEOLOGICAL and INVOLVES a spirit of recrudescence and IMPROVEMENT OF HUMAN CHARACTER that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature and all the material and cultural developments of the past 2000 years."

"IT MUST BE OF THE SPIRIT IF WE ARE TO SAVE THE FLESH."

Let us scrutinize these remarkable statements. Although he was a successful general, MacArthur believed that--in world war--we have had our last chance! Both of these former military men essentially knew that the ONLY SOLUTION--the only HOPE of averting human annihilation--would require a renewing of human spirit - a changing of humankind's tendency toward evil (cf. Ecclesiastes 7:9; Ezekiel 11:19-20). A re-building of man's CHARACTER.

## The Answer

If misguided human beings were left long enough to themselves to solve this world's problems, the final result would be global DESTRUCTION (Matthew 24:22; Mark 13:19-20).

Some people sincerely want to do right, but they know not the way to peace. They are honestly sincere, but honestly wrong. As Solomon was inspired to write: "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of DEATH" (Proverbs 14:12).

God says that the normal, carnal way that human beings wish to go ends up in death. People are often deceived by thinking that there is no special danger right now, that the world has always been like this. This is true, in part.

Human nature has always been like this. Carnal man has always brought death and destruction into the world. However, remember that Paul said, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (2 Timothy 3:13, KJV). And most important of all, NEVER BEFORE WORLD WAR II HAS MASS HUMAN ANNIHILATION BEEN POSSIBLE--and it is worse now.

Man has long had guns and powerful shells. Later, tanks

and planes came into use. But NOW we have rockets which deliver hydrogen missiles and can destroy entire cities by remote control! It is believed that electromagnetic pulse bombs, if released in the right locations, could send much of the Western world back to the so-called stone age. Human annihilation is not a vague possibility, but a terrifying reality!

And now nothing can save man from self-destruction except a CHANGE in human nature - in man's character. But in spite of all the professing "Christian" churches, in spite of the feeble efforts of the United Nations and in spite of everything man is doing to bring peace and happiness, TOTAL WAR looms just ahead. Though there will be times of seeming peace, declarations of peace and safety will be made just before sudden destruction comes (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Sadly, many will believe those who will falsely proclaim the dawn of peace apart from the God of the Bible (Ezekiel 13:10-16).

Just as Solomon was inspired to write, THE WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT TO MEN IS LEADING TO DEATH, WHAT IS THE ANSWER? ONLY GOD CAN CHANGE MAN'S CHARACTER, and force humans to learn the way of peace.

That is WHY Christ is returning to take over the "kingdoms of this world" (Revelation 11:15).

That is WHY "He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron" (Revelation 19:15). That is the only way to preserve human life on this planet. Jesus Christ knew the terrible state of affairs men would bring on themselves in this end time, when He said: "And unless those days were shortened, NO FLESH would be saved" (Matthew 24:22).

May God help you to grasp the significance and reality of these things as you read these passages.

They show that God foresaw the invention of our present weapons of mass destruction long before man ever dreamed of them. And they reveal that God had already planned the only real and logical solution. God's entire plan is just as logical and real.

The pattern for GOD'S little-understood PLAN is given in the first two chapters of Genesis. It is the WEEK of seven days.

As God originally set time in motion, man is given six work days followed by a day of rest. In Hebrews 4:4, 11, the seventh day is also a type of the peaceful rest--a 1,000 year rest--that will follow the present age of human labor and futile struggle to master the earth.

Observe carefully after Christ's intervention the time of peaceful rest under His rule is specifically termed "a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). If the "last day" of God's

7000-year plan is 1000 years, then the preceding SIX DAYS WHICH HE HAS ALLOTTED FOR HUMANKIND to WORK out its own ideas would amount to 6000 years.

And this is exactly what world events today are proving.

Look about you! This world is crashing to its DOOM!

If you add up various ages of people in Genesis, reigns of kings, and have the dates for some events in the Bible, you will find that the 6,000 years of human kind is almost up.

In other words, the TREND OF WORLD EVENTS is now PROVING we are VERY NEAR the time the scriptures have always said CHRIST will RETURN -- when the probability of world destruction would become a reality. Six thousand years of human history have almost been completed. Here, then, is proof--DOUBLE PROOF--that CHRIST IS COMING in our generation!

The common assumption that humankind, as it is now, has lived on earth countless tens of thousands of years is an idle dream. Reason disproves it! TRUE science disproves it! Strange as it may seem, the theory of man's evolution is not only unproved, but irrefutably disproved when we understand the facts.

A soon-coming lesson will give you these facts so you may study them in your home! The apostles did not fully understand this PLAN OF GOD when Christ was yet on earth. They thought the Kingdom would be established in their day after only about 4000 years of God's plan had been completed.

But before they died, the APOSTLES KNEW GOD'S PLAN. Peter said: "The Lord is not slack concerning the promise [of Christ's coming] . . . but is long-suffering" (2 Peter 3:9).

God is patient.

God has refrained from intervening in world affairs for nearly 6,000 years.

Why?

Because He will not intervene until humanity is forced to cry out to God for fear of self-extermination. Notice that the day of Christ's intervention and rule is compared to "a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4; cf. Psalm 90:4).

Peter also says the same thing that a day in God's plan is as "a thousand years," and "a thousand years" of human civilization is as one day in His planned week of seven 1000-year days (2 Peter 3:8).

CHRIST IS TO COME AFTER SIX ONE-THOUSAND YEARS OF

human struggle and slavery. True followers of Christ have long realized that God would send Jesus Christ to set up His government in the seventh one-thousand years, which will usher in a time of rest and peace.

How AWE INSPIRING that in our day at the very time that 6000 years have ALMOST ELAPSED, the world is threatened with extinction of life. How MARVELOUS that Jesus Himself said that when we see this taking place HE WOULD COME AGAIN!

## What is the Bible?

The word Bible comes from the Greek word biblio meaning book.

When this course (like many others) uses the term “Bible” or “Holy Bible” this is a reference to the 39 books considered to be scripture and primarily written in Hebrew by most Jews (known as the Hebrew scriptures or the Old Testament), plus the 27 books considered to be scripture and primarily written in Greek by most who profess Christ (known as the Greek scriptures or the New Testament). Passages in the Bible are considered to be scripture.

None of the Bible was written in Latin nor was any of it originally written in English. Hence, the old Latin Vulgate by Jerome that many Catholics use and the old King James Version of the Bible that many Protestants and others have used WERE NOT GOD’S DIRECTLY INSPIRED WORDS. They are translations, and sometimes translations of translations. And often translations require an approximation and sometimes translators make intentional and unintentional errors.

The original manuscripts no longer exist as they have decayed, been lost, and/or have been destroyed. However, there are more ancient manuscripts that support the Bible than other books or writings from thousands of years ago. The Jews, to cite one example, had very strict copying and checking procedures to almost totally eliminate errors in copying. The New Testament had enough copies in circulation within short periods of its being written to insure the overall integrity of the texts used.

But which manuscripts should be the source of translation has had some controversies. The Nestle-Aland NA27 edition of the Greek text of the New Testament (NA27/UBS4) claims to have used all then known Greek manuscripts, and usually considers the older manuscripts to be closer to the original writings (and it does not contain the spurious edition in 1 John 5:7-8 that the Textus Receptus does). Though this is not saying that NA27 is perfect; the best text is the original, and it seems to be that a version of something like that

which has sometimes been called the “Traditional Text”

## Read the Bible

When physically hungry and tempted by Satan, Jesus quoted the book of Deuteronomy:

4 Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).

His other responses to Satan also relied on an application and quoting of scripture (Matthew 4:7,10) instead of human reasoning (or conflicting traditions of men).

One of the reasons it is necessary to read the Bible, because:

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires they have itching ears, they will heap up to themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The above time seems to be upon us and apparently will worsen.

Jesus prayed to the Father to:

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (John 17:17).

The Psalms declare,...“Your law is truth” (Psalm 119:142b).

Since God’s law and His word are the truth, how can you know the truth without reading the Bible or hearing it read?

Reading the Bible is the way to measure whether or not something is true. The Bible teaches us doctrine and how to live.

Paul was a preacher of God, but how would people know this? They would know it from their knowledge of the Bible.

How do you get knowledge of the Bible? First by reading it. Then by studying it.

When Paul preached in Berea it was reported that:

11 These were more fair-minded (margin - noble) than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word in all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).

The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily; we should too.

Scripture was inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16) and was not the opinions of its writers. Its prophecies came from God, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men



of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

Notice the following from the KJV:

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:19-21, KJV)

God’s prophetic word is sure. That certainly is comforting in these end times.

In addition to providing instruction, doctrine, and correction, reading the Bible even helps you to learn the thoughts and intents of your heart:

12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Christians need to read and the study the Bible.

## Final Important Instructions

Now we are ready for the end portion of the lesson. But wait! Is your Bible in front of you? If not, don’t read another word! Stop right here! Go and GET YOUR BIBLE.

Also several sheets of paper, and a pencil or pen, so that you can MAKE NOTES to help you remember what you learn.

This course is based on the New King James Version because it is intended to be a literal translation and uses a version of the English language that people commonly use in the early 21st century. For most of the lesson, you can use other translations, but the questions and answers specifically refer to the NKJV unless otherwise stated. So, for most, the NKJV is the best choice to use with the Study the Bible Course.

Now we are ready to begin this lesson. REMEMBER, YOU must OPEN your Bible TO EVERY PASSAGE we give you in this lesson. Do not simply believe us—(the teams directed by late C. Paul Meredith and/or Bob Thiel)—believe what the Bible really teaches.

You should READ AND RE-READ, actually STUDY every passage in your Bible. This is a Bible STUDY course—a study

of the Bible, not just a study of these words we have here for you. Our words are intended to show you where to look in your Bible—to help you to know how to study the Bible.

Now, with your Bible, a good dictionary, and your note paper and pencil or pen on a desk or table before you, here is the method of study: Write down, neatly, on your note paper, the caption “Lesson 1,” and underscore it.

## Then, “What Is the End of the World?”

Underneath, number each question, and WRITE DOWN THE ANSWER, in your own handwriting (some of you may prefer to type or text). As EXAMPLES for the questions, this is what you will write on your note paper.

1. Matthew 24:3—Now as He {Jesus} sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age.”

Also write in any other thoughts or comments you want to remember. When you have finished this question, and have studied it and are sure you understand it, then read next question.

2. Write down your own answer to the question, after reading the comment and any Bible passages that may be quoted in the question.

After question 3, write down your answer, and also write down every word of the Bible verse, Matthew 24:22.

It will be much better for some of you if you go to a book store or stationery store, and buy a supply of loose-leaf note paper with the three holes punched in the side. Also buy a binder, and keep these lessons and your own notes and answers fastened in the binder.

Do NOT SEND us the ANSWERS to these lessons. Keep them for reference. (It may be that we will offer a free certificate to those who complete the entire course and/or significant portions of it, but that would be after 2014, and we would expect to announce this online and likely elsewhere. If we do end up doing so, we would ask that you simply send in a copy of the lessons you completed and/or questions in certain parts of the course).

Some may ask, “Is this WRITING really NECESSARY?”

YES!

Extremely so!

Why?

Here is why!

We want you to truly understand the Bible. Christians are to be teachers (cf. Hebrews 5:12) and need to know their Bibles well enough to “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15, KJV).

Writing down what you are learning will help you better remember.

Furthermore, you can quickly review your lessons, as necessary, if you have them in this form. Also, it will aid you greatly in explaining the Bible to others.

We are giving you the brief, comprehensive, true outline of the bible. You will often want to refer to these lessons and the explanation of them in your own words in future years as you apply them to clear up related points in the Bible. Remember, you are to spend at least a half hour every day studying YOUR BIBLE with this Bible Study Course. Now we are ready...

## Lesson I

### Study Your Bible

#### What Is the “End of the World”?

1. Was Jesus ever asked about the now threatening doom of civilization - the END OF THIS AGE and the signs of His return? Matthew 24:3.
2. Does this verse refer to the end of the physical earth? Or does it refer to the end of the present age of human misrule? How do modern translations of the Bible properly render Matthew 24:3?

Comment: There are three basic Greek words inspired in the New Testament which are rendered by the one English word “world” in the King James Version. The original Greek word used in Matthew 24: 3 is *aion*, meaning AGE! Not the physical earth on which we live. Because many grew up hearing the KJV, they frequently misunderstand that the Bible is not prophesying the end of the earth, but the end of humankind’s rule during this age. The NKJV gets this right (though it, like other translations, is not perfect either).

JESUS, then, was questioned by His disciples about the end of this.

## Why God MUST Intervene

1. Has there ever been a TIME OF TROUBLE such as will occur at the close of this age? Matthew 24:21.

What does Mark 13:19 say about it?

2. Did any of the prophets foresee this same time of peril? Jeremiah 30:7, Daniel 12:1.

As each of these verses explains that there never has been before, and never will be afterward, another similar period of trouble, could they be referring to three different events, or ONLY to ONE CLIMACTIC PERIOD at the close of this age?

3. Do the prophets picture the horrible events at the close of this age as the result of ravaging destruction in MODERN SCIENTIFIC WARFARE? Joel 2: 1-3. Read also Isaiah 33:11,12.

Will there ever again be a time like this? Why would this prophecy of Joel have to be referring to the same time as Jesus’ prophecy?-could wide destitution, such as Joel describes, have occurred as a result of older and outmoded methods of warfare?

4. Or could it happen since with the invention of atom and HYDROGEN BOMBS, ROCKETS, BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS, ELECTRONIC WEAPONS, horrifying GASES, and other MODERN FORMS OF MILITARY TRANSPORT & WEAPONRY which can exterminate civilization? Revelation 9:5-10 and 16-19.

Do the symbols here in Revelation possibly indicate the torment of poison gas and MASS MURDER by the latest scientific weapons? John was DESCRIBING WAR WEAPONS OF OUR DAY BY the CHARACTERISTIC SYMBOLS OF HIS DAY. Early Christians knew they were symbols because such things never existed then. Yet John could not use modern words such as “tank” or “rocket” or “helicopter” or “jet” because no one

## CAUSE of World Ills

1. As God will intervene to prevent annihilation of humanity, so will He also have to prevent future wars by removing the cause of war! What is the BASIC CAUSE OF WAR? James 4:1-2.
2. Are the desires and passions of HUMAN NATURE fundamentally good or evil? Compare Luke 11:13 with Romans 3:10-19 and Ecclesiastes 7:29.

Notice, however, that human nature is a COMBINATION OF GOOD AND EVIL. James 3:9-10 and Luke 6:45.

3. Is this world a mixture of good and evil? Do actions and decisions that seem right to great leaders and to the people in general often end in terrible results? Proverbs 14:12.

Is this proverb so vital that God thought it worthy of extra emphasis through repetition? Proverbs 16:25.

Doesn't the fact that the world faces self-destruction today PROVE that the FORCE OF THE EVIL NATURE of man is GREATER than the force of the good part of his nature?

4. Does MANKIND REALLY KNOW THE WAY TO PEACE? Romans 3:17.

How did one Old Testament prophet describe humanity's real understanding of peace? Isaiah 59:8.

5. In their ignorance, hatred and cowardice, did the rulers of the world kill the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), the Lord of glory? 1 Corinthians 2:8.
6. WHAT DECEIVES MAN into believing that actions which end in death will bring peace? Jeremiah 17:9, 1 John 2:16.

(Remember that in Scripture, the heart is spoken of proverbially as the center or seat of human nature.) Then can rulers be deceived by their OWN LUSTS into believing that their evil deeds are right and good for the world?

Can they mislead their followers and contribute to their destruction? Isaiah 3:12, 9:16.

7. At the close of this age did PAUL FORESEE that men would be traitors, truce-breakers, greedy, coveting the wealth and territories of one another? 2 Timothy 3:1-5.
8. Does knowledge tend to increase pride? 1 Corinthians 8:1. But what does love of God result in? 1 Corinthians 8:1.

Can undue authority lead to vanity? 1 Timothy 3:6.

Since we live in an age of increasing scientific knowledge, which makes it possible for a few people to amass stupendous industrial and scientific power, will human nature tend to make humans become better and better or WORSE AND WORSE in the last days? 2 Timothy 3:1,13.

9. Is it now possible, through the inventions of science and technology, for the greedy to covet, seize, and destroy more than ever before?

## WAKE UP AND HELP!--OR BLOW UP!

1. Will there be SCOFFERS in the last days denying that Jesus will return? 2 Peter 3:3,4.

When the Beast power rises up and gets identified by the faithful Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) remnant of the Church of God who will be leading the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to the world (Matthew 24:14-15) will this lead to persecution? Daniel 11:28-35.

Will civilization be threatened with extermination by mad dictators? Matthew 24:15, 22; Revelation 13.

2. Has human nature basically changed? Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-30.

Though human nature has not basically altered since Noah's day, have the scientific means of destruction remained the same? Do the nations create greater and GREATER POWERS for peace?-or for MASS MURDER?

3. Are most of the people today really CONCERNED about the mortal danger of suicidal war for world dominion? 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, Matthew 24:39.

Are people AWAKE enough to world events even to expect it? Does the WORLD go on in its day-to-day routine WITHOUT HEEDING WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN?

4. Will human efforts to re-educate the world and plans for peace prevent annihilation? Isaiah 33: 7-8.

When ambassadors of peace weep bitterly-when cities are leveled-will GOD INTERVENE to save humanity? Verse 10.

5. Throughout the Bible, war is pictured as a penalty of sin-imposed as the result of lust or covetousness. James 4: 1-2.

Can ambassadors of the nations forgive sin? Can they therefore permanently stop WAR, which is its penalty?

Comment: World peace cannot come unless the penalty of sin is forgiven by an equal payment. Obviously ONLY CHRIST CAN STOP ALL WAR because He alone paid the full penalty-death

# MARDI GRAS: THE DEVIL'S CARNIVAL?



New Orleans Mardi Gras (Infrogmation)

By Bob Thiel

What is Mardi Gras? Is it a Christian holiday? Where did many of the practices associated with it come from? Does the Bible endorse it?

This article will briefly deal with those questions.

## Mardi Gras = Fat Tuesday

Mardi gras is translated to “fat Tuesday” in the English language.

The day before “Ash Wednesday” is sometimes called Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras and marks the end of the season known as “carnival” or “carnaval” (which is several days to many weeks long depending upon the culture). Essentially it is a time of having parties and indulging in practices that certain Catholics believe that they should give up on Ash Wednesday for the duration of Lent.

The Orthodox Catholic apologist Arnobius (died 330) warned against the type of fasts that pagans had and even seemed to warn about a Mardi Gras banquet followed by a fast:

What say you, O wise sons of Erectheus? what, you citizens of Minerva? The mind is eager to know with what words you will defend what it is so dangerous to maintain, or what arts you have by which to give safety to personages and causes wounded so mortally. This is no false mistrust, nor are you assailed with lying accusations: the infamy of your Eleusinia is declared both by their base beginnings and by the records of ancient literature, by the very signs, in fine, which you use when questioned in receiving the sacred things,—“ I have fasted, and drunk the draught; I have taken out of the mystic cist, and put into the wicker-basket; I

have received again, and transferred to the little chest” (Arnobius. Against the Heathen, Book V, Chapter 26).

The feast of Jupiter is tomorrow. Jupiter, I suppose, dines, and must be satiated with great banquets, and long filled with eager cravings for food by fasting, and hungry after the usual interval (Against the Heathen, Book VII, Chapter 32).

Hislop believed that Arnobius was teaching against what became known as Lent (Two Babylons, p. 106). Perhaps it should be noted that in the late 2nd century, Tertullian also warned against “Christians” participating in events that also honored Minerva...

Lent, however is a time that the Church of Rome adopted. Pope Gregory the Great (c.540-604) moved its beginning to a Wednesday.

Since those who follow the faith of the Church of Rome may abstain from meats, sweets, and/or other carnal pleasures during Lent, various ones decided that having a party the evening before and indulge in things that some may give up the next day was a good idea.

The idea of Mardi Gras did not come from the Bible.

## Mardi Gras is also called Carnaval

Mardi Gras is also known as Carnaval in some places.

Notice the following:

Although the origins of Carnaval are shrouded in mystery, some believe the fest began as a pagan celebration of spring’s arrival sometime during the Middle Ages. The Portuguese brought the celebration to Brazil in the 1500s, but it took on a decidedly local flavor by adopting Indian costumes and African rhythms. The word itself probably derives from the Latin “carne vale,” or “goodbye meat,” a reference to the Catholic tradition of giving up meat (and other fleshly temptations) during Lent...(http://www.sltrib.com/travel/ci\_7883824).

The origins of this are not a complete mystery as the sixth edition of the Columbia Encyclopedia states:

Carnival communal celebration, especially the religious celebration in Catholic countries that takes place just before Lent.

Since early times carnivals have been accompanied by parades, masquerades, pageants, and other forms of revelry that had their origins in pre-Christian pagan rites, particularly fertility rites that were connected



with the coming of spring and the rebirth of vegetation.

One of the first recorded instances of an annual spring festival is the festival of Osiris in Egypt; it commemorated the renewal of life brought about by the yearly flooding of the Nile. In Athens, during the 6th cent. BC, a yearly celebration in honor of the god Dionysus was the first recorded instance of the use of a float.

It was during the Roman Empire that carnivals reached an unparalleled peak of civil disorder and licentiousness. The major Roman carnivals were the Bacchanalia, the Saturnalia, and the Lupercalia. In Europe the tradition of spring fertility celebrations persisted well into Christian times, where carnivals reached their peak during the 14th and 15th cent.

Because carnivals are deeply rooted in pagan superstitions and the folklore of Europe, the Roman Catholic Church was unable to stamp them out and finally accepted many of them as part of church activity (<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-carnival.html>).

*Wikipedia* states:

Carnival is a festival traditionally held in Roman Catholic and, to a lesser extent, Eastern Orthodox societies. Protestant areas usually do not have carnival celebrations or have modified traditions, such as the Danish Carnival. The Brazilian Carnival is the longest celebration today, but many cities and regions worldwide celebrate with large, popular events. These include the Carnevale of Venice, Italy, of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands; of Torres Vedras, Portugal; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Rijeka, Croatia; Barranquilla, Colombia; and Trinidad and Tobago. In the United States, the famous Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama, date back to French and Spanish colonial times...

An inspiration for the carnival traditionally was that it marked the last time for celebration and special foods before Lent. The Lenten period was marked by practices of fasting, restricted food, and pious practices. Traditionally, no parties were held and people refrained from eating rich foods, such as meat, and in some cases, dairy, fats and sugar. The forty days of Lent serve to mark an annual time of turning to God and religious discipline.

While it is an integral part of the Christian calendar, parts of the carnival traditions likely reach back to pre-Christian times. The ancient Roman festivals of the Saturnalia and Bacchanalia may have been absorbed

in the Italian Carnival. The Saturnalia, in turn, may be based on the Greek Dionysia and Oriental festivals. While medieval pageants and festivals such as Corpus Christi were church-sanctioned celebrations, carnival was also a manifestation of medieval folk culture. Many local carnival customs are based on local pre-Christian rituals, for example the elaborate rites involving masked figures in the Swabian-Alemannic carnival.

Yes, many Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and others will participate in the revelries associated with carnival. And many will also observe Lent.

Here is some of what the American Catholic reports about it:

Mardi Gras, literally "Fat Tuesday," has grown in popularity in recent years as a raucous, sometimes hedonistic event...Carnival comes from the Latin words *carne vale*, meaning "farewell to the flesh." Like many Catholic holidays and seasonal celebrations, it likely has its roots in pre-Christian traditions based on the seasons. (Catholic Roots of Mardi Gras. American Catholic. <http://www.americancatholic.org/features/mardigras/>)

Essentially, this is a pagan holiday that the Catholics adopted as a compromise to keep members. Participants eat a lot (hence the name "fat Tuesday") before they begin a fast now called Lent - another observance with pagan origins. Parades involving under-clothed women are common.

Of course, Mardi Gras festivities are not biblical, despite their popularity.

Lent, which also is not of biblical origin, is becoming an excuse essentially for loud and wild parties all over the world, which stop the night before it.

## **Bird Masks and Indecent Exposure**

Some wear a variety of masks and costumes to celebrate Mardi Gras.

In some areas, I have noticed a tendency for partiers at Mardi Gras to wear bird masks. Notice some information about them:

The largest pandemic (Black Death) of 1348 - 1351 was brought to Europe by Genoese sailors from the East... It was believed that the mask with a beak that made doctors look like ancient Egyptian deities repelled the disease. The beak's function was to protect the doctor from foul smell of the sick. The tip of the beak was filled with strong-smelling herbs that made breathing

in the constant stench of plague easier. Plague Doctors constantly chewed garlic for prevention, and the beak protected others from the garlic odor. In addition, doctors put incense on a special sponge and placed it in the nose and ears. To prevent suffocation from this bouquet of smells, the beak had two small vents. The mask also had a glass insert for eyes protection. A long waxed coat and leather or oiled clothes made of thick fabric were required to avoid contact with infected patients. Often clothes were soaked with a mixture of camphor, oil and wax. In reality, it allowed to some extent to avoid bites of plague carriers - fleas, and protected from the airborne disease, although people were not aware of it at the time. The costume was completed with a leather hat with a hood with a cape under it covering the joint between the mask and clothing. Costumes varied depending on the location and doctors' financial resources. (<http://english.pravda.ru/society/stories/11-10-2013/125877-plague-0/>)

Notice that bird masks they were used by doctors in the Middle Ages, despite coming from ancient Egyptian deities. Most of these doctors also probably claimed to be Roman or Eastern Orthodox Catholic.

Some wear nearly nothing to celebrate Mardi Gras/Carnaval:

Carnival...five-day annual exaltation of music, booze and flesh...The rotund King Momo embodies Carnival, a raucous free-for-all where excesses are encouraged and the natural order of things is turned upside down: men dress as women...In addition to the elaborate two-day samba group parade and the high-dollar costumed balls where the rich spend a lot to wear very little in the most exclusive company, Rio's free, open-to-all street Carnival is bigger than ever. [http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2011/03/rio\\_celebrates\\_as\\_carnival\\_ope.html](http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2011/03/rio_celebrates_as_carnival_ope.html)

For as long as locals remember, the sight of people relieving themselves – and the stench of their steamy puddles – has been as much a part of Carnival as half-naked women, samba schools, drag queens, body paint, and drunk and sun-burned foreigners. ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/06/brazil-pee-patrols-carnival-public-urination\\_n\\_2631945.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=world](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/06/brazil-pee-patrols-carnival-public-urination_n_2631945.html?utm_hp_ref=world))

Mardi Gras is not just a week-long party for New Orleans bar-goers, millions of people around the country celebrate the raving party.

Mardi Gras is infamous for public nudity, chaotic parties, ingesting copious amounts of alcohol...

The Christian-themed holiday serves as one last hooray before Lent and giving up delicacies until Easter. People party hard for the week leading up to Lent and Ash Wednesday. This usually involves a massive parade, numerous mini-celebrations and masquerade balls sporting gold, green and purple, which represent power, faith and justice.

Citizens hold nothing back, including their sense of humility, during the few days included in Carnival season. Women typically strip for meaningless colorful beads, chocolate or plastic coins thrown from floats, and wear even less out at bars. The women have no shame and the men have no boundaries. (<http://www.fourthestatenewspaper.com/mobile/off-the-wall/mardi-gras-unexposed-mayhem-1.2781767>)

Mardi Gras is not truly a Christian holiday. It should be clear that excessive booze, cross-dressing, and flesh exposure does not seem to fit with the Bible's comments about modesty:

8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; 9 in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation...(1 Timothy 2:8-9)

13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:13-14)

Christians should not promote paganism nor lewdness.

## Some Call a Version of it the Devil's Carnival

Here are two reports about the version in Bolivia:

### Devil's Carnival (La Diablada)

Frommer's

When: 19 – 23 Feb 2009 (annual), Where: Oruro

Every spring, Oruro goes into carnival mode. The costumes on show are phenomenal and include anything from llama herders to Amazonian Indians sporting feathered head-dresses. The combination of colour, outlandish masks, music, dance and fireworks is bound to leave you wide-eyed.

One of the highlights are the devil dancers, the tradition

of which derives from a peculiar kind of devil worship. Oruro is a mining town and the locals, spending so much time underground, decided to adopt a god of the underworld. Christian tradition dictates that this must be the devil and the Oruro faithful thus adopted Satan, or Supay, as their god.

They would perform sacrifices to the devil on a regular basis to ensure their safety in the mines and the devil dancing in the carnival derives from their belief in Satan as their protector underground. ([http://events.frommers.com/sisp/index.htm?fx=event&event\\_id=5769](http://events.frommers.com/sisp/index.htm?fx=event&event_id=5769))

### **Festivals To Get You Going**

FF, UK – Feb 18, 2009

When: The 10 days around Ash Wednesday

Where: Oruro, Bolivia

What: The Oruro Carnival is Bolivia's largest annual celebration which draws in about 400,000 people every year thanks to its extraordinary centrepiece, La Diablada – The Dance Of The Devil.

The 4km long procession takes place on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and features so many entertainers that it can actually last up to 20 hours. The whole debacle follows a brightly costumes San Miguel character, and behind him come the more famous devils and a whole host of other beings.

The chief devil, Lucifer, get's treated to the best costume, obviously, and swans around in a velvet cape and ornate mask, naturally. The rest of the procession follows and is drenched in jewels and precious metals with offerings for the owner of the underground minerals, El Tio.

When the procession arrives at the city's football stadium there is a huge performance which shows the battle between good and evil – wow, that must take some dedicated choreographer! After it is apparent that good has triumphed over evil – horary – the dancers can finally head home and put their feet up. The festival continues throughout the week before the grand finale on the Monday after Ash Wednesday, which is known as the Dia del Agua – the day of water – and involves everyone pelting each other with water bombs. (<http://www.femalefirst.co.uk/music/events/tivals+To+Get+You+Going+Next+Week-7201.html>)

Celebrations for the devil and/or his plan are highly inappropriate for those who profess to follow Jesus. Jesus

did not observe anything like Mardi Gras or Carnival, nor did His disciples or their real followers. In the Spring time, they observed days such as Passover and Pentecost; the Bible is clear about this (Luke 2:41-42; 22:7-13; Acts 2:1).

Of course, not only is carnival not in the Bible, neither are Ash Wednesday or Lent (they did not come until centuries after the original apostles died) as none of them are original practices of the true Church. Nor are any practices of the Continuing Church of God today (we observe the same days that Jesus and His disciples did, like Passover and Pentecost).

Mardi Gras tends to be associated with drunkenness, lust, and other practices that the Bible condemns.

It really should not be considered as something that real Christians would participate in.

The practices associated with Mardi Gras and Carnival have "pre-Christian origins" and are not endorsed in the Bible. Partially because of their observance, they result in people not understanding God's plan of salvation for them.

Perhaps those who profess Christ should follow His example and observe the same days that He did in the Spring, such as Passover.

## What Did Jesus Mean – “I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE”?

Originally published as What Did Jesus Mean – “I Will Have Mercy, And Not Sacrifice”?, *Good News*, July – September 1973, pp. 13-15



(Photo by Nikodem Nijaki)

By Charles F. Hunting

Do we really know what He meant? Christ said, “Go ye and LEARN what that meaneth” (Matt. 9:13). Knowing can mean your eternal life!

What IS our goal – really? Is it a hazy, not too vivid, all-encompassing kind of thing, like “to get into the Kingdom,” “to show love,” or “to do the Work of God”?

Each of us must have a much more clearly defined, moment-by-moment goal than that. A goal so vivid and so real that we can confidently know we are fulfilling God’s desires – His purpose for our lives.

### The Starting Point

Everyone wants to live forever. But since we are merely physical human beings, we all face physical death.

Death is a sobering reality. As David said, our life is but a “handbreadth” (Ps. 39:5). We are here today and gone tomorrow.

Death is our final appointment in this life – then we simply no longer exist. Nothing physical survives. We are gone.

But spirit does survive. So our goal has to be one of spiritual survival.

### What Spiritual Survival Means

Look at it this way. Let’s suppose you want to hear music, so you compose a song. Then you hire an orchestra and a director. Finally you record their rendition by means of a tape recorder.

Afterwards the orchestra disbands. The sheet music is destroyed. Everything physical that went into making the beautiful sounds is gone. But a perfect record of the whole effort remains recorded on tape. It can be replayed in a tape player at any time.

In the same way, the spirit in man is the spiritual record of each one of us. This is what survives.

God put this spirit in man for a great purpose. Combined with our physical brain it enables us to think, to plan, to design. It gives us some of the imagination and even some of the desires of God Himself. And it provides God with a record of our attitudes, personality, acquired knowledge, our very character – all that which makes us US – after we die. That which is physical decays and dies, but the spirit in man remains indestructible, eternal.

But why does God want a record? The answer is that God plans to “replay,” reconstitute, rebuild – resurrect – us exactly according to the pattern of what we will have become in this life – same basic personality, same attitudes, same character. And so the basic element of our whole being which will survive our physical life is our CHARACTER. Only we will then be composed totally of spirit.

So what is being recorded in your case? Think before you answer. Whatever it is, it has to be recognized by God as something He wants to survive eternally – or He will not “replay” for the purpose of eternal preservation the record that has been made.

And here is where the problem lies. Some of us will fulfill the sickening prophecy of nonrecognition found in Matthew 7:21-23, where Christ said: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven... Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord ... and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.”

### Physical Works Not the Criterion

Did you notice something very frightening about those words? Christ was speaking of those who have identified Him and call Him Lord and Master like we do. They know He is the Messiah. But Christ does not know them. He does not recognize them. He is looking for something that He cannot find. Therefore He will not replay their “record” for eternal life.

We keep the Sabbath, we tithe, we keep the Holy Days, we may pass out songbooks or give the opening or closing prayer, or even be ordained as a deacon or deaconess. We may feel that these activities prove we are on our way into the Kingdom.

We may even be ordained into the ministry of Jesus Christ, give sermons, anoint the sick and see them healed, and



even cast out demons! Wouldn't you say that doing these things would be the obvious sign of a man of God, well on his way into God's Kingdom?

But read what Christ said: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (verse 22.)

Do you grasp that? They have done all of those things that most of us would regard as the final stamp of approval from God. They have done great works – preached inspired sermons, anointed the sick and seen people healed, and cast out demons.

But didn't the apostles heal the sick and cast out demons – before they were ever begotten of God's Spirit? Didn't Judas also do all these things? Yes they did! And so did some of the other religious Jews of Christ's time (Matt. 12:27).

So what chance do you have? You're a lay member of the Church. Perhaps you took the leadership training course but you are still not "used." Have you failed? May be – but not because you were not ordained or put on the visiting program. If that were true, what about the women in the Church who don't even pass out songbooks or lead in opening and closing prayers, and whose main duties are housekeeping?

Let's understand something! Your physical activities are not what ensures your receiving eternal life in God's Kingdom!

Recall Matthew 5:3-7. Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.... Blessed are the meek.... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. ... Blessed are the merciful..." etc.

Notice that all these are qualities (attitudes) of mind – of character. And it is these qualities that are required in an eternal son of God.

## **A Commandment-Keeping Failure!**

One young man came to Christ and asked, just as we all do, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). Notice that he went to the right person, just as we do. Christ gave him the same answer that we are aware of: "Thou knowest the commandments..." (verse 19).

The young man told Him that he had observed and kept those laws from his youth. Then Christ loved this young man. He wanted to help him. But there was a problem, and Christ knew that something was wrong. The problem was not physical; it was only expressed physically, but it was a spiritual problem. This man had a mind that coveted. So he was a commandment-keeping failure, just as were

the Israelites who tried to keep God's commandments in Moses' time.

God said of the ancient Israelites: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always..." (Deut. 5:29). In other words, there was a spiritual inability – a spiritual lack – that prevented them from completely comprehending the spiritual meaning of the great laws of God. But brethren, we should not have that lack; we should have the Spirit of God in our minds. God's laws are spiritual, and with His Spirit we can truly keep those laws in their spiritual intent.

## **The Kind of Mind to Cultivate**

Notice the important question asked in Micah 6:6-7: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?... Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Is God going to be pleased with burnt offerings (physical works)? Shall we find approval from God with great tithes and offerings?

Now notice the startling answer in verse 8. "He hath showed you, O man, what is good; and what doth God require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Here is what God wants: He wants you to "love mercy." Is there anything physical about that? Of course not. So be pursuing a merciful mind.

Are you happy when somebody who really deserves harsh punishment is forgiven and does not have to pay the penalty of sins? Are you sure?

What happens when somebody has wronged you? Do you secretly hope they will be punished – that they will have to pay the just recompense for slandering or harming you? We must come to have a merciful mind that just loves to see people forgiven and allowed to escape the deserved penalty for their sins. For this is the mind of Christ! This is the spiritual and mental yardstick by which we can measure and examine our own mind in every action of our lives.

## **The Greatness of God**

"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? . . . (Isa. 66:1.)

In effect, God is saying, "That vast expanse of the universe is all mine. The earth, which is so huge to you and to which you are limited, to me is about like something you would put your feet up on in your own home. This is just a part of my greatness. So what can you possibly do for me?"

“ ‘For all those things hath my hand made . . .’ (verse 2) – look how puny your efforts are physically in comparison to the tremendous vastness of my creation in space and its awesome unmeasurable power!”

Can we do anything to compare with this? Of course not. Anything physical we would do in comparison with what God has already done is total futility.

But God will still come to know us, recognize us and ultimately use our spirit-in-man “record,” because of one thing. He will look at (or “look to”) us if each one of us is of a “poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my [God’s] word” (verse 2). Christ said that God seeks those who worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Do you see anything here about physical accomplishments? Neither mental capacity nor a lack of it, nor race, nor sex, nor personal poverty can exclude any one of us from attaining to those things which God is looking for. A poverty-stricken paraplegic can still possess a poor and contrite spirit, for God is looking for something spiritual.

So acquiring and developing this spiritual character attribute must be our daily, hour-by-hour goal in life.

## Moses Understood

Moses will be in God’s Kingdom not because of what he did physically, but because he “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3).

The meek are going to rule the earth (Matt. 5:5). Are you pursuing a goal of meekness? Don’t be deceived. It is not difficult to tell if you are one of the meek.

Meekness is totally different from feelings of inferiority. One who is meek is very teachable. He does not resent correction, regardless of the source from which it comes. You will not find a harsh, unbending or critical attitude in the spiritually minded keeper of the law. One who is meek is easily approached by family, friends and the ministers.

Moses took instruction and correction from a man beneath him in rank. Even with his vast experience in government in Pharaoh’s court and with the tremendous power that God had displayed through him, when his father-in-law came to him and told him he was wrong, Moses listened and learned (Ex. 18:13-27).

He did not take the attitude some of us display when one younger than ourselves gives a sermon or sermonette, or has a suggestion. Moses was not self-opinionated, or puffed up with his great office, or with his age or with what he had accomplished.

Was Moses merciful? When Miriam was struck with

leprosy for criticizing Moses, he cried out to God to heal her instantly (Num. 12). Would this have been our attitude?

## Why David Will Rule

Meekness, a broken and contrite spirit, and all of the other attributes of Matthew 5 form the yardstick by which we can measure ourselves in God’s eyes. It is not sufficient to put this on merely as a Sabbath façade, but it must be a continuous, ever-present goal in every activity – whether it is in our relationship with our employers, our wives or husbands, our children or any other human being.

Only this type of mind will be capable of safely handling the great power God is going to put in our hands.

Would you want a jealous, envious, revengeful type of person to rule over you? Obviously not. Neither does God.

Do you mentally hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6)? With deep emotion David said, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps. 119:18). Why? Because David realized his safety was not in wandering from the commandments of God. He knew that if his ways were directed by God’s law, he would not make mistakes and be ashamed (verses 6, 10).

But what did David do when he was cursed and had stones thrown at him? Did he take vengeance? Notice a spiritual mind in action when Abishai, David’s bodyguard, asked if he might destroy a man who deserved death. David replied: “If he is cursing because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David,’ who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’ . . . let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord has bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for this cursing of me today” (II Sam. 16:10-12, RSV).

Would you react that way in similar circumstances?

David will be in God’s family not because of his military or other physical accomplishments, but because of his great spiritual strength and a mind that God and Christ will recognize. He loved God’s law and meditated on it – until, by means of the Holy Spirit, he came to understand the spirit of the law.

## The Rest of the Story

What is the spirit of the law? The Pharisees were very strict keepers of the law. But Christ called them hypocrites because they missed the most important part of the law. Christ said: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith . . .” (Matt. 23:23).

# KEEPING THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Did you notice that the most important aspects of the law, the “weightier matters,” are good judgment (what we might call balance today), mercy and faith? These are spiritual things, And this is why “the law is spiritual” (Rom. 7:14).

“The law hath dominion over a man as long as he lives” (Rom. 7:1), but as true Christians “we should serve in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (verse 6).

You may not steal, but are you envious, jealous, stubborn or revengeful?

One of the biggest problems we have in the Church of God today is the breaking of the law of faith. But God says without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6).

Can we begin to understand why David said, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps. 119:165)? Or why Isaiah said, “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (Isa. 32:17)?

Both David and Isaiah understood the spiritual purpose of the law. They had the mind of Christ! Do we?

The greatest expression of the mind of God is mercy. It caused Christ to be willing to die for and at the hands of those who deserved to die. In His most horrible moment, forsaken, beaten beyond recognition, He said: “Father, forgive them . . .” (Luke 23:34).

The same Jesus Christ was quoting from Hosea 6:6 – an Old Testament prophet – when He said: “Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice” – why? – “for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:13).

Have you learned what it means to have mercy?

(Editor’s note: As the above article shows, Jesus listed mercy as one of the three “weightier matters of the law” along with judgment and faith. Mercy itself is so important that according to James 2:13, “Mercy triumphs over judgment.” Hence mercy is, in that sense, even “weightier” than judgment. Mercy is very important to God and must also be very important to Christians.)

The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, enjoins keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread, and they were kept by early faithful Christians (see Should Christians Keep the Days of Unleavened Bread?).

Notice the following from the Apostle Paul:

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

So, how does one “keep the feast”?

There are a few things that one should do. One, is to examine oneself (2 Corinthians 13:5). Another is to remove all the leaven from one’s house and if applicable, automobile. You do not give the leaven to someone else to give it back to you later. (Note: Brewer’s yeast and autolyzed yeast extract are not leavening agents and do not have to be removed—but baking soda, bicarbonate of soda, yeast, and baking powder are leavening agents and they and foods that they are in should be removed.)

Christians are to keep the two holy days (similar to how week Sabbaths are kept) which are the first and seventh day of unleavened bread, avoid leaven, and eat unleavened bread:

6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8 But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.’ (Leviticus 23:6-8).

During the Days of Unleavened Bread, Christians should eat at least a small amount of unleavened bread each day (that can be made from any grain or grain-like substitute), but not eat any bread with leaven (such as those puffed up with yeast or baking soda).

The Days of Unleavened Bread for 2014 run from sunset April 14th through sunset April 21st.

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



Continuing Church of God [www.ccog.org](http://www.ccog.org)  
Daily Bible News Prophecy [www.cogwriter.com](http://www.cogwriter.com)

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

**CCOG.IN** This is a website targeted towards those of Indian heritage.

**CCOG.EU** This is a website targeted toward Europe. It has materials in many European languages.

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

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

---



***BibleNewsProphecy channel***  
[www.youtube.com/BibleNewsProphecy](http://www.youtube.com/BibleNewsProphecy)

***ContinuingCOG channel***  
[www.youtube.com/continuingcog](http://www.youtube.com/continuingcog)

---

The leading pastor in *Continuing Church of God* is a regular radio guest using radio to reach audiences in many areas.

The *Continuing Church of God* also uses printed and electronic magazines, books, and weekly letters to the Brethren to also support Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20

