

The Good News

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What Is the Second "Beast" of Rev. 13?

*John saw a beast having "two horns like a lamb," but it spoke as a dragon!
It imposed the MARK of the first "beast." What is this second lamb-like "beast"?*

by Herbert W. Armstrong

SATAN has his civil government on earth. He gave it "his power, and his seat, and great authority."

He also has an ecclesiastical organization—a CHURCH—as his instrumentality in deceiving the world. In 2 Corinthians 11:14, we find Satan is transformed into an "ANGEL OF LIGHT." According to Rev. 12:9 and 20:3, he has DECEIVED the whole world. How?

Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Satan has HIS ministers who pretend to be the ministers of righteousness, but are actually false apostles, deceitful workers, calling themselves the ministers of Christ! Therefore they claim to be CHRISTIAN ministers. They are the MANY, not the few, because all prophecies say it is the MANY, not the few, who have been DECEIVED. Satan's main labor for six thousand years has been the *deceiving of the world*.

The "Two-Horned Beast"

Now turn to the 13th chapter of Revelation, beginning with verse 11:

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a LAMB, and he spake as a DRAGON."

Who—what—is this "beast"?

Some say it will be the United States

aligned with the Papacy. Some believe it is a federation of Protestant churches. Others declare it is the Pan-American Union. MOST church organizations ignore this very vital subject completely, or say frankly, "WE DO NOT KNOW!"

Why this ignorance, when the answer is so plain? Yes, why indeed?

The Bible Interpretation

Remember, first, THE BIBLE INTERPRETS ITS OWN SYMBOLS! When men put their OWN interpretation on Bible symbols, their conclusions are always false!

Notice, after John saw one "BEAST," which we have proved to be the ROMAN EMPIRE, he now sees ANOTHER—a different "beast" rise up. We have learned that "BEAST" is a symbol for a kingdom, or government (Dan. 7:17,23), and the term represents either the kingdom or its leader, as the case may be (Dan. 7:17,23).

So this other "beast" with the two horns is the prophecy of another kingdom or government. In these prophecies, God pictures to us the earthly Gentile governments as the wild beasts whose characteristics describe them. This two-horned "beast" appeared as a LAMB. But actually it spake as a DRAGON—its true

characteristic—for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Mat. 12:34).

What does the word "LAMB" symbolize, in the Bible? The answer is, CHRIST (John 1:29; Rev. 17:14). And "DRAGON" is a symbol of the DEVIL (Rev. 12:9; 20:2).

So here is some kingdom or government masquerading as that of CHRIST, or the KINGDOM OF GOD, but actually being a government of SATAN!

Christ did not set up a government (kingdom), at His first appearing on earth. After His resurrection the disciples asked Him if He would at that time restore the KINGDOM (Acts 1:6); but He did not. The Church is *not* the Kingdom. Because some thought it was, Jesus spoke the parable of Luke 19:11-27 to show that He first must ascend to His Father's throne in heaven to receive the royal power to become King of kings, and then return, as He now soon shall, to set up the world-ruling Kingdom of God.

But Satan is a deceiver, and he has deceived the world into supposing his (Satan's) CHURCH, and system of churches, is the Kingdom of God.

Now notice carefully verse 12:

"And he exerciseth ALL the power of

the first beast before him."

The first "beast" is the Roman Empire. Here is ANOTHER government, also controlled by Satan, pretending to be CHRIST's government, the Kingdom of God, taking, exercising, using, employing, ALL the power of the first kingdom, the Roman Empire.

Now WHEN? "He exerciseth ALL the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to WORSHIP *the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed*" (verse 12). So, it was AFTER the deadly wound (of 476 A.D.) was healed. It was healed when Justinian brought about the restoration of the Empire in the West in 554 A.D. Consequently this RELIGIOUS government took over, exercised, by ruling, all the power of the Roman Empire AFTER 554 A.D.

Did a Church Government Rule Rome?

So here we have pictured a government—a RELIGIOUS government, appearing as CHRIST's government, masquerading as the KINGDOM OF GOD, actually ruling the civil Roman Empire, AFTER 554 A.D. Was there such a government? Indeed there was! And only ONE!!

Prior to 554, Justinian had written a letter to the pope, acknowledging his supremacy. And when he ascended the throne at Rome in 554, he was crowned by the pope, before whom he kneeled! The Roman Empire, thus restored to continue until 1814 (1260 years), became known as "The HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE." We read in history that the popes were accepted as the Vicars of Christ, which means "IN PLACE OF Christ." The teaching was that the Second Coming of Christ had occurred—Christ had returned to earth, as KING of kings and as LORD of lords, in the person of the popes. The millennium had begun. For the entire 1260 years, the emperors accepted the popes as such, ruling ALL nations with a "rod of iron" as Christ is to do WHEN He really comes.

Consequently they gave over their power to the popes. The Church was organized as a GOVERNMENT—as a dual, two-fold government (its TWO "horns" or kingdoms—for the "horns" symbolize kingdoms also—see Dan. 7:24). It embodied CHURCH government, and it also was a STATE, or civil government, always occupying a certain amount of territory over which it, alone, ruled as an independent sovereign state—in addition to actually ruling over the vast civil kingdom called "The Holy Roman Empire." Even today, it is a separate, independent, sovereign STATE. Most nations send ambassadors to it, just as they do to the United States, or to Italy, England, or Russia.

Notice, this second "beast" was to wield power over ALL THE EARTH, because it was to CAUSE the earth, and them that dwell therein to WORSHIP this first "beast" "whose deadly wound was healed"—after 554.

In the Encyclopaedia Britannica, article "MILLENNIUM," you will read the history of this very event—of how the "Holy Roman Empire" was called the "Kingdom of God upon earth." They claimed the MILLENNIUM had arrived!

Notice verse 14: "and DECEIVETH them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." Verse 13 says "he doeth great wonders."

All Nations Deceived

So notice these three points:

- (1) This "beast" performs miracles.
- (2) He performed them "in the sight of" the "Holy Roman Empire," or first beast.
- (3) With them he DECEIVED all nations.

Where else, in the Bible prophecies, do we find these same identical facts?

First, note Rev. 17. Here is pictured a woman. In II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-27, and elsewhere, we learn that "woman" is a symbol for CHURCH. This woman is a fallen woman—an apostate church—and a great one, called "the great whore" pictured as ruling over many nations, verses 1, 15.

In verse 3, this great false church is pictured sitting on a "beast" "having seven heads and ten horns." A woman riding a horse guides, controls, the horse. It does her bidding. It is well known by ALL who understand Bible prophecy that this 17th chapter of Revelation pictures the Roman Catholic Church ruling over the so-called "Holy Roman Empire."

Notice, verse 18, she is "that great city"—"which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Notice, verse 2, the inhabitants of the earth have been DECEIVED by this great false church. Also Rev. 18:3, she has deceived all nations.

Next, notice II Thes. 2:3-4. The day of Christ—and the Coming of Christ—shall not come, until there be a falling away, and a "MAN OF SIN" be revealed. He exalts himself above all that is called God. As God, he sits in a Temple claimed to be the Temple of God, shewing himself to deceive people into accepting him AS God. God is our HOLY FATHER. This man, then, would claim the same title. This wicked man is to be DESTROYED at, and by, Christ's coming (verse 8). Notice verse 9: "even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with ALL POWER and SIGNS (miracles) and lying WONDERS, and with all DECEIVABLENESS of unrighteousness."

Here is the head of a vast ecclesiastical

empire, performing miracles and lying wonders, with which he DECEIVES people everywhere.

At Armageddon!

This deceiving religious ruler will still be active clear down to the Battle of ARMAGEDDON and the Second Coming of Christ! In Rev. 16:13-16 are described three foul spirits. They come from the "dragon," which is the devil; from the "beast," which is the civil Roman ruler; and from the mouth of the false prophet associated WITH the Roman ruler—the pope. "For" continues verse 14, "they are the spirits of devils, WORKING MIRACLES, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." And they are gathered, finally, at ARMAGEDDON! Note it! Yet future, the Roman ruler, as the Roman Empire is again restored, along with the pope—and all in the power and influence of the DEVIL! Working MIRACLES! All prophecies concerning them show these powers doing the same things!

Now notice the last battle of ARMAGEDDON. It is in Rev. 19:19-20. Here is pictured the "Beast"—"and WITH him the false prophet (the pope) that wrought miracles before him, WITH WHICH HE DECEIVED them that had received the MARK of the Beast, and them that had worshipped HIS IMAGE."

Note it! Compare with the two-horned beast of Rev. 13:11-17.

- (1) BOTH perform miracles.
- (2) BOTH perform them before, or in the sight of, the 'Beast.'
- (3) WITH them, BOTH the False Prophet and two-horned Beast DECEIVE them that have the MARK of the Beast—cause them to receive that mark! (Rev. 13:16).

Certainly, then, this two-horned beast and the false prophet and the man of sin, and the woman that rode the Beast are all one and the same thing—the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH with its Pope, its other bishops, its priests and deacons, comprising the hierarchy of order!

Now did the two-horned beast deceive the very ones who have the MARK of the Beast? He did! Continue in Rev. 13:

"And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth"—HOW? ". . . saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an IMAGE to the beast, which had the wound by the sword and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should both speak, and CAUSE as many as would not worship the image of the Beast should be killed. AND HE CAUSETH ALL, BOTH SMALL AND GREAT, RICH AND POOR, FREE AND BOND, to receive a

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What Is the SIGN of a Christian?

*Your Bible proclaims a definite SIGN
by which God knows you are one of His children.
Yet you may have been blinded to it!*

by Rod Meredith

HAVE you ever wondered why all the "Christian" churches claim to follow Christ and yet each one teaches something different?

Did you ever stop to ask yourself why you believe certain religious teachings and reject others? These ideas have been planted in your mind since you were a small child. You probably *never stopped to question them*. But now it is time to "search the scriptures" as Christ said.

Prove all things and hold fast to what is good. (I Thess. 5:21). Diligently study what follows with your Bible. This is TRUTH, and truth *always* bears examination.

Be honest with yourself and God!

You are about to read a brief but straightforward explanation of how men have *lost* the very sign that would set them apart from the rest of the world as God's children.

The God that created you gave a *sign* that you MUST possess if you are to become His child and inherit eternal life. It is *more important than you realize!* So free your mind from prejudice, and weigh what is to follow with an open and a searching mind.

A Deceived World

This present world is on the road to DESTRUCTION! Honest persons are admitting that world conditions bear this out. But very few people understand the great underlying CAUSE of this world's trouble.

It is *not* Communism, Fascism, or any other ideology. These are only the misfortunate end results that occur when godless, materialistic men try to solve the world's problems by human reason. Yes, "science" and "reason" are almost worshipped today in every avenue of life—and even in many "popular" churches!

Men and man-made churches have forsaken the *way* of God as expressed in the *laws* of life contained in your Bible.

That's the real CAUSE of all this world chaos! Men have *lost right knowledge of the true God* because they have lost the SIGN by which they could know they were the children of their creator.

Paul said that Christ came to "deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). This worldly system in which we live is called "Babylon" in the Bible, and Christians are commanded to *come out* of it. (Rev. 18:1-4). The great church (pictured as a woman) which heads this system is called "Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother of Harlots and Abominations of The Earth." (Rev. 17:5). Notice that this mother church has daughters which are called *harlots*. She is also the mother of many *Abominations*. These abominations, which have blinded you to God's *sign* for true Christians, are false doctrines which this false church and her daughter churches have palmed off as "Christianity." These are the doctrines *you learned as a child* and probably didn't stop to question.

False Teaching Prophesied

The apostle Paul told the Christians of his day, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30).

This prophecy has been fulfilled!

Why do we have nearly three hundred different religious denominations, each teaching something different from the others? Doesn't that show that most, if not all of them, have departed from the true faith of Jesus Christ?

In the book of Jude we are exhorted: "*earnestly contend* for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude said to *contend* for the true faith because there were already in his day false preachers creeping in and *perverting* the truth just as Paul prophesied earlier. In verse 4 of Jude, we read that ungodly men were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, or license to disobey God. They were making God's grace or *pardon* from the penalty of the law an excuse to disobey the law. They were turning grace into sin. (I John 3:4).

These false preachers were beginning to introduce the idea that God's commandments were done away or changed.

That is a LIE and the Bible brands it so! I John 2:4 states: "He that saith

I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a *liar*, and the truth is not in him." There is a *plain statement out of God's word*. Do you believe it? It says that the "popular" ministers (who tell you that God's laws are done away) are *liars*.

Christ kept His father's commandments. (John 15:10). He set us an example to follow. (I Peter 2:21). Paul told the Corinthians, who were mainly *Gentiles*, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (I Cor. 11:1).

There are many human arguments trying to prove that God's laws have been changed. But Christ said that *heaven and earth would pass* before the Father's laws could cease to function! He showed that to be great in God's kingdom, we will have both to *do* and *teach* the least of His commandments. (Matthew 5:17-19).

Especially do the false churches which are a part of the babylon or confusion of this world seek to hide the SIGN by which we might be kept in a right relationship with God for our peace and happiness.

In this way, these *false ministers* are part of the real CAUSE of all the suffering in this sin-sick and deluded world! They have *not* taught men to "live by every word of God." Instead, they have substituted their own ideas and traditions. Christ said of such, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Mark 7:7). If you set aside God's laws, your *worship* is all in vain—to no good purpose or effect.

God is going to punish these false preachers for misleading His people Israel—Britain and America. Read Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 which show God's anger against these false shepherds or preachers. God will require the blood of the people at their hands!

But IF you are *honestly seeking the truth*, you may escape all this punishment prophesied to come upon this worldly system. You need to have the SIGN God gave to keep you in a right knowledge and relationship to Him.

God's Sign

God made a certain *sign* from the

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very beginning to keep man in continual remembrance of Him as Creator. This was done long before the so-called "law of Moses" was ever given. As His sign, God picked the most enduring thing there is—a certain space of time which comes around regularly every seven days.

This sign was a special creation. But to create it God rested from his other work. In Genesis 2:2-3 we read, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God had created and made." Right here God sanctified or made holy the seventh day.

Later, God revealed His Sabbath to the children of Israel after they had come out of Egyptian bondage. (Exodus 16). Then he told them to "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." Notice that God told them to keep this day holy. They could not make it holy. Only God could do that. But He told them to keep it that way.

In Exodus 31:12-18, God said, "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a

sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." Read this entire passage! Notice that the sabbath was the SIGN to keep the people in remembrance of God as Creator. It was to be a perpetual covenant between God and His people. This sign designated who God's people were. Being made after the old covenant (Exodus 24), this covenant was NOT a part of it.

Then how does this apply to Christians today?

The Bible says that if you are a Christian, you are spiritually an Israelite! Galatians 3:29 tells us, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed (an Israelite!), and heirs according to the promise." Your Bible shows this from cover to cover! Romans 11 explains that Gentiles must be grafted into Israel to be saved. You must become a spiritual Israelite to obtain salvation. The Gentiles who were not given this SIGN were without hope and without God. (Eph. 2:12). As long as you follow the practices and laws of the Gentiles you can't be saved.

When given to physical, flesh-born Israel, this covenant punished by death any breaking of the SIGN. Today, since

the administration of the death penalty by the Levites and judges is not being done (2 Cor. 3:7,8), and since all races whether Israelite or Gentile are grafted into spiritual Israel (Romans 11:24), the wilful refusal to keep this sign is punishable by death—the second death. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorcer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28,29)

Was the SIGN Ever Changed?

The world has been DECEIVED by the great false mother church! You probably have been taught since you were a little child that the first day of the week, Sunday, has replaced the sabbath day, which is God's SIGN between Himself and His people. You CAN'T find that anywhere in your Bible!

"The sabbath was made for MAN, and not man for the sabbath." (Mark 2:27). Jesus didn't say the sabbath was made for the Jew, but Sunday for MAN! He said the sabbath was made for MAN. For absolute proof that the sabbath was never changed to the first day of the week in the New Testament, write for Mr. Armstrong's booklet "Which Day Is the Sabbath of the New Testament?"

As God never changed the sabbath, then our present day Sunday observance must have come about as a result of HUMAN REASONING.

Do you want to live by the word of God and have the SIGN which proves you know and love God (I John 5:2,3), or the traditions of men which BRAND you with the MARK of disobedience to the Creator?

You may have been sincere in thinking that you were doing the right thing in following these human ideas. I used to observe these pagan days myself. But I have had to repent of this heathenism! So must anyone to be a true child of God.

By observing Sunday instead of keeping God's holy Sabbath, you are deliberately flouting the authority of your Creator! You are acknowledging to God Almighty that you esteem and worship the institutions and traditions of men above the very Creator himself. Your preachers have taught you that you should get into the institutions of this world and be a friend of the world. But God inspired James to write, "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

How different the word of God is from these teachings of men! Don't you Please continue on page 16

RADIO LOG

"The WORLD TOMORROW"

Herbert W. Armstrong analyzes today's news, with the prophecies of The WORLD TOMORROW!

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Is This the ONLY Day of Salvation?

Is there a contest between God and Satan—God doing His best to get everybody saved—Satan trying to keep them lost—with time now fast running out on God?

by Dr. C. P. Meredith

GOD IS A just God! Paul, in Ephesians 2:11-12, says Gentiles formerly had no chance of salvation: "Being in time past Gentiles . . . at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens . . . and strangers from the covenants of promise, HAVING NO HOPE, AND WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD."

Could a just God condemn to the lake of fire those people who died before the gospel was brought to them by Peter (Acts 10) and Paul (Acts 13)?

And what about the people living now in Russia and similar countries where religion is suppressed? They did not choose to be born into those godless nations. Are they lost forever because they never heard the TRUE Bible teachings?

Clearly, these people who have not heard the way of salvation and the name of Jesus Christ ARE LOST FOREVER IF THERE IS NO FUTURE OPPORTUNITY OF SALVATION! They have not received the Holy Spirit, the only means by which God will resurrect anyone to eternal life (Romans 8:11; I Corinthians 15:42).

God's Desire for Mankind

It is God's desire that all avail themselves of the opportunity for salvation: "God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (I Timothy 2:3, 4.) Some will say, "Oh, so everyone is going to be saved—universal salvation." The Bible does not teach this.

Notice what 2 Peter 3:9-10 says: The Eternal "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is God's will or wish that all would come to a knowledge of the truth so they would repent and be saved from the penalty of sin—death. But some people are not going to repent—for if all repented and met the conditions to eternal salvation there would be no necessity for casting human beings into the

lake of fire of Revelation 20:15 and 21:8 which will destroy the wicked. Malachi 4:1-3 absolutely disproves the doctrine of universal salvation derived from heathen philosophy, because the wicked will be ashes, *neither root nor branch*. There is no possibility of a resurrection from the lake of fire.

Yes, God is desirous that ALL of us may attain eternal life. He is "long suffering," not being quick to judge us—desirous that *all* will accept HIS WAY OF LIFE as revealed in the Holy Bible so we may become his spirit born children at the resurrection.

The Common Attitude

"Well," many might say, "it certainly seems from what the Bible says, that God would not be fair if he did not give those people who lived in the Old Testament times a chance in the future; but all of US since Christ, are having our chance now and we must be saved by the time Christ comes again or we will be lost."

Yes, that does SEEM to be the idea and almost everyone today believes it to be a fact! It appears to be so evident that no one even questions the matter. IT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED! Did you ever hear it questioned? No, you probably NEVER HAVE in your lifetime! People do not investigate! "EVERYBODY CAN'T BE WRONG"—IS THE POPULAR ATTITUDE!

It would APPEAR from the common teachings that salvation is open to EVERYONE today and that all one has to do now is to join a church and be "saved." IS EVERYONE FREE TO ACCEPT SALVATION AND BE SAVED ANY TIME ONE WISHES TO BE? Or are some blinded to salvation in this day?

Let us see what the Bible teaches about this subject. It is neither discussed nor understood by the churches today, yet it concerns every one of you!

Israel Blinded

Note what Moses said to the Israelites shortly after he had led them out from

Egypt: "ye have seen all that the Eternal did . . . in Egypt . . . those great miracles: yet THE ETERNAL (not Satan) hath NOT given you an heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." (Deuteronomy 29:4). GOD, HIMSELF, HAD BLINDED ISRAEL! They would not have known about this blindness EXCEPT THEY HAD BEEN TOLD!

Observe also what God said he would do to Ephraim, head of the ten tribes of Israel, after they had sinned: "For with STAMMERING lips and ANOTHER TONGUE will I speak to this people—the WORD of the Eternal was upon them precept upon precept; line upon line—here a little, and there a little (this sounds like the way in which the Bible is written today, does it not?)—THAT THEY MIGHT GO (not come), and FALL BACKWARD (not be rescued), and BE BROKEN and SNARED AND TAKEN." (Isaiah 28:11 and 13).

What had the tribe of Ephraim done? It had sinned (verses 7 and 8)—and what did God do? GOD HID HIS LAWS which, if obeyed, would have preserved them from being punished. Because they rejected knowledge (Hosea 4:6) GOD BLINDED THEM so they would continue to sin and suffer its consequences. Why?

Now notice Ezekiel, chapter twenty. This chapter is VERY IMPORTANT for it is a summary of all of God's dealings with rebellious Israel. Particularly take note of verses 11 and 12: "and I gave them my statutes and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them . . . moreover also I gave them my sabbaths."

What did God do when they rebelled? Verses 24 and 25 tell us: "Because they had not executed my judgments . . . have polluted my sabbaths . . . therefore I GAVE THEM ALSO STATUTES THAT WERE NOT GOOD AND JUDGMENTS WHEREBY THEY SHOULD NOT LIVE." God said he gave them over to other laws by which THEY SHOULD NOT LIVE! Statutes that would bring death—"the statutes of the heathen . . .

and of the kings of Israel." (II Kings 17:8; Acts 7:42).

ALL THROUGH THE BIBLE, after it tells of God's punishments, it quotes what God said was his reason: "THAT THEY MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE ETERNAL." This phase occurs over fifty times, with slight variations. Ezekiel 20:26 is an example. Yes, God wants everyone to *truly know him!* Whoever rejects knowledge will be punished in order to learn of God and his ways by hard experience.

But what was the reason for blinding Israel? Because they were lost forever?

Why God Blinds

God has made man's natural mind so that it wants to do things that are *contrary* to HIS laws: "The carnal mind (with which we are ALL born) is enmity against God." (Romans 8:7). Read also Romans 3:9-18, Galatians 5:19-21 and John 3:19. "The flesh (man's natural heart and mind) LUSTETH against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are *contrary* the one to the other." (Galatians 5:17.) ALL, as originally born, have a desire—LUST—to go contrary to God's laws! (James 1:14 and Psalms 81:11-12).

A person's carnal mind remains at enmity against God *until* that person becomes sick and tired of the RESULTS of HIS OWN ways and REPENTS of them, and calls on God to CHANGE HIM by giving him the Holy Spirit—the very mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5).

God has made it natural for man to reject truth and to do what is right in his own eyes, to want to sin—to want to break God's laws. It is by man's own carnal mind that God blinds him, not to destroy him, but to bring him to repentance. Concerning blinded Israel Paul said: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Romans 11:32). So ancient Israel isn't lost forever.

Human beings, like Israel of old, want to do what *they think* is right. God, in love and wisdom, blinds human beings who by nature reject the truth so they will unwittingly SIN ALL THE MORE OFTEN and thereby LEARN THEIR LESSON ALL THE MORE DEEPLY—the lesson that *human customs are wrong and only by living according to the commands of the Eternal can one be happy!*

The Creation of Character Takes Time

Nothing that God has ever created begins to compare with the delicate thing that he is creating in man—CHARACTER. God knows that it TAKES TIME to do this. He, himself, said "O

that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me and keep my commandments always." (Deuteronomy 5:29). God is NOT IN A HURRY TO SAVE ALL UNTIL THEY HAVE LEARNED THEIR LESSON. That is the reason he has allowed 6000 years for mankind to learn it.

The Eternal let Israel try various forms of human GOVERNMENT as the books of Judges and Kings explain. Human beings are *blinded* to the Kingdom of God because they believe that their own forms of government are right. Today, we have democracies, dictatorships, and other forms of government. NONE HAVE BROUGHT HAPPINESS!

God has actually given the attitude of a wild animal to Gentiles because they would not accept him as supreme ruler (Daniel 4:16-17 and Romans 1:28). They will, by having this mind, bring *increased* misery upon themselves and ultimately will learn that God rules and that his government and laws are good.

Christ, in his day, did not try to disturb the blindness that was over man's mind. To the disciples he said: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but unto them (the vast majority) that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see and NOT perceive; and hearing they may hear and NOT understand." (Mark 4:11-12). The parables were spoken to HIDE the truth, not to make the meaning clearer.

MAN DOES NOT KNOW HIS OWN INABILITY TO RULE EITHER HIMSELF OR THE WORLD as compared with the ability of God! The Father wants us to develop our initiative and ability but he also wants us to recognize that HE is the One to whom we should go with our problems and that his laws are best, and that he is the true ruler of the earth. He wants us to know that we must have his very spirit within us to fulfill our desires (Acts 2:38).

Job did not recognize God in his true character, and God took steps to make him understand. Job was too self-righteous (Job 32:1). He spoke constantly of *his own* righteousness. It was always "my integrity" and "my righteousness." (Job 27:3-6). Only God is completely righteous for "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). God finally humbled Job and he repented. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5, 6).

Of all things that God has ever created, man is far superior to others

in his ability to reason, and also in his ability to make things. BUT—these abilities are of no value to God—indeed they are a hindrance—if man's WILL or desire to use these abilities is *against* God's will! "Thy kingdom come. THY WILL BE DONE on earth, as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). GOD wishes HIS will to be done in us!

When man has had an opportunity to exercise *his own will* and seen the evil results of it, he is ready to have his old self—his own will—killed, "Buried with him (Christ) by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4), and WILLING to present his body as a LIVING sacrifice to God—a living body through which God can carry out HIS WILL! (Romans 12:1).

Are the Majority Blinded?

Paul, speaking to the Romans concerning their Gentile forefathers, said: "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a REPROBATE MIND . . . being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness . . . full of envy" (Romans 1:28-29). Again, "For God hath concluded them (all mankind) all in unbelief that he may have mercy on all," Romans 11:32. The GENTILES were blinded then and THEY ARE BLINDED TODAY! ALL NATIONS are blinded today!

What about modern Israel—the democratic nations of Europe and America? "Even so at this present time there is a REMNANT (just a remnant) according to the ELECTION OF GRACE" (Romans 11:5). A FEW had received the chance of salvation—but notice verse 7: ". . . the REST (the VAST MAJORITY) were BLINDED." The same is true today: the few, whosoever *will*, may come to God, but the vast majority *won't* because they are blinded to God's truth by thinking their ways are better. Jesus never once said that everyone is in this age called to salvation. Paul said: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." (I Cor. 1:26). Only those drawn by the Spirit of God and who come through Jesus can approach God, John 6:44.

So we see that the VAST MAJORITY OF ALL RACES TODAY ARE BLINDED! The PREACHERS are AMONG THESE BLINDED: "MANY shall follow their (the false teachers) pernicious ways,"—the MANY—not the few! (II Peter 2:1-2). ". . . BROAD is the WAY that leadeth to destruction . . .", Matt. 7:13. People today are IN BABYLON! Remember, it is *Babylon THE GREAT*—not Babylon the small, Revelation 17:2; 18:4.

The VAST MAJORITY will continue to

remain so BLINDED that they will even fight against Christ at his second coming—NOT RECOGNIZING who he is, for the devil will have them so deceived that they will think Jesus is antichrist and fight against him at Armageddon, Revelation 16:13-14.

People today who are blinded to the truth can have salvation NOW if after suffering the consequences of sin, they will earnestly ask God (Luke 11:8, 9, 13) to SHOW THEM HIS WAYS (REMOVE THEIR BLINDNESS) and then BE WILLING TO FOLLOW THESE WAYS AFTER THEY ARE REVEALED!

Only a relatively small number will receive salvation in this age. These will be used to teach, rule, and judge those called later, Revelation 1:6; I Corinthians 6:2. But what of the vast blinded majority of all times who never had an opportunity? Are they damned because God created them with a carnal mind which blinded them to the ways of salvation?

Future Chance for Blinded?

Now, if God is Just and it is He who has blinded most of the people that ever lived, from understanding his laws and the grace which they must accept to be saved, then He will have to remove the blindness to give them a chance—their first chance—will he not? YES!—and he has PROMISED TO DO IT!

"And he will DESTROY in this mountain the face of the COVERING CAST OVER ALL PEOPLE, and the VAIL THAT IS SPREAD OVER ALL NATIONS," Isaiah 25:7. It is no stigma or disgrace to your loved ones or others that they are among those that are blinded now. God's PLAN called for the removal of blindness from only a few now. It is HIS responsibility!

Salvation in Millennium

God has allotted six thousand years to mankind here on this earth in which they can try out all methods of living which THEY THINK will bring them happiness. LOOK AT THE WORLD TODAY FOR THE RESULTS! NOW—in this very END TIME—man is writing *finish* to a history of his poor attempt to rule himself without God's help—a history that all may profit by when they have their first chance. The world today is feverishly preparing to drench itself in a bath of blood. What happens after this?

"The people that walked in darkness (BLINDNESS) have seen a GREAT LIGHT (the BLINDNESS REMOVED)—for unto us a child is born . . . and the government shall be on his shoulders . . . of the increase of his government . . . there shall be no end." (Isaiah 9:2-7). This

tells of Christ's birth and his taking over the rule of this earth for 1000 years at his second coming, Rev. 20:4.

This is THE TIME GOD HAS SET TO REALLY START TO SAVE THE PEOPLE. Blindness will be removed—the people will see God's mercy and laws clearly. All now living who live into that period will have their *first* opportunity for salvation. Christ will come with "ten thousands" of his saints to execute judgment and convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds, Jude 14, 15. The devil will be chained so he cannot deceive people, Revelation 20:10. Christ will pour out his spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17), and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Eternal, Isaiah 11:9. God will cleanse the people and give them a new heart and a new spirit, and cause them to walk in his statutes and judgments, Ezekiel 36:25-27. The whole chapters of Isaiah 11 and Zechariah 14 describe this time more fully.

But, the people who live on from this life into the thousand year period are relatively few compared to the MILLIONS AND MILLIONS THAT HAVE DIED BLINDED—WHAT ABOUT THEM?

When Is Vast Majority Saved?

Notice Revelation 20:4. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Now read verses 11-12: "And I saw a GREAT WHITE THRONE and him that sat on it . . . and I saw the dead, small and great, stand (A RESURRECTION) before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of LIFE (there is a chance of obtaining ETERNAL LIFE), and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books." They are to be judged by what they HAVE DONE in *this life* AND by what they WILL DO after they are resurrected to mortal life!

This is THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT when the VAST NUMBER OF UNSAVED DEAD will be resurrected and be GIVEN THEIR FIRST CHANCE FOR SALVATION—all those millions and millions who have lived and died since the time of Adam up through our age, and have not known the TRUE way to eternal life.

Satan will have been cast into the lake of fire, Revelation 20:10, after he had been liberated for a short space of time at the end of the thousand years; and the earth will have been purged of the people who, knowing the truth, allowed him to deceive them during this short space of time. ALL WILL BE INVITED to the marriage supper (salvation) and if they refuse, then they are

LOST FOREVER! (Luke 14:16-24).

SALVATION will be open to ALL just as in the thousand year period, only now there will be *many more* to accept it. This will NOT be a SECOND CHANCE for if they were blinded by God when they formerly lived, they never had a chance. The cities of Tyre and Sidon will be rebuilt and the evil people of those cities who were formerly blinded will be given their *first* chance, Matthew 11:22. Also, Sodom and Gomorrah will be rebuilt (Matthew 10:15), and her evil citizens have their *first* chance. God is a JUST GOD—he is giving even the WORST OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE BLINDED BEFORE CHRIST'S SECOND COMING, THEIR FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO SALVATION!

Ezekiel 37:11-14 gives a good picture of how this physical resurrection will be accomplished for ALL people, for here it is speaking of Israel as a type. Note Ezekiel 36:25-27 also; this shows how the SPIRITUAL BEGETTAL AND GROWTH comes about at this time. Here are people receiving the Father's Holy Spirit for the first time, just as a few are being *called* today to receive it.

People will live for a hundred years during this age, Isaiah 65:20. But all this information ought not come as a surprise, for man could and would know of it if they were observing God's command to KEEP THE HOLY DAYS which show God's PLAN OF SALVATION for the WORLD. These are given in Leviticus 23. In verse 34, the FEAST of Ingathering or Tabernacles represents salvation in the 1000 year period and the EIGHTH DAY in verse 36 represents the GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT period when the VAST MAJORITY will be saved.

No, the BLINDED WORLD today DOES NOT UNDERSTAND that the Father is in the process of making from mortal man, here on this earth, a *spirit family of his very own*—a family that is being carefully trained. His family will constitute the Kingdom of God, living by and administering his laws of love which are written in the heart and mind, Romans 7:22-24.

AFTER blinded man has had a lifetime of sad *experience* living by *his own* way of life, then is resurrected back to this earth and has *his blindness removed* so that he can SEE and PRACTICE GOD'S WAY OF LIFE—the only way that leads to happiness, and can SEE HOW MUCH BETTER GOD'S WAY IS THAN HIS OWN—then, AND ONLY THEN, it is that God REALLY starts to save the *vast majority* of mankind and give eternal life to those who are willing to come under his loving rule and aid HIM in administering wisely the great power HE will give to them!

Is Truth Stranger Than Fiction?

Read This and Then Decide for Yourself! The following is a vital summary of some of the great lessons in Old Testament history. These are lessons you should have learned, but probably have not. So—read on!

by Rod Meredith

HOW INTERESTING is the Old Testament to you? Have you found it rather dry and dull? God intended for you to get a great deal of understanding from reading it. Perhaps YOU haven't been approaching the study of it as you should.

The Bible is LITERALLY PACKED with ideas and principles that *you* need to apply *every day of your life!* Many people read parts of the Bible and neglect others. One of the most neglected portions of the Bible includes the historical books of the Old Testament. These are the books from Joshua to Esther inclusive. Yet these books are LOADED WITH DYNAMITE! They teach you lessons in everyday living in a rough, straightforward, and forceful way.

The whole trouble in reading these books probably lies in the fact that you haven't been taking these lessons in a personal way. When you study these narratives—apply them to *yourself!*

How would *you* and your worldly neighbors react to situations like the following? Would you measure up any better than those fleshly, unconverted Israelites?

God is showing HUMAN NATURE at work in these books, and YOUR carnal nature is just about the same! Your Creator is trying to show you the terrible results of relying on your own reason and impulse.

Are you learning these lessons as you should? Probably not. Then literally *put yourself* into these true stories and then vigorously apply them in your own life. You are going to see "life in the raw," but you will see it through the eyes of the Creator.

God, looking down through the stream of time, sees clearly the sad results that man's ideas or actions lead to under different circumstances. It is an immeasurable help to be privileged to get His viewpoint on these situations without having to learn all our lessons the hard way!

In Romans 15:4, the Apostle Paul tells us. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." So we find that the Old Testament writings were written for the instruction of Christians today. It is with

this idea in mind that I will point out to you some of the outstanding lessons in the historical books of the Old Testament. And I want to encourage you to *read these books for yourself.*

As we shall find, *human nature at work* is sometimes even stranger than the imaginations of the fiction writers!

God's Charge to Joshua

When Joshua first became the leader of Israel, succeeding Moses, God gave him certain basic instructions which, if obeyed, would have insured a successful and prosperous rule. Oh that these instructions might sink into the hearts and minds of rulers everywhere!

In Joshua 1:8, God said, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Here is the way to the happiness that everyone wants, then as now.

The way is to *keep God's law!*

Let us put ourselves in the place of these Israelites, and see if we would have obeyed God any better than they.

Soon after giving Joshua these instructions, God miraculously led Israel through the Jordan River, feeding them "manna" all through their journey. Israel kept the Passover as God commanded. Then He supernaturally delivered Jericho into their hands—again witnessing to them of His mighty power and His love.

But, like so many people today, Achan took God's commandment lightly (Joshua 7). He coveted some of the gold and silver in Jericho and took some in direct violation of God's command. He probably reasoned out in his own mind that he would just take a little bit, and that God probably didn't mean this to apply to him anyway.

How natural such reasoning is to the unconverted human mind!

The result? God punished all Israel before their enemies. God would like all men to know that *He means business!*

If we can't learn anything else from these historical books of the Bible, we had better learn that when God gives a

command, He means exactly what He says!

As long as Israel obeyed God, "the land had rest from war" (Joshua 14:15). There is a way to peace and prosperity, but today men will have *none of it!* They would rather try in vain to bring it about by their own *human devising.*

Before Joshua's death, he called Israel together and reminded them that God had given them a land for which they did not labor. Then he continued (Joshua 24:15): "*choose you this day whom you will serve;* whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Here was a final warning to the people to serve their Creator and obey His laws. God had already shown them that His way was best. Now it was up to them!

The Results of Human Reason

Before Israel entered the promised land, God had commanded them to completely destroy the heathen nations residing there (Deut. 7:2). These heathen nations were practicing a most abominable form of idolatry which was making their lives a blot and shame to mankind.

Archeologists have found the remains of many children in these ancient cities who had been sacrificed to Baal and other heathen gods. These pagans were wrecking their own lives with these vile practices, and would have drawn Israel into similar idolatry if they had not been exterminated. In view of the resurrection, God knew they were *better off dead* for the time being!

So God's command to kill these people was really not so harsh as we might suppose. It was really for *their own good*, and the good of others.

But fleshly Israelites thought, *like many today*, that they were more wise and righteous than God! They spared the lives of many of these idolaters because, to their *human reason*, this seemed best (Judges 1).

God was greatly angered by their disobedience. He sent an angel to tell them
Please continue on page 14

New Facts About the Image of the Beast

What is this mysterious "image"? You will soon be compelled to worship it or face martyrdom. If you submit, you will suffer the wrath of God!

by Herman L. Hoeh

MANY ministers know the facts which prove the identity of the "image of the beast," but they are afraid to tell you. This present generation, confused over the real significance of the "image," is destined to be forced to worship it! Many who haven't been told the facts are already practicing this species of idolatry.

The "image of the beast" (Rev. 13:14-15) can not be understood until the "beast," described in Revelation 13:1-10, is known. It is symbolic of a power whose identity is revealed in the second and seventh chapters of the book of Daniel.

The June, 1952, issue of "The Plain Truth" contained the Biblical explanation which conclusively proved that the "beast" John delineated is the *Roman Empire*. After receiving its deadly wound, it continued 1260 years from its restoration under Justinian (554) to the downfall of Napoleon (1814). For one last time this Roman system will be revived in Europe by a federation of ten nations. It is already beginning to solidify and emerge on the continent.

The "dragon" which gave this Empire its authority is the devil according to Revelation 12:9 and 20:2. The adversary told Jesus that the kingdoms of this world were delivered to him, "and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke 4:5-7). The Roman Empire and its revivals is Satan's *civil government* on earth.

Not only does the devil have his *civil rulers* doing his will, but he also has ecclesiastical rulers—ministers who masquerade as the "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). John saw this pictured under the symbol of the "beast" which had two horns like a lamb (Rev. 13:11-17). According to the Bible, it is the *hierarchy of order*—the Pope, bishops, priests and deacons of the Roman Catholic Church, the explanation of which is given in this issue of "The Good News." This church is responsible for the creation of the "image of the beast."

What Is the Image?

There are five fundamental points to

consider before fully grasping the Biblical interpretation of this "image." (1) The lamb-like beast, by its miraculous claims, deceived the people who dwell on earth, saying to them (2) that they should make an image to the beast—Satan's civil government, the Roman Empire. (3) The great church figuratively gives life to the image. It was made to live and (4) to speak. Furthermore, the image (5) caused that every person not worshipping itself should be killed. It did not martyr, it merely caused the death of those who would not submit to such idolatry. Once again, in this generation, the already widespread worship of this "image" will be forced upon the world.

What could it be? What is an "image"? According to the dictionary, an image is a "copy, representation, model, semblance, counterpart." It is a "likeness." Therefore the church which John mentions was saying to the people: "You should make a *model*, a *copy* of the civil Roman *Government*"—for the "beast" is a government (Daniel 7:23).

Instead of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom or government of God—*divine government* with divine laws—this church established *human church government*. The church of God is constituted by those saints who are begotten and led by the Holy Spirit. It is not a Kingdom, for Christ's kingdom is not of this present world or age (John 18:36). But here is a great church that deceived the people into forming a duplicate or image of the *civil government* of the Roman Empire.

The PAPACY is "the Roman empire, again extended over Europe by a universal code and a provincial government; by a hierarchy of religious praetors or proconsuls, and a host of inferior officers, each in strict subordination to those immediately above them, and gradually descending to the very lowest ranks of society: the whole with a certain degree of freedom of action, but a restrained and limited freedom, and with an appeal to the spiritual Caesar in the last resort" (*History of Latin Christianity* by Milman, p. 28).

This church government—the PAPA-

CY—is the image of the beast! It is an ecclesiastical model of the pagan Roman Government.

"Long before the fall of Rome there had begun to grow up within the Roman Empire an ecclesiastical state, which in its constitution and its administrative system was shaping itself upon the *imperial model*. This spiritual empire," says Myer's *Ancient History*, p. 582, "like the secular empire, possessed a hierarchy of officers."

The Papacy, according to these historians, is a *model*, a *counterpart*—an *image* of the "beast" which is the Roman Government. This ecclesiastical government compelled people to worship a man-ruled church organized into a worldly government. Although palmed off as the government of God, it is in reality an *image* of a human civil government. And worshipping any image is idolatry!

Just as the old Babylonish *idolatry* spread and *altered* its form as it propagated throughout the world, so this modern Babylon the Great, a Mother Church, has propagated daughter churches which came out *protesting* (Rev. 17:5), and all of them have *different* forms of church government—different "images of the beast,"—each patterned in some way after the *human government* of the Empire. When religious people speak of "MY Church," they mean their *humanly* organized denomination which teaches pagan doctrines and customs labeled "Christian." They **IDOLIZE** their Church, believing its teaching can't be wrong. This is *idolatry* and God calls everyone of his people out of it (Rev. 18:4).

Where did this practice of human government in the churches develop? And how? What is the historical proof that most of you haven't been told because ministers are afraid to let you understand that their churches are not governed by Christ as the *head*, but by *human boards* or "*spiritual Caesars*"?

Government in the Early True Church

Unlike any denomination of today, the Christians in the early inspired

Church were governed by the will of God expressed in the Bible. The Father set Christ to be the continuous, living *Head* of the Church, the Head of those individuals who are led by the Spirit of God. Under Christ were those ministers He chose. *They were not elected*; the ministers of the gospel were never voted into office. They were ordained according to the Biblical specifications because their fruits proved that *God had already chosen them*. Compare John 3:27, Acts 13:2, 3 and 1 Timothy 3.

Every office of service in the church for spreading the gospel was and ought to be today according to the *gifts* of God proven by the fruits (Eph. 4:11-13). Jesus has always been the absolute Head of the Church, not any board, man or *vicar* ruling in the place of Christ (Eph. 5:23).

Edward Gibbon rightly says "that the apostles declined the office of legislation." (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 15.) The laws governing the lives of true Christians are not human canons or traditions sanctioned by boards or Church councils, but the inviolate laws of God revealed in the Scripture.

There were *elders* in every city to instruct, correct and to be examples to the churches (1 Peter 5:3). The original Greek word for "elders" is also translated "presbytery" in I Tim. 4:14. From Acts 20:17, 28 it becomes obvious that presbyters or elders were also called overseers or bishops—"two appellations which," according to Gibbon in his excellent fifteenth chapter on church history, "in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. The name Presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of Bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care."

How vastly different church governments are today! What happened that church offices are so radically altered? When did it happen?

How the People Began to Form the "Image of the Beast"

The Roman Empire in the days of the apostles was *authoritarian*, and the use of *elections* for many offices was an honored practice. After the death of the apostles, the prophesied great apostacy set in (? Thess. 2). Some of the very elders or bishops to whom Paul talked at Ephesus (Acts 20:30) were ring-leaders in *deceiving the people* into holding public church meetings and *elections* of officers following the pattern of Roman municipalities. Each lo-

cal congregation took for itself, with variations, the *form* of the Roman *collegia*, associations, which were modeled after the *Roman municipal government*. (Boak, *A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, pp. 398, 364.)

Here was the beginning of the "image of the beast"—ecclesiastical leaders deceiving the people into creating a government in the church after the mode of the Roman civil administration and attributing to it divine origin.

In various congregations were numerous people, unconverted, who wanted the "say-so." They *elected* teachers who sanctioned elections and pleased their whims and who led them back into the customs of pagan Rome and Greece (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). Gradually those ministers who were chosen of God were rejected and forced out of the visible church congregations (3 John 10). The *visible* churches were ceasing to be governed by Jesus Christ. A universal or catholic apostacy permeated almost the whole Christian world.

"The order of public deliberations soon introduced the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly," says Gibbon. Here were local congregations, making their *human resolutions* instead of following the Bible, and causing the formation of human government in the churches.

The Bishops Grow in Power

Occasional elections induced the apostatizing Christians to constitute permanently *one* of the elders or presbyters with the office and "duties of an ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellations of Presbyter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president."

Did you notice? Each local congregation in its legislative practices developed into a little "senate" with one of its elders, elected to the permanent office of president, styled a "Bishop." From this time forward, only the leading elder, the president, was called "Bishop." The people were following the pattern of the Roman civil government, introducing it into the churches in place of the government of God. They found that voting on resolutions was a very satisfactory way of getting pagan "religious ceremonies, which imperceptibly increased in number and variety" into the churches. Rather than receive the correction of the Bible, the congrega-

tions wanted to have their own way and the leaders were glad to have it so, because it invested them with *legislative power* over the flock.

In the same fifteenth chapter of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* we read: "Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation." No longer were the ministers being chosen by Christ and ordained by the elders and apostles. Instead, in the Catholic churches the elders were elected and one of them, specially elected to preside over the local meetings, appropriated the title of "Bishop" *above* his equals.

Coupled with the advancement of the "Bishop" or president in each local congregation, was the rapid tendency to form local dioceses "by the union of several country churches with a church in a city" after 100 A.D. (Milman's footnote in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*). Toward the middle of the ensuing century, numerous churches within a city united under the leadership of the most important Bishop of the leading church in each local *diocese*. Thus far, the "image"—church government shaped according to the model of the Roman civil institutions—was formed only after the city government and its municipal officials and jurisdiction. There was as yet no supreme leadership over all the churches.

The Image Called a Divine Institution

The episcopal form of government was adopted within a hundred years after the death of the apostles by ALL the congregations scattered over the Roman Empire. It soon acquired the deceptive sanction of a *divine institution* because the bishops styled themselves the "vicars of Christ." Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church* gives several cases in the early Catholic writings wherein "every bishop is vice Christi, Christ's vicar or viceregent" (Bk. II, ch. II, sect. 10).

The Bible nowhere teaches that man rules in place of Christ. Christ has no one ruling in his place. Every minister in the Church is ruled by Christ and carries out Christ's will, not his own or the people's! But those early bishops deceived the gullible, unconverted "Christian" into believing that they stood in the *place of Christ* and that the episcopal form of church government was a holy institution which the people should hold in reverence. The congregations voted those beguiling leaders into office since they taught what the people desired to hear in order to gain authority and prestige over them. (2 Peter 2:3; Jude 16). This is how the *worship of*

the image—the idolizing of church government—developed!

The Roman "Province" Adopted

With the progress of time the development of jurisdiction increased apace. Not only had a local elder usurped authority over his fellow elders, thus receiving the *exclusive* title of "Bishop," but he had also acquired the dominion over all church congregations pertaining to a city—termed a *diocese*. The next step that occurred was the adoption of the Roman civil division of the "province" in order to *unify* the dioceses and the conflicting traditions that were developing in church customs.

Bingham, page 342, says: "A province was the cities of a whole region subjected to the authority of one chief magistrate, who resided in the metropolis, or chief city of the province. This was commonly a praetor, or a proconsul . . . so likewise in the same metropolis there was a bishop, whose power extended over the whole province, whence he was called the metropolitan, or primate, as being the principal bishop of the province."

The government of the churches, the episcopate, was no longer a local association of bishop and elders, but *monarchical*. "The bishops were now regularly nominated by the clergy, approved by the congregations, and finally inducted into office by the ceremony of ordination." (*A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, p. 398.) Toward the close of the second century irregular synods in Ephesus, Jerusalem, Pontus and at Rome were held to assist in substituting the heathen Easter for the passover (Milman's footnote to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*). By 250 A.D., these synods were held regularly, especially in Greece and Asia Minor.

From where did this practice come? Not from the Bible.

Says the historian Gibbon: They "borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country. . . ."

"It was soon established," he says further, "as a custom and a law, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the *province* at stated periods of spring and autumn." The proceedings were moderated "by the presence of a listening multitude. Their decrees, which were styled Canons, regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline. . . ."

The church government was beginning to issue decrees! The IMAGE was beginning to SPEAK with the force of law! Faith and discipline ceased to proceed from Scripture. Pagan traditions and customs became "the law."

"Suited to Private Ambition"

With uncanny accuracy Gibbon explains that the "institution of synods was so well suited to private ambition, and to public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire . . . and the catholic church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength, of a great federative republic."

Synods were universally accepted. Each local diocese, like a republic with its elected representatives and an ecclesiastical governor, joined together to form a province in the "public interest." It was the *people* who permitted the ministers and bishops to deceive them into modeling church government after the civil government. From the provincial councils there poured forth an ever increasing flow of correspondence *federating* all the provinces of the catholic or universal churches.

Exactly as the bishops had so recently grasped authority over every presbyter—who now became a *priest*—so in these provincial synods the difference in rank of the city from which each came caused the bishop of the metropolis or chief city of the province to prepare secretly to usurp authority over his fellow bishops and to acquire "the lofty titles of Metropolitans and Primates."

By now the mutual alliance of the bishops enabled them to attack the original "rights of the people" in having their "say-so." The participation of the people gradually ceased amid the *superstitious* reverence for the "divine authority" of the assemblies of the bishops. The bishops owed no allegiance to any higher human authority than their own assemblies in which they *voted* on matters of faith.

Constantine Begins Universal Councils

After permitting the Catholic Faith to become the State religion of the Roman Empire, Constantine found it essential to unify conflicts within its ranks. To this end he called universal or ecumenical councils. Says Boak: "Procedure in the councils was modelled upon that of the Roman Senate; the meetings were conducted by imperial legates, their decisions were issued in the form of imperial edicts, and it was to the emperor that appeals from these decrees were made." (*A History of Rome to 565 A.D.*, p. 492.)

There was as yet no Pope. The Roman Emperor was head of this Church. The laws of the councils were laws of the State. The Roman Senate, not a Biblical example, was the model. The "image" was gradually being fashioned more and more like the Roman civil government.

It was also during the age of Con-

stantine that the Roman Empire was divided into great *dioceses*, thirteen in number. These were made up of numerous provinces over which bishops with the titles of Metropolitan or Primate presided. With the enforced universal councils being the highest assembly ruling the churches, Gibbon says it was not "long before an emulation of preeminence and power prevailed among the Metropolitans themselves, each affecting to display . . . the temporal honors and advantages of the city over which he presided. . . ."

Naturally the Metropolitans who resided in the capitals of these great dioceses were to dominate all the other Primates over the provinces in his realm. Thus was the title of "Exarch" or "Patriarch" acquired by less than a dozen great bishops. There were now four grades of bishops: country bishops who became parish priests, city bishops, Metropolitans, Patriarchs.

Who would eventually be the Universal Bishop? We shall soon see.

It is notable that the title *vicarii* (vicars) was given by the Civil Government to the civil administrators of the great dioceses. Although the Patriarchs of the Catholic Church were really the *vicars* of the Emperor, who was head of the Catholic State Church, they claimed to be the vicars of Christ, as *all* bishops had done decades prior in order to gain their eminence.

The Roman Empire was also divided into four *Prefectures*. While the Catholics did not institute any ecclesiastical office to compare to the *prefects*, they did soon find that among the *Patriarchs* over the dioceses, there was a rivalry that brought forth four dominant Patriarchs in the East and one in the West. These were of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria in the East and Rome in the West.

Bingham, pages 344, 345, and other authors point out a highly important fact. The dioceses in the West, with the exception of Africa, *lacked* Patriarchs in Spain, Gaul and Britain, or else failed to send them to the councils. ROME WAS THE ONLY WESTERN PATRIARCHATE THAT REPRESENTED THE WEST IN DEALINGS WITH EASTERN BISHOPS, says Boak in the aforementioned book, pages 492, 493. It was easy to foresee that the bishop at Rome would be the dominant Patriarch since the Roman church was the greatest and its bishops claimed the inheritance of the attributes of the office of the apostle Peter by progressive traditions.

Was the Roman Bishop Always the Head of the Church?

That the bishop at Rome was *not* from the time of Peter the head of the

Church is admitted by the Roman Catholic Du Pin, who states, to the later embarrassment of Catholic doctrine, that Germany, Spain, France, Britain, Africa, Illyricum and seven of the Italic provinces were NOT UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE BISHOP AT ROME during the early ages (Du Pin de Disciplin. Eccles. Dessert. I. n. 14. p. 92, quoted in Bingham's *Antiquities*, p. 348).

The bishop of Milan, Italy, was never ordained by the bishop of Rome, as he would have been if he were under his jurisdiction. This is even admitted by Pope Pelagius in one of his epistles (Bingham, p. 348). The African Church under the Patriarch of Carthage was originally independent as Justinian declares. In the 22nd canon of the Council of Milevis, the African churches prohibited appeals to the bishop at Rome. For centuries, Baluzius declares, the French synods "never allowed any appeals from their own determination to the pope" (Bingham, p. 349). The British or Celtic Church did not come under Roman dominion until the Synod of Whitby (664) brought about British conformity to the Roman Catholic mode of Easter observance. (E. R. Edman, *The Light in Dark Ages*, p. 184.)

The advancing star of the Roman Bishop developed rapidly with the transference in the fourth century of the capital of the Empire to "New Rome"—Constantinople. Up to this time there were no great pontiffs that provoked jealousy, neither were there such factions that split the East. The bishops of Rome were carried upward by the sweep of dominant opinion. Eastern feuds disrupted the patriarchates in that area and left only the most recent, Constantinople, in the leadership. The domination of the Emperor in Constantinople was a disastrous handicap for the Eastern churches. The bishop of Rome was immeasurably freer to expand.

In 343 the Council of Sardica, COMPOSED OF WESTERN LEADERS ONLY, not a universal or ecumenical council, confirmed the Western feeling that the bishop of Rome ought to be the Head of the Church by sanctioning Pope Julius as the final arbiter in disputes resulting from the Arian controversy. Thirty-five years later the bishop at Rome became the "Pontifex Maximus" or Supreme Pontiff. This title once belonged to the high priest of the pagan Roman priesthood before Julius Caesar, the first Emperor was granted it. Thereafter, the office was passed to succeeding Emperors until Gratian refused it in 376. Two years later Damasus, Bishop of Rome, was declared Supreme Pontiff by *imperial edict*. (Bower's *Lives of the popes*.) The pagan Roman College of Pontiffs later became the Catho-

lic business," wrote Boak in his previous work. "Pontifex Maximus" "had charge of the calendar, fixed dates of the public festivals, and announced each month what days were open and what closed to public business," wrote Boak in his previously mentioned work, page 67. Little wonder that the Catholic Supreme Pontiff should "think to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25) in opposition to Jesus Christ who is the actual High Priest of the Church (Heb. 7:21; 10:21).

The Papacy Finally Develops

Many early writers and the populace termed the bishops in the Catholic Church "princes" in imitation of Isaiah 60:17 which they read: "I will make thy princes peace, and thy bishops righteousness." It became the customary view that the Church was the Kingdom and its leaders the rulers therein—a view exactly opposite to the gospel of Jesus which spoke of the Kingdom of God yet to be established (Bingham, p. 22).

With the rapid decline of the Western Roman Empire, the bishop of Rome rose in respect with the people. He determined to be the King of Kings in the government of the Church. We shall now see how the Roman bishops sought by their claims and obtained by popular approval the position of *Ecclesiastical Caesar*.

At the close of the fourth century Augustine wrote the "City of God," a book envisioning a Universal Catholic Empire of which the Roman Empire was the pattern. A few years later Innocent I pushed the claims of the papacy vigorously. Following him came Leo I, styled by many the first Pope. *He was the first Latin preacher*; for prior to him there seem to have been no public preaching by Catholics in Rome according to Sozomen (Milman, *Latin Christianity*, p. 56). Leo claimed to be the heir to Peter's primacy, advocated the complete "organization of the Church on the model of the Empire, with the pope as its religious head." He said resistance to his will was worthy of "hell," and advocated the death penalty for heresy.

Boak wrote in his book: "It was Leo also who induced the western emperor Valentinian III in 455 to order the whole western Church to obey the bishop of Rome as the heir to the primacy of Peter" (p. 493). Despite this decree that made the bishop of Rome the head of Western Christendom, the Council of Chalcedon, 451, a universal council claiming divine authority, placed the Patriarch of Constantinople "on an equality with the pope, a recognition against which the Pope Leo protested in vain."

By this time, too, the term *parochiae*—parish—began to be applied specifically to individual churches in the episcopal dioceses, rather than to the dioceses themselves. Within another fifty years the common term "papa" from which "pope" is derived was applied almost exclusively in the West to the bishop of Rome, although, in prior years, "it was a common title of all bishops." However, the Eastern Catholics did not recognize this papal title, for in the time of Pope Gregory I, 590-604, the Patriarch of Constantinople claimed the title of "Universal Bishop." Against this Eastern usurpation of authority, Gregory stormed. He refused to appropriate the title to himself for obvious reasons, yet he exercised all the authority of a universal bishop.

After the Council of Constantinople in 869, the Roman and Eastern Churches ceased to meet together in ecumenical councils. In 1123 it was decided that the popes should appoint all bishops. The head of the "image of the beast" now governed with absolute power the entire ecclesiastical government. About 750 years later (1871), the Pope secured the declaration of infallibility when speaking "from the chair."

To assist the Roman Pontiff there have been developed through the centuries certain agencies. The College of Cardinals (Cardinals are bishops of dioceses) collectively advise the Pope. Under them are twelve Congregations, three Tribunals and five Offices of the Roman Curia (bureaus, boards and courts) organized to administer Church affairs.

The "image" or "model" against which John warns is the *hierarchy of jurisdiction*, "the governing body of the Catholic Church—the Pope and the other bishops throughout the world." They possess according to Catholic sources "the power to make laws, to sit in judgment, and to fix spiritual penalties when necessary."

Its attributes belong ONLY TO GOD. To attribute them to any organization of men is to set that organization in the place of God—to commit idolatry—to worship the image of the beast! Not only does the Roman hierarchy claim such powers, but also millions of PROTESTANTS ARE WORSHIPPING SIMILAR IMAGES OF THEIR OWN MAKING—human church governments which pretend to exercise the powers of God.

Everyone committing such idolatry which will soon be forced on the world will suffer the wrath of God, the seven last plagues without mercy! Your only hope is to COME OUT OF THIS IDOLATROUS SYSTEM THAT IS GRIPPING THE WORLD. "Come out of her my people," says God (Rev. 8:4).

Thou Shalt Not!

*Are the Ten Commandments "NEGATIVE" and therefore a **WRONG** form of law?*

by Herbert W. Armstrong

OFTEN we hear the basic Law of God impugned as negative, and therefore not good. God is often conceived as a stern, wrathful God, who angrily says to us: "THOU SHALT NOT!" God's truth is sometimes looked upon as "a religion of FEAR," and therefore not desirable for modern, advanced, enlightened man. It ought to be POSITIVE, they say, not negative.

Thus God, the Truth of God, the purpose and plan of God, the method of God, and the Law of God are relegated to the primitive, the imperfect—something enlightened man has now outgrown. Modern man thereupon looks upon himself as elevated to a plane of rational thinking, and knowledge higher than God, or Christianity, or God's Law. Of course, when we UNDERSTAND, God's TRUTH is the most positive religion or philosophy there is—it eradicates fear! It is the way of FAITH!

But is the negative form, "Thou shalt not," then, wrong? Is it outmoded? Should a PERFECT law contain only "DO's" and no "DON'Ts"?

Just what is TRUE CHARACTER? Just what is the perfect life?

I have defined character—that is, true, righteous, holy character—as 1) coming to the KNOWLEDGE of the true, as opposed to the false values—the right, instead of the wrong way; 2) making, of one's own free will and volition, the choice to do the right instead of the wrong; 3) the exercise of the will in actually doing the right instead of the wrong.

Character, then, once the true knowledge is acquired and the right decision made, involves SELF-DISCIPLINE. The truly educated person is a self-disciplined person.

What, then, does this SELF-DISCIPLINE involve?

Two things: 1) self-restraint to resist the lower impulses and pulls in human nature—to restrain the self from desires, impulses, habits, or customs which are contrary to the RIGHT WAY; and 2) self-propulsion or determined initiative to drive the self to do those things which ought to be done. In other words, in true character in action there is the POSITIVE and the NEGATIVE.

Suppose one rejects the negative as faulty and something to be discarded

altogether. Suppose one applies the positive only. He impels the self to DO those positive things to be done, but he exercises no restraint to resist those things which, by habit, impulse, desire, or custom of others ought not to be done. Because human nature is what it is, the very nature in such a man will pull him constantly in the wrong direction. Thus CHARACTER is destroyed. He is out of balance.

We find present in NATURE both the positive and the negative. Electricity functions and performs its work by use of both the positive and the negative. All elements are either alkaline or acid. All living things and beings in this world of matter are male and female. There are SINS both of OMISSION and COMMISSION.

Frequently we read the pitiful, feeble efforts of a man who fancies in his ignorant egotism he is wiser than God, setting forth his idea of TEN POSITIVE COMMANDMENTS. Ten "do's," and no "don'ts." And what do we find? How much character would such a list of "commandments" produce? Just about as much character as an electric light bulb would produce light with merely the one positive wire leading into it. Just about as much character as the male alone, without the female, could reproduce his kind. He might DO a few good things, but all his good things would be nullified and cancelled out by the unrestrained evil he would commit.

No basic LAW OF LIFE, forming the basis of perfect CHARACTER, could be a perfect law unless it contains, in perfect balance, both positive and negative.

Examine now again God's basic code, upon which all His laws, social, economic, civil, and religious, hang:

1. "THOU SHALT have no other gods before Me." This is actually stated in the positive form, implying we SHALL worship and obey the true God. In a sense, this commandment contains both the positive and negative, directing us positively, "Thou SHALT," to the true God, and restraining us from false gods.

2. "THOU SHALT NOT make unto thee any graven image, or . . . bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." This is negative, restraining from either making or worshipping any THING as

a god; also from either worship, or obedience to, such false god. To the true God we owe both worship and obedience. Notice the principle of GOVERNMENT in this, as in all the commands. THE WHOLE ISSUE IS ONE OF GOVERNMENT. Adam and Eve rejected God's government, refused His rule over their lives, disobeyed four of the Laws of His government. Christ came preaching the "KINGDOM of God," which is the government of God—commanding men to repent of their rejection of that government and the transgression of its laws (sin is the transgression of the law—1 Jno. 3:4)—providing the way of atonement for that transgression, and reconciliation to the worship and government of GOD.

3. "THOU SHALT NOT take the NAME of the Eternal thy God in vain." This is a restraint—negative—to prevent cutting man off from the POWER and BENEFITS of the right use of GOD'S NAME. If we repent of sin, and come to God by Jesus Christ, He puts within us the impregnating gift of His Holy Spirit, and thus we become His actual begotten children—begotten into HIS FAMILY—bearing HIS NAME (the true name of His Church is Church of GOD)—and having access to all the BENEFITS, BLESSINGS, and POWER of that name. This command is a negative, making possible the POSITIVE and vitally needed blessings thru that NAME!

4. "REMEMBER the Sabbath Day, to KEEP IT HOLY. . . . the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Eternal thy GOD." Here is another POSITIVE command—the only one God specifically commanded us to "REMEMBER," and the very one mankind insists above all upon forgetting. Is it not an indicting commentary on the unrestrained human nature, and irrational thinking of the self-professed RATIONALS who imagine themselves superior to God, and who insist His Commandments ought to be all POSITIVE and not negative, that this most positive of all the Commandments they flout and disobey with greatest impunity. Again, notice the perfection—here again is a command including both positive and negative, for while it is primarily positive, yet it includes negative restraints to make possible that

positive—"in it thou SHALT NOT do any work," etc.

5. "HONOR thy father and thy mother." Do you see any negative statement in this command? Here is a POSITIVE command, with a definite promise of blessing. This heads the six commands regulating man's relationship with neighbor. However, the negative opposite is implied, tho not stated.

6 thru 10. "THOU SHALT NOT kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness against, or covet." Here are the famous negatives, yet each implies the opposite POSITIVE: as, THOU SHALT love and have charitable tolerant patience toward your neighbor; BE TRUE to your wife and RESPECT your neighbor's wife; BE HONEST; TELL THE TRUTH, and RESPECT your neighbor's property.

Here is a PERFECT LAW (Psalm 19:7). It outlines, in broad detail, man's right relationship with the true GOD that he may have all the needed guidance, help, and blessings from God; and also man's right relationship toward human neighbors—including parents, children, husband and wife, and all neighbors. This Law provides for both WORSHIP of God, religiously, and OBEDIENCE TO God, and BLESSINGS FROM God—every need of man for his own good in a living, active, continuous relationship with the all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God.

This perfect Law forms the basis of ALL human relationships, as well as man's God-relationship. It provides the wide, basic general rules affecting every phase of his life—

a) Religious, in his relationship to GOD;

b) Family, in his relationship to parents, children, wife and husband, and is designed to preserve the blessed sanctity and dignity of the HOME;

c) Next-door and personal neighbors and friends;

d) Civil relationships—here are found the very BASIC civil laws respecting murder, larceny (theft), adultery, perjury;

e) Economic life—honesty, not coveting other's money, goods, or property or possessions, which coveting is the very root source of today's economic principle of competition;

f) Social life—such commands as those respecting adultery, false witness against, coveting, stealing, form the foundation principle of a right social attitude and relationship with neighbors.

This Law, in its basic principles, defines THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN (Eccl. 12:13). It is the basis, in principle, for ALL THE BIBLE. The entire Bible is, so far as its TEACHING is concerned, a magnification in specific

detail of these basic principles.

This Law is COMPLETE. It contains, in brief summation-principle, all the positive and negative obligations of the PERFECT, rightly-balanced life. It expresses and reflects the very character of God.

The whole Law is summed in one word, LOVE. It is like God, for God is LOVE, just as His Law is LOVE. It was given in love for us, and LOVE is the fulfilling of the law—LOVE IN ACTION.

It is love to GOD, and love to NEIGHBOR. It is PERFECT. It is COMPLETE.

2nd Beast of Rev. 13

Continued from page 2

MARK in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell (trade, earn a living, hold a job), save he that had the mark, or the name of the Beast, or the number of his name" (verse 14-17).

So, notice: This two-horned "beast" not only CAUSED people to receive the MARK of the Beast (compare Rev. 19:20), but also perpetrated the forming of an image that caused the martyrdom of saints. As many as would not worship this image were caused to be killed. This false church did not kill them—she CAUSED them to be killed. History shows that the civil government of the Roman Empire martyred nearly 50,000,000 who were declared "anathema from Christ," or "heretics" by the Church.

Compare with the WOMAN who rode the Beast in Rev. 17: "And I saw the woman DRUNKEN WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SAINTS, AND WITH THE MARTYRS OF JESUS" (verse 6).

Certainly these are one and the same!

A Worker of Miracles!

The false prophet which John saw worked miracles. In ancient Italy, the high priest of the Etrurians called *Tages* claimed to work miracles and was said to be born out of the ground. He supposedly brought lightning down from the heavens. In Egypt, the same high priest was represented with the head and horns of a ram, says Hislop in *The Two Babylons*, P. 256. The second beast of Revelation 13:11 appeared from the earth or ground and had the horns of a lamb! And he brought fire down from heaven to the earth in the sight of men! They are the same power.

No wonder this religious system is called "Babylon the Great." It is simply the paganism masquerading under the guise of a "Christian Church."

Throughout the centuries, the Popes and the Church have claimed the power to wield the "spiritual fire" of God's

wrath in passing judgment against "heretics." At present the Pope does not claim to have the gift of prophecy or the power to work literal miracles, but the time will come when such wonders will be performed!

In Revelation 11:5 the two witnesses, who are yet to prophecy and be killed by the coming civil ruler in Europe, will have the power to devour their enemies who would kill them for the truth they will declare. In order to deceive the world, the Pope will also have to work similar wonders by the deception of the devil. He will utter *false prophecy*. The Vatican, *then moved to Palestine* (Dan. 11:45), will claim to be the kingdom of God that will bring "peace" to the world. This time is coming and many of you will live to see it!

Stranger than Fiction

Continued from page 8

that the heathen nations "shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you," Judges 2:3.

Soon, "there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel, And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim," Judges 2:10-11. How many times does the "younger generation" depart from the right ways of their fathers? We poor humans seem to be so perverse that we can't learn anything without suffering by traveling the wrong way first! Yet God has given us this history so that we have ample opportunity to see where our own way leads.

After Israel forsook God, He delivered them into the hands of their enemies to punish them. When they repented, God would raise up judges, which delivered them from their enemies. Then the obstinate Israelites would once again go a whoring after their gods and their Creator would be forced to punish them again (Judges 2:13-19).

What a lesson written in human suffering! When Israel served God, they prospered. But when they turned to idolatry and other sins, they suffered terribly. Read this vivid account for yourself! Is our nation obeying God any better today?

The very last verse of Joshua gives the reason for all this suffering: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." God is forcefully showing that *conscience and human reason just cannot be relied upon!* We need to seek the Eternal and walk in His ways.

Christ's Ancestry

The book of Ruth is the story of a humble and faithful Gentile girl, a

Moabitess, who became part of the Chosen Line that led to Christ. This story is an example of the type of people who receive favor in God's sight.

Ruth was faithful to her mother-in-law, and chose to leave her own land and family, and become an Israelite. This is an example that in any age a person who really sought God could always become one of his people.

According to God's laws regulating family life, Ruth could rightly expect that Boaz would marry her. Therefore her conduct toward him was not "forward," but a simple, straightforward reliance on the providence of God. Thru their marriage she became the great-grandmother of David, and consequently the direct ancestor of Christ.

Human Government

All thru the books of Joshua and Judges, we found that Israel refused to obey God or the voice of the judges that He set over them. They all wanted to do what was right in their own eyes. They *refused* to submit to the government of God.

The books of Samuel begin with a God-fearing woman, Hannah, praying to God for a boy. If her prayer is granted, she promises to give her boy to the service of God (I Sam. 1:11).

In I Samuel 3, we find that God had called Samuel to serve Him, and that "all Israel from Dan even unto Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord." So the people really understood that Samuel was a called servant of God. But did they obey him? We shall see!

When Israel was in trouble, Samuel commanded them to repent and turn to God. His prayer was heard, and God delivered them from the Philistines.

But when Samuel became old, his rebellious sons began to pervert judgment. The people began to clamor for a king "like all the nations" (I Sam. 8:5). They wanted *human government* instead of God's rule!

Samuel was displeased and prayed about the matter. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, BUT THEY HAVE REJECTED ME, that I should not reign over them" (I Sam. 8:7).

They had rejected the rule and government of their very Creator! These carnal-minded Israelites had decided that they were smarter than God, and they wanted to have *human government* so they could run things to suit themselves.

Do you realize that most professing Christians feel the same way today? They *do not want* to submit to God's government or His laws! Yet Jesus

Christ came proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, or government, of God (Mark 1:14). This is the very essence of the true gospel!

Rev. 19:15 shows that Christ is coming to rule all nations with a rod of iron. I Cor. 10:4 tells us that *Christ was the one who dealt with the children of Israel*. So they were then rejecting Christ's rule just as most people are today!

Perhaps they thought that they could just "accept Christ" like many so-called Christians today. It is time to WAKE UP and realize that Christ is to be your King as well as your Saviour! An empty faith or belief will avail you nothing. As Christ said in Luke 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word of God*."

Study these historical books, then, and see what a MESS man makes when he tries to govern himself without obeying God's directions!

The prophet Samuel warned Israel that they would have to obey God if their kingdom was to last (I Sam. 12). Saul, who had been made king, immediately overstepped his bounds and offered sacrifice. This was an exclusive function of the priests, and Samuel reproved him for this wrong act (I Sam. 13:8-14). After making some more blunders, Saul disobeyed God's command to destroy all the animals and goods of the Amalekites. He claimed that they were spared in order to sacrifice to God. But, regardless of that, he had once again used his own *human reason* and directly disobeyed God's command!

The prophet Samuel then informed Saul (I Sam. 15:22-23): "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, and to hearken than the fat of rams . . . Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

What a powerful message for people of all ages! God requires implicit OBEDIENCE of His Word above everything else! When will people realize this vital fact?

David and Solomon

After rejecting Saul, God had Samuel secretly anoint David to be king. Note that Samuel and Jesse (I Sam. 16:1-13) both would have chosen one of David's older brothers to be king. Human beings often disagree with God's selection of a leader or ruler. But God knows best, because He looks on the heart. Keep that in mind when you think about criticizing a true minister, a servant of God.

From the time of his anointing, David

went through many trials and tests. But, as he wrote in Psalm 34:19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

One of the principal things to remember about David is his constant prayer life. He wrote most of the Psalms, and they abound with his prayers, thanksgivings, and praises toward God.

In Psalm 119:97, David wrote, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

How many Christians today love and meditate upon God's law, and keep as close to God in prayer as David? No wonder he was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

Many atheists and scoffers ridicule the Bible account of David's sin with Bathsheba (II Sam. 11). They seem to forget that David bitterly repented of it when he was made to realize what he had done (II Sam. 12). God did not condone his action, but took the life of his son and caused him to be involved in wars the rest of his life as a lesson to teach us all how terrible sin is.

None of us are worthy to condemn David for his one great sin, but we can learn from this account that if we sincerely and bitterly repent of our sins, God will forgive us. The very fact that David himself had to write the story of this wicked act in a book for all generations to read should prove to anyone that the Bible is no *man-made* book!

In his old age, David appointed Solomon as his successor. He instructed him to keep God's laws "that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest."

Solomon's first request to God after being made king was for an "understanding heart" to judge the people. God was pleased at this request, and granted his wish (I Kings 3:7-12).

Israel then began to prosper under Solomon's wise and peaceful rule. The Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom and fame and came to prove him with hard questions (I Kings 10). After meeting Solomon, she confessed, "thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (I Kings 10:7). This shows the results of one who will follow God and ask Him for wisdom and guidance (James 1:5).

But shortly after this, "king Solomon loved many strange women" (I Kings 11:1). He broke God's commandment against marrying the heathen and "his wives turned away his heart" (verse 3). From then on, his heart was not perfect with God (verse 4) and he and Israel were on the way down. Compare this with the admonition in James 4:8.

Kings and Prophets

After Solomon's death, one king after another took over the reins of govern-

ment in Israel and Judah. The nation, remember, split into separate kingdoms and warred with one another.

In Israel, the people and every one of the 19 kings followed the worship of the Golden Calf! Many of them served Baal. And how dearly the people paid for rejecting God and wanting *human government!*

The kings of Judah also tended to serve idols, but at times there were great reformations. God witnessed mightily before the people and sent Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets to warn them to return to God. But for the most part, Israel and Judah remained rebellious and refused to turn whole-heartedly to God.

In 721 B.C., Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:6). All of God's warnings had been of no avail and He was forced to punish them.

The temporary reformations in Judah did not last. Judah followed Israel into captivity, beginning 604 B.C. Sometimes it takes a lot of suffering to make us humans realize that our own ways are wrong!

The same events, with some additions and omissions, are repeated in the books of Chronicles. They are retold from a different point of view. Their *repetition* in God's word indicates that they are *very important lessons for us to learn!*

The book of Ezra tells of the Jews' return from captivity under Ezra. They rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem under the protection and guidance of God. They began to keep God's annual feasts (Ezra 3:4 and 5:19-22) and to keep God's commandments.

Some of the men violated God's command against marrying foreign wives and

were commanded by Ezra to forsake them (Ezra 10). Compare with I Cor. 7:9. By that time those Jews recognized the POWER of God, and "all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter . . ."

People today don't FEAR and TREMBLE before the word of God! Prophecy tells us that we, too, are going to be taken captive until we learn to fear and respect the *authority* of God. Why not study God's word and learn these lessons without having to suffer for this precious knowledge?

It is interesting to note here that God's prophet, Ezra, did not hesitate to break up these illegal marriages. Neither will the true ministers of God today!

Although the book of Nehemiah comes next in the Bible, the correct chronological order would be to insert the book of Esther here. Esther made possible Nehemiah's work. Her marriage to the King of Persia gave the Jews enough prestige at the Persian Court to enable Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem. The name of God is not mentioned in the book, but His providential care of his people is nowhere more evident. Read it and see!

The book of Nehemiah continues with the story of rebuilding Jerusalem. In Nehemiah 8, we find that God's law was read and the Feast of Tabernacles was kept. Chapter 10 gives the account of the people's covenant with God to keep His law, and faithfully pay their tithes.

However, some soon began violating God's Sabbath day (Neh. 13), and he sternly rebuked them for it. Others began once more to marry strange wives.

Human nature was at work again! The people had not yet learned that the

way to genuine and lasting happiness is to *fear, obey, and love God*. Yes, truth is sometimes stranger than fiction! In spite of *all* their suffering, they hadn't learned this simplest of all lessons.

Have you?

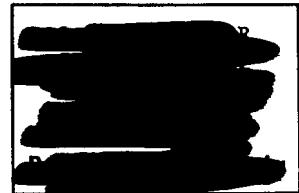
What Is the Sign of a Christian?

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see that to be a true Christian you are going to have to follow Jesus and put loving *obedience to God* far above all these worldly ideas and institutions. You were born into a world that forcibly brands the minds of most people with error before they are even old enough to decide conscientiously for themselves what God says is right and wrong. But God is now warning *you* to come out of this corrupt worldly system and learn the truth.

The real question is: do you love the praise of men more than the praise of God? Are you like those of whom Christ said, "This people honoureth me with their lips, *but* their heart is far from me." (Mark 7:6). You *dare* not call yourself a Christian and continue to disobey God's commandments and reject His SIGN.

Choose you this day whom you will serve! If God be God to you, then keep His commandments. "Remember the sabbath day to *keep* it holy." The sabbath is the SIGN between you and God that you have separated yourself from the world and are worshipping Him as the Creator. It's time for people everywhere to *wake up* and get back to the "faith once delivered"!



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