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Is It a SIN to Have INSURANCE?

*What does the Bible say about insurance?
Is it a lack of faith to have insurance?*

by Herman L. Hoeh

IT WILL come as a surprise, but *the Bible does say something about insurance!*

The problem of owning insurance has perplexed many in the Church. It is often reasoned by those who do not have insurance that it would be showing a lack of faith to be "protected" by insurance. Others have said that when they had insurance they did not feel they needed to trust God as much as before. It seemed to destroy their faith, since they were "protected" by men.

Is this kind of reasoning right? Exactly what DOES the Bible reveal about owning insurance—about saving for the future?

Is It Wrong to Save?

Before we can understand the right or wrong of insurance, we must first ask ourselves the question: "Is it wrong to save for the future?"

Notice what the Bible says about laying up for a "rainy day"!

The prophet Agur, under inspiration, wrote: "There are four things which are little upon the earth"—they are little in size—"BUT THEY ARE EXCEEDING WISE: the ants are a people not strong"—in comparison with the gigantic weight that man lifts—"yet they provide their food in the summer" (Proverbs 30:1, 24-25).

The ant SAVES. The ant gathers in

summer for the coming winter. The ants are wise creatures. They do not have to beg for food.

No wonder Solomon said: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise; which having no chief, overseer, or ruler"—to tell the ant what to do—she "provideth her bread in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Pro. 6:6).

The ant does not wait till the winter comes to gather food. It is too late by that time. The wise thing to do is prepare for hard times.

So the Bible counsels laying up for a rainy day.

Notice again Proverbs 13:22: "A GOOD MAN leaveth an inheritance to his children's children; and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous."

The good, as well as the sinner, save for the future. If a man is good in God's sight, *he will have saved enough for his grandchildren!* Most Christians are poor because they have been sinners *throughout life*—until they came to repentance. Life is too short after conversion for many to save very much even for their children.

God also saves for us—He saves up the wealth of the sinner for the righteous!

Then what did Jesus mean by saying: "Treasure not up for yourselves treas-

ures upon earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves steal. But treasure up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . for where thy treasure is there will thy heart be also" (Mat. 6: 19-21).

Does this mean that Jesus frowned upon saving for the future? Not at all! Jesus sanctioned saving for all eternity—"treasure up for yourselves treasure in heaven." That saving Jesus will give us as a reward when He returns. But Jesus warned not to treasure up "for yourselves" earthly savings. Don't save for yourselves—save for others! A good man does not lay up for himself. He saves for his grandchildren! A wise man does not build up a bank account only for himself, *but for his family.*

What Is Insurance?

Now we are ready to understand what insurance really is.

Insurance involves a program by which many individuals pay small premiums into a company, so that in case of accident, fire or death, the party suffering the loss receives sufficient money as compensation for the loss. It is a kind of pool in which people save and share the burdens of one another.

Insurance, of course, does not prevent accident, fire or death; it merely compensates you if you suffer such a loss so that you can regain your eco-

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conomic feet. In case of death, insurance provides security for widows and children.

Does the Bible have anything to say about this kind of insurance?

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 14: 28-29. "At the end of every three years, even in the same year, thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase, and shalt lay it up within thy gates." For whom is this laid up? For yourself?

No!

For "the strangers, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates [or cities]." Why? So that they may "come and eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hand which thou doest."

This is INSURANCE! Here is God's insurance program to take care of widows and orphans in case of death of the husband and father. It often happens that people will not have sufficient laid up for emergencies until later life. God knew this might happen. To provide for this He ordered the people to save 10% of their income once in three years—that is, the third and sixth year out of every seven years. We commonly call this the THIRD TITHE. The same command is repeated in Deut. 26:12.

Such problems as this have already faced God's Church. Sometimes women who have young children are converted. Either the husbands have died or have left them without means of support. What shall the Church do? It is the responsibility of its members to save the THIRD TITHE to take care of just such emergencies. Such young women should not be out working, but ought to be at home taking care of their children, until they become old enough to work.

In another instance a fire gutted the home of an elderly widow who had recently been baptized. She had little savings. What should we, as God's people, have done? She received help from the THIRD TITHE.

This is the *unselfish* thing to do. Insurance is the principle of saving to help others. God wants us to save the *third tithe* once in three years as an insurance program for the Church, just as He wants us to save the FIRST TITHE for the spread of the gospel. It is not a lack of faith to save the first tithe for the gospel. Neither is it a lack of faith to save for the fatherless and widows.

New Knowledge Added

In our January Ministerial Conference we reopened the question of the THIRD TITHE. The use of the THIRD TITHE had never before been as fully revealed to us as it now is.

Heretofore we had *assumed* that it is to take care of the needs of the poor—that it is a kind of *charity* program.

Let's re-examine the Scripture. The third tithe is for the "stranger, the fatherless, the widow."

Notice who is eligible for aid—the person who has been uprooted from his community and is a stranger in a new community. As the years go by drought and floods will cause many to be strangers in new communities. *The third tithe is a kind of flood and drought insurance, too.* It is also a type of "life insurance," aiding the widows and the young children if the head of the house dies unexpectedly. This can and does happen! *"Time and chance happen to all"* (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

But the third tithe does not mention the poor! The poor are taken care of in another way. We had not fully grasped this before.

Notice where the poor are mentioned. It is found in Deuteronomy 15:7-11: "If there be among you a *needy man*, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates . . . thou shalt not harden thy heart, not shut thy hand from thy needy brother; BUT THOU SHALT SURELY OPEN THY HAND UNTO HIM, AND SHALT SURELY LEND HIM SUFFICIENT FOR HIS NEED IN THAT WHICH HE WANTETH."

When to GIVE to the Poor

If any man be called a brother, we are to LEND to him. It does *not* say "give." Too often in the past we have permitted the poor to receive *when they were not willing to work*. Paul commands, "If any will not work, let him not eat!" (II Thes. 3:10). We are to *loan* to the needy brother. But we are not to charge him interest. We are not to be usurers, seeking a profit from a loan.

If, after seven years have passed, and

the poor or needy have not been able to repay the loan, then you are to release the brother from that obligation. You are to count the loan as a gift. "At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother . . . Of a foreigner"—one who is not converted—"thou mayest exact it; but whatsoever of thine is with thy brother thy hand shall release. Howbeit there shall be no needy among you—if only thou diligently bearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do ALL this commandment" (Deut. 15:1-5).

The only reason many of us are poor and needy is that we have not observed all God's commandments *in the past*. We reap what we sow!

If we are needy, God expects us to borrow and also to pay back. David said: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. All the day long he dealeth graciously, and LENDETH; and his seed is blessed" (Psalm 37: 25-26).

The righteous do not beg. The righteous lend. Of course, God does expect us to *give* to beggars and the needy of this world if they ask us and we have the means. *Alms* are for the blind and maimed and crippled of this world. Jesus said: "Give alms."

This aid for the poor is different from the third tithe which is God's insurance program for His people.

Example from History

We have given you previously the illustration from Jewish history which shows how the Jews understood the use of the tithes. Let us reconsider this example—from Tobit, chapter 1. (This is a historic, though uninspired record): "A tenth part [the first tithe] of all my produce I would give to the sons of Levi, who officiated at Jerusalem, and another tenth [the second tithe] I would sell [because Tobit lived too far from Jerusalem to bring it there] and go and spend the proceeds in Jerusalem each year [at the annual feasts], AND A THIRD TENTH I WOULD GIVE TO THOSE TO WHOM IT WAS FITTING TO GIVE IT, as Deborah my grandmother had instructed me—FOR I WAS LEFT AN ORPHAN BY MY FATHER."

For whom was it fitting to give the third tithe?—widows and orphans.

Now that we, as God's ministers, have come to recognize the full import of this command, we must say that it is God's injunction that all of His people who have an earned income should plan to save the third tithe. Why should some of

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Should Christians Celebrate BIRTHDAYS?

Why does the Bible omit mention of the birthdates of such men as Abraham, Moses and even Jesus Christ? Where did the custom of celebrating birthdays begin?

by Kenneth C. Herrmann

SEARCH your Bible! How many birthday celebrations do you find?

That of a Pharaoh who celebrated his birthday by hanging his chief baker (Genesis 40). And a second, Herod's birthday celebration at which John the Baptist was beheaded (Matt. 14:6).

Only two definite birthday celebrations in the entire Bible!

Not a single mention is ever made of the exact date in terms of the month and day upon which any individual was born! Isn't all this strange in the light of the popular modern practice? Birthdays seem to have little importance in God's eyes!

The sons of Job may also have been observing their birthdays, though there is uncertainty as to whether these "days" (Job 1:4) they met on were really birthdays. Job actually cursed his birthdate! (Job 3:1).

It was to show His death that Christ commanded His disciples to continue in the observance of the Passover. **NO MENTION OF THE DATE OF JESUS' BIRTH AS A HUMAN BEING IS FOUND.** *Certainly your birth date is not as important as His!*

Why did God the Father intend that Jesus' birthdate should be forgotten but that man should remember the date of His death? Is it hard to believe, "the day of death . . . is better . . . than the day of one's birth"?

Attached to This World

We live in a world today that is geared to the Roman calendar. We remember the date of our birth, pay our taxes and have our tombstones engraved with the day we die—all in accord with this *pagan Roman system of calculating time.*

Have we forgotten we are commanded to come out of this world?

In following these customs we are obliged to make use of this Roman system of time with its *pagan* designations: *Sunday, Moonday, Tuesday, Wodenday, Thorsday, January, February,* etc. In many business matters we must regard January 1 as the beginning of a new year. Think back. Doesn't January 1

completely overshadow in your mind the date when *the true new year really begins?*

Probably ONLY A HANDFUL OF YOU TOOK NOTE AT SUNSET ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 1 THIS YEAR that A NEW YEAR, AS GOD REVEALED IT, WAS BEGINNING. April 2 was the anniversary of the date about which the Eternal spoke to the children of Israel, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

Thirteen days after the first day of God's new year we are to remember the date of *death* of Jesus Christ. *Is it strange that His DEATHdate and not His BIRTHdate should be remembered?*

How hard Satan has worked to substitute his Roman calendar, his first day of the week, his midnight beginning for a day, his emphasis on men's birthdates so man might forget the day of death of Christ, our Passover!

How completely has Satan succeeded in convincing men that Easter is the resurrection date, that Sunday is the Sabbath!

Consider the tactics of your enemy. Satan's work of deception extends into every field of endeavor, every practice, every custom, everything we deal with in life. His efforts are continually directed to provide a counterfeit for every practice that God has ordained, a perversion of every true way; a wrong way suited to every whim of carnal human nature.

What Is the Correct Attitude?

We are prone, like the world, to overemphasize the date one is born into this carnal life. When one repents, turns to God's true way, receives God's Spirit and then death overtakes him before Christ comes—ISN'T THIS MAN'S DAY OF DEATH MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE DAY OF HIS BIRTH? This man, though dead, has completed his time of trial and testing. Eternal life, a position as ruler, awaits him at the resurrection!

Paul writes, upon nearing death, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown*

of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (II Tim. 4:7,8).

The day Paul began his carnal life as a baby could hardly be compared in importance with the day he, at death, made certain his reward by enduring the problems and trials of a Christian life to the end.

A child's life does not begin with birth. Rather, at birth he is about nine months old and about ready to begin his training in the mastery of his emotions, his lusts and desires under the guiding hands of his parents.

Japanese count a man's age from the time of conception rather than birth.

A single Greek word is translated both BORN and BEGOTTEN in our English translations of the Bible according to the context. No distinction is made of the moment of birth. The single word *fathered* could have been used to carry the intended meaning in English. Preserving one's genealogy was important, but the date on which one was born was considered of little account.

A New Birth Date

Our present mortal existence is but one of dust kept alive by the breath of life, the oxygen we breathe in and which our bloodstream carries to all parts of the body. The moment of conception and of the birth of *this mortal life* are of little importance compared to our *new birth* into God's kingdom.

In sharp contrast to the complete absence of any mortal man's birthdate in the Bible, *we do find the command to commemorate the day* which pictures the first "harvest of souls"—the time when *immortal Sons of God will be born!* This day pictures not only our spiritual birthday but the day of conception as well!

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." "You must be *born* again." For Christians the moment of *conception* of this new life is the time *they receive God's Spirit as a begetting* to eternal Spirit life. Now turn to Acts 2. For many in 31 A.D., the time of

spiritual conception was the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2.

For some it was then three years *after their repentance and baptism*; for others only months or days. It is not our baptism day then that is to be remembered year by year, but *the Day of Pentecost* which is set aside as *the memorial of conception of all God's children*, the moment of the beginning of their Spiritual life.

But conception only begins our life. *We must yet be born!* Paul writes, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth *until Christ be formed in you.*" (Gal. 4:19). We must grow from conception, from the moment God implants His Spirit in us. We must be born immortal. That moment, then, will be the day of our new birth. This is the *day of birth* Satan would like to cover up by emphasis on the day of your birth into this *physical* life.

It is *the Feast of Pentecost*—which

commemorates the first harvest, the spring harvest—that *commemorates in advance the day on which Christians will be reaped into the Kingdom of God and freed from this mortal earthly body* in which they have been developing and growing to be like God. For those Christians in their graves it will be a moment of awakening. *They will come up out of their graves*, children of the earth and children of God!

The new birth is again emphasized by the Feast of Trumpets which pictures the Day of the Lord—and the return of Christ at the "seventh trumpet" to raise the "first fruits" of God's creation.

Why Birthdays?

The basic purpose of observing birthdays is to keep track of one's age. How important are mere years? Is there not something MORE IMPORTANT than having achieved only another birthday?

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Is INSURANCE Wrong?

(Continued from page 2)

His people expect to reap the benefits of others, and do nothing themselves?

And with regard to aiding the needy, God does not expect you to loan or give to another *if you do not have enough yourself*. As Paul said: "I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want. So that their abundance may supply your want [if that becomes necessary at a later time] that there may be equality" (II Corinthians 8:13-14). Sometimes special offerings are necessary to take care of people in severe affliction, or religious persecution. But God does not want us to give so much that we, in turn, become a financial burden to the Church.

Personal Savings Also

But charity or insurance is not meant to be a substitute for personal savings for our family. Don't forget the ant! It is our duty as a body to take care of one another in case of death, of flood or other natural causes.

That is the kind of insurance which the third tithe provides. This tithe may be handled locally, wherever there is a congregation; or at the headquarters in Pasadena to which the scattered members may send their third tithe.

But this does not free each man who is the head of a family of the divinely appointed responsibility of providing savings for his children and even grandchildren. Without such savings, many people would not have been able in the

past to help God's work as they did. They voluntarily gave to the work in a special crisis.

Without savings, how are you going to be able to aid someone who is really in need? How will you have money to loan a person who is in genuine need?

God could not expect you to graciously loan to another, if you had not saved money in advance!

When the Church is NOT Responsible

Now let us consider a personal responsibility of each member in God's Church. Turn to I Timothy 5:3-4, 8, 16: "Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow hath children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety towards their own house, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable before God . . . But if any provideth not for his own, and especially his household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever! . . . If any believer hath widows, let that believer relieve them, and LET NOT THE CHURCH BE BURDENED; that it may relieve the real widows"—those who are absolutely alone in the world.

Paul wrote this to Timothy. It was Timothy's duty to see that no one took advantage of the financial sacrifice of God's people. If you are able—and some think they are not able when they *are* able—to support widows and orphans in your household, you are to do so. That is acceptable before God, Paul said.

IT IS NOT THE CHURCH'S DUTY IN SUCH CASES to use the third tithe. God

does not want spongers in His Kingdom!

Other Insurance

It is, of course, up to each individual to provide for his own home. Some may have enough saved or invested and feel no need for special insurance.

Consider, however, accident and liability insurance. Since most individuals cannot save money on their own in anticipation of emergencies, then they ought to obtain auto insurance (and whatever else may be necessary) to fit their budget. We all become CARELESS or take unnecessary chances at times. *Accidents can happen to YOU!* The experience of our own Church members proves it. God is not going to prevent you from reaping the consequences of carelessness. But He will deliver you—[just as I am writing this sentence I was interrupted by a member who injured his leg because he had failed to tighten a set screw on a router. Yes, accidents CAN and DO happen. But thanks to God that we can always pray to be healed or to be protected from infection in case of injury].

Continuing, many people cannot save unless they owe some insurance company a premium obligation. What a shame! But be careful. Do not accept just any insurance company agent that comes along. Some companies are not sound. Remember, too, that accident, fire and educational insurance which provide benefits in the next few years, are far more beneficial than life insurance—which will probably be of little value 15 years hence anyway!

No insurance can replace faith. Otherwise God would not have provided life and disaster insurance for His people in His own law.

If you are one who believes that insurance *replaces* faith, that is merely proof that you probably DID NOT HAVE ANY ABIDING FAITH IN THE FIRST PLACE.

Insurance is never a substitute for faith. Faith is that assurance that God will deliver you *out of* every difficulty you may become involved in. Paul was in several shipwrecks. God delivered him out of each of them after they happened. Paul often lost his property. Time and circumstance happen to us all. God alone could deliver Paul from death in such accidents. No insurance could have! But savings in the form of insurance would compensate Paul for his loss.

That is how God wants us to view the question of insurance.

It is time we open our minds to receive God's understanding and believe and act on this command of God's law to save the THIRD TITHE. "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them," said Jesus.

Are You Cursing Your Land?

Today we are having severe drought in some areas and floods in others. It has not always been this way. Why the change? Who is responsible?

by J. W. Robinson

LARGE portions of the United States, which were once productive, are now drought stricken. Streams and springs are drying up in many areas! Much of the topsoil in several states is blowing away. Tornadoes are sweeping inland farther, and with greater frequency than ever before!

Why all this distress? Is it a *naturally caused* situation which can be explained away? OR IS IT PUNISHMENT FOR SIN?

If it is punishment, for whose sin are YOU being punished?

Why Climatic Rampage?

Here is the answer—

When God gave Israel the law in Mount Sinai, He told them to cultivate the land and harvest its fruit for six years (Ex. 23:10-11). But He also included this little-known, though vitally important statute: "*the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie still . . . In like manner shall you deal with your vineyard and your oliveyard.*"

God made this law a part of His overall law of love. He knows that the land needs a rest every seventh year.

God did not say, "Do it if you *want* to." He made it a definite command *for our own good!* Like the sabbath day it involves spiritual as well as physical principles and still should be observed!

But why the increase in drought, in floods, in blowing topsoil and tornadoes? And why the coming war and captivity of this whole nation? What have the people done to merit such devastation?

Let Leviticus 26:34-35 tell us. "Then [in the near future] shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, AS LONG AS IT LIES DESOLATE, and you be in your enemies' land; then shall the land rest, AND ENJOY HER SABBATHS. As long as it lies desolate it shall rest; BECAUSE IT DID NOT REST IN YOUR SABBATHS, WHEN YOU DWELT UPON IT."

It is all very clear. The land becomes desolate *because it has not been allowed to rest and keep its sabbaths!*

I have met at the Feast of Tabernacles farmers who *claimed* to have been in God's Church and obeyed Him for seven and eight years. They should have known that God requires them to keep the sabbath year—but *they had neglected to do so!* When I explained to them their obligation and made it

very plain that they had disobeyed God, they turned and walked unconcernedly away. Did *that* show an attitude of OBEDIENCE?

No, it typifies the indifference of this modern age! Don't think for a minute that you are on a band wagon with an easy ticket into the Kingdom of God. You must *obey* God! Otherwise you will suffer when the nation pays for its sins.

In the Scriptures God isn't speaking just to your neighbor. *HE is speaking to YOU!*

God's Conditional Promises

Are you occasionally plagued by disease among your livestock, by insect pest, or by drought? If so, you may have been neglecting to *DESERVE* God's promised blessings. God promises the obedient that He will ". . . satisfy your soul in drought . . . and you shall be like an irrigated garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (Isa. 58:11).

God commands us, in Leviticus 23:35-36, "You shall serve the Eternal your God and I will bless your bread and your water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of you. None shall cast her young or be barren in your land."

Again, in II Chronicles 6:13-14 God promised us, "When I shut up the heavens that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, *if My people* [Christians today] who are called by My *name* HUMBLE THEMSELVES and PRAY and SEEK My face, and *turn from their wicked ways*, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and HEAL their land."

There it is! God's people must obey God—and that includes the keeping of the sabbath year. Now is the time we need to learn to *PRAY for one another*, "Casting all your cares upon Him; for He cares for you" (I Pet. 5:7).

Punishment for Disobedience

Notice what happened once before when the people refused to obey this

NOTICE!

Booklets explaining the annual Holy Days are being set in type. As soon as they are off the press they will be mailed to you.

law. We have a record of this in II Chronicles 36:20-21: "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he [Nebuchadnezzar] away to Babylon; where they were servants of him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: *to fulfill the Word* of the Eternal by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths*: for as long as she [the land] lay desolate *she kept sabbath*, to fulfill threescore and ten years." Every sabbatical year unkept meant a year in captivity for Judah! God's corrective measures are sure—Israel, too, *will* be desolate and the land will soon *enjoy* her sabbaths because the people refuse to turn to God and keep His sabbatical years.

God warned Israel in Leviticus 26:14-25 what would happen *if they disobeyed* this law. Israel was to receive severe punishments in four progressively worsening stages unless the nation repented. This prophecy was fully explained in the April 1956 issue of *The PLAIN TRUTH*.

Some have thought this prophecy applies only to Israel's first punishment, and isn't for us today. They quote verse 22: "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you *FEW* in number; and your ways [roads] shall be desolate."

Those who are scoffers will say, "That is no concern of ours: there are not enough wild beasts in this nation to do any serious damage." Don't you believe it! We are already getting a foretaste of this condition. Peoria, Illinois was recently invaded by muskrats (rabbit-sized marsh dwellers) which were driven by hunger to leave the Illinois River. They came into the city and attacked several people (from *Pasadena Independent*, news item).

Another similar incident, of greater danger and longer duration, is happening on Vancouver Island, in British Columbia, at the southwestern corner of Canada. The island's large cougar population is suffering from a shortage of deer and other natural prey. As a result of their hunger, many cougars, especially the half-starved females, have gone into the towns, *even entering houses*, to attack people, watchdogs, and housecats (*Field and Stream* magazine, December, 1955, page 46, article, "Crazy Cougars" by Frank Dufresne).

Many unprovoked attacks have been made on humans by these hunger-maddened beasts. In 1954 nearly 300 of the cougars were killed on that island alone without making any discernible dent in their number (page 87, same article). Wild animals are destined to become even more destructive *throughout* the nation *because we have ruined the land*.

Wild animals are not the only source of danger. There are more than 20,000,000 dogs in the United States. When our national food supply diminishes to famine proportions on a nationwide scale, we may expect many of them—possibly a majority—to be turned out to shift for themselves. Hungry dogs run in packs like wolves. Past association with man will enable them to be *more stealthy and cunning than any other beast*. Under such conditions they will multiply unrestrained—three or four years' time could produce enough wild dogs to outnumber the people. Marauding packs of dogs will do great damage to flocks of sheep and poultry and herds of cattle. And, as Mr. Hoeh brought out in the April, 1956 issue of *The PLAIN TRUTH*, rabies—which is rapidly increasing today—will run rampant.

How to Keep the Sabbath Year

We know that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in **RIGHTHOUSNESS**" (II Tim. 3:16). We know also that we are *commanded* to keep the sabbath year and that "*all {God's} commandments are **RIGHTHOUSNESS*** (Ps. 119:172)." Therefore let us look into the Scriptures for instructions in the keeping of the sabbath year.

God's instructions, in Leviticus 25: 3-7, for the sabbath year are very thorough and complete and are easily understood. [I quote from the Moffatt translation here because it is more easily understood than is the King James Version. The meaning, however, is identical in both.]

"For six years you may sow your field, for six years you may prune your vineyard, and gather in the produce; but the seventh year shall be a sabbath of entire rest for the land, a sabbath in honor of the Eternal, on which you must neither sow a field nor prune a vineyard, on which you must not even gather the aftergrowth of your harvest nor grapes from your undressed vines . . . it shall be a year of entire rest for the land. The natural produce of the land shall serve as food for you, for yourself and your slaves, male and female, for your hired servant and any outsiders staying with you, furnishing food also for your cattle and livestock!"

Read these verses again very care-

fully. They are important. Notice verse 5. It tells you that you must not gather your crops or fruit for commercial use in that year. They must, in general, be allowed to return to the soil. Yet verse six tells you that the natural produce of the

land in the sabbatical year shall serve as food for you, your servants, and strangers or guests that are with you.

Some people are temporarily confused when reading these two verses, thinking they contradict. But actually they do not. You must not harvest the produce of the land in order to sell it. Neither are you to store up on the sabbath year for future use. You may use the produce for day-to-day needs. God wants you to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season, even in the sabbath year.

The natural produce of the land in that year will also furnish food for your cattle and other livestock which may graze on the land (verse 7). This clearly shows that it is permissible to allow cattle to graze the fields in addition to the pasture in the sabbath year. To take advantage of this liberty it is permissible to allow your cattle herd to increase while they are grazing the whole farm.

One man, *who did not study the scriptures* on the matter, sold all of his cattle on the sabbath year, and had no food except what he bought. To him and his family the sabbath year became a yoke of bondage—a form of penance—*because of his ignorance* of God's law. The sabbatical year should have been a time of great joy and rejoicing.

What about your shrubbery and flowers? How should you care for them on the sabbath year? The answer is that you should keep the house and its surroundings neat with whatever lawn and hedge trimming may be necessary. God would not want you to let your home become run-down and dilapidated looking. The law of the sabbatical year involves only that land from which crops are reaped and sold. It does not include your pasture or your flower garden around the home.

How to Figure Your Sabbath Year

The sabbath year is counted from one Feast of Tabernacles to the next, beginning and ending in the fall of the year. In ancient Israel the sabbatical years were reckoned from creation but included the Jubilee every 50th year. The Jubilee is reckoned only when there is a God-given permanent inheritance.

After the Jews returned from captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah they were not given any permanent inheritance. Therefore they could keep only the sabbatical years every seventh year.

After the Jews returned, they did not reckon from creation but from the time they *reoccupied* the land. *We are in a similar situation today*. We have no permanent inheritance.

It is apparent that God intends us to use a personal, and not a national, system. *Your sabbath year would be the seventh year of your conversion, counted*

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from one Feast of Tabernacles to the next. Count the year of your conversion as your first year. If you were converted before the Feast of Tabernacles in 1954, your sabbath year will be 1960, starting after the Feast of Tabernacles in 1959. If your conversion occurred after the Feast of Tabernacles in 1954, your sabbath year will be counted from the Feast of Tabernacles in 1960 till the fall of 1961.

Is This Your Problem?

Someone is sure to ask, "Should renters, as well as landowners, keep the sabbath year?" The answer is an emphatic "yes."

There may be land owners who will not allow their renters to let the whole land rest for a year. Renters do not have the authority to force the issue in this case but must submit to the demands of the owner. In this case the renter should let a portion rest each year until it has all rested. Through this method the land will at least have its recuperative rest.

The exact year that the land rests is not of primary importance because Christians do not all have the same sabbath year anyway. However, this should be *only* a temporary expediency and should cease when a more satisfactory (in God's sight) arrangement can be made.

Renters should keep the sabbath year of the land for the same spiritual reason that wage earners, for example, should keep the sabbath day. Since renters do not own the land, they must not insist that the owners obey God. Instead, they may have to find work and a farm elsewhere.

Actually, all land renters who are obeying God should aim to become landowners so that they will have full authority to farm according to God's principles. (But don't buy a farm in a drought-stricken area!)

If you are obeying God, you should be as willing, as was Abraham, to leave the locality in which your ancestors lived. But before you move into a new area, *make sure you can make a living there.* God is not obligated to supply your needs if you move into a desolate, drought-stricken area, or if you grow up in such an area and stay there. You should start your farming venture in an area that is not yet suffering.

Then, *after you have fulfilled your normal obligations and are obeying and trusting God to the best of your ability, God will supply all your needs!*

Land Left Fallow Every 2nd or 3rd Year

There may arise the question, "What should be done with land that is already being left idle every second, third, or fourth year? How should it be handled

in order to conform to God's sabbath year?"

Two types of land are being managed in this manner. The first type to be considered is good, productive land that is periodically being left idle, usually being seeded to a winter legume or other soil builder. Such a practice builds the soil up to a richer, more productive capacity and should in no way be discouraged. However, this should be *in addition* to the sabbatical rest.

Another grade of soil is occasionally left idle because it is too poor to produce crops any more often. Such soil is gradually wasting away and is so thin that it should not be cultivated in the first place. Rather, it should be seeded to a good pasture grass AND TURNED INTO PERMANENT PASTURE.

It is *vitaly important*, however, that you *do not overgraze your land!* One cause of the present distress in our Western states is that much of the land has been overgrazed in the interest of *temporary* higher profits.

If too many cattle are on the land they will nibble the grass *so short* that it will afford *no protective covering* for the soil. The land will then dry up—the grass will starve—the topsoil will be blown away.

Some land is also overgrazed even under the best grazing arrangement. Such land has already been worn out and should be left to nature so that shrubs and trees may take over and produce something for future generations. *Do not think of present profits only!* Think of future generations who will reclaim this land after the captivity—after the land shall have kept its sabbaths.

God's Blessings Promised

Some are sure to say, "How can we make a living in the sabbath year? A little fresh fruit and vegetables will not support my family. I need a cash crop. *I think* God wants us to use our minds and learn to draw our own conclusions; and *I think* we should let one-seventh of the farm lie idle each year." This looks good to the natural reasoning of some people, but what does GOD say about it?

God *does* want you to use your minds. And if you use them properly, you will come to the conclusion that *everyone* must learn God's point of view and live by it. The only other recourse is to follow human reasoning, independent of the Scriptures, which leads only to heartaches, sorrows, and wretchedness. Therefore, let us turn to God's Word so that He will tell us *how* to keep the sabbath year.

God tells us in Leviticus 25:20-22, "And if you shall say, 'What shall we eat the seventh year? Behold, we shall

not sow, nor gather in our increase. Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year; and it shall bring forth produce for three years. And you shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old produce until the ninth year; until her produce comes in you shall eat of the old produce."

There you see a definite command that one particular year should be set aside in which the *whole farm* should rest by being uncultivated. Also you see a *very distinct promise* that God will so abundantly bless you in the sixth year that your produce will last until the fall crops are harvested in the end of the ninth year.

You should be diligent in your work, but not overly concerned with such matters as your physical needs, because there is very little that *you* can do about it. *Making your crops grow is one of GOD'S jobs.* Strive for greater spiritual growth and God will supply your needs. "For your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him (Mat. 6:8).

"Take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed?'—for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Mat. 6:25-33).

What Work Should One Do in the Sabbath Year?

Some will want to know, "What should I do on the sabbath year? I know I shouldn't become idle. Should I get a job in town?"

Considering the purpose of the sabbath year, you should not get a job *until you have put your farm in good repair.* The sabbath year does for your land what the sabbath day does for your physical body. One rejuvenates the physical body; the other rejuvenates and improves the land. Surely you have buildings and fences that need repairing. Do you need new fences? Then build them. Digging post holes will not be a violation of the principle of letting the land rest. The sabbatical year is *a sabbath for the land.*

Possibly your home needs remodeling and painting. Take time to renovate it thoroughly in your seventh year. That will be the best opportunity you will have to make of it the kind of home you want. Overhaul or repair all of your machinery—make sure that everything is in good condition before the beginning of the eighth year.

After all this is accomplished, why not take an *educational vacation?* God said that the laborers should be released from work in the sabbatical year. Go to the cities' libraries and museums to

BIRTHDAYS

(Continued from page 4)

study and to broaden your understanding of the world around you. You might also visit some of the nation's beautiful parks or attend concerts that would be inaccessible in the other six years. Have you seen some of the great mountains, plains, deserts, caverns, canyons, or the coastline? See all of these natural wonders that you can. It will give you a better understanding of, and appreciation for, God's greatness and the beauties of His creation.

When you have done all of these things that you want, *or can afford*, to do—if you still want to get a job for the remainder of the year, go ahead and get it. *It is good to stay busy*, and the extra money can certainly be useful.

Trust God

Remember that the sabbath year is a time for rejoicing, created for the benefit of man. If you *obey* God and *trust* Him, in *faith*, He will fully supply all your needs. In Deuteronomy 11:13-15 God promises you that if you *obey* Him, He will send you rain at the right season so that your fields will produce abundant crops and your pastures plenty of grass ". . . that you may eat and be satisfied."

Do you think it would be difficult for God to punish the nation *without injuring you*? Turn to Psalm 91:7-10 and read God's answer to this question: "A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Eternal, who is my refuge, and the Most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling."

Turn to Amos 4:7, also, and read: "I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered." This definitely *proves* that God can give *you* rain while your neighbor suffers from drought. If you doubt that this refers to our day, read carefully verses 6-12. The statement, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel" at the end of verse 12 shows that this Scripture is for our day—just before the return of Christ.

Could you want stronger promises? What could be stronger than these assurances taken directly from God's inspired word? Do you believe God? If you do not, you have a very wretched life ahead of you! Anyone can see that conditions are worsening the world over. Human scheming certainly can not save you. Are you going to continue disobeying God and suffer for it? Or will you OBEY Him so that He can heap HIS BLESSINGS upon you?

Consider the case of Job. He was a middle-aged man, proud of his years, righteous in the eyes of all; even Satan could find no fault.

God brought him down to repentance by showing His great might compared to Job's, by showing the contrast in wisdom, in understanding. But first Job had to receive wisdom from a comparative youth.

Study Job, chapters 32 through 38. Before Job could have the personal interview with God that he demanded, he had to have his sins laid bare by a youth. This young man, Elihu, had good manners. He "had waited till Job [and the others] had spoken, because they were older than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men . . . [he] said, I am young, and ye are very old: wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion. I said, '*Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.*'"

Put yourself in Job's position. God was bringing him down. A youth, strangely enough, gives words of wisdom. A man of years listens.

The speech of the Eternal out of the whirlwind which follows contains no rebuke for this young man. Job repented. His three friends offered sacrifices for their own folly.

Isn't there a lesson here for those of us who count our wisdom by our age? "The hoary head is a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness." (Prov. 16:31). Here is a different attitude toward age. The multitude of years *should teach wisdom*, the aged should understand judgment. We should be better qualified to teach wisdom each year. But are we?

Ought we not to look back year by year with a feeling of regret rather than pride? We have not learned the wisdom or acquired the knowledge and understanding that we might.

If we had only applied ourselves more diligently. If we had only begun earlier in life to fear God, to keep His commandments, to recognize human nature for what it is. Then our years could be a thing to look back over with joy and with a right kind of pride.

What is this mortal life anyway? Of what lasting significance is a birth date? None!

God's Calendar for Birthdays?

A few moments spent considering God's Sacred Calendar should make it clear why the practice of birthday observance among God's people *would be impossible*. Have you pitied the "un-

fortunate" individual who was born on February 29 and could receive gifts and congratulations only once every four years? Then consider that *the length of three months* of the God's Sacred Calendar *varies from year to year*, having 29 and 30 days after a rather complicated pattern. *Three times* as many individuals would be affected.

A still greater deterrent to annual birthday observance is *the insertion of a 13th month* in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years of the present 19-year cycle. The *single irregularity* of February 29 of the Roman calendar affects but *one individual in 1461*. *The irregularities of God's Calendar would affect the birthday observance of one person in every eight.*

It is true that some Jewish people continue to observe birthdays and other anniversaries with God's Calendar. A rather intricate set of carnal human rules governs whether to move the celebration ahead or back one day, or back one month in the absence of the 13th month. Differing regulations are applied and the practice is not uniformly followed by all. But Christians follow God, not Jews who have adopted pagan customs!

The use of the God-given calendar actually deprives one person in eight of the pride and pleasure of having a regular day once a year on which to practice idleness and overindulgence!

Keeping God's Holydays

But, you might ask, doesn't this pattern in God's Calendar make His annual Holydays difficult to keep also? NOT AT ALL. *Every one of these Holydays comes during the first seven months of the year. These first seven months never change in length.* The 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th months always have 30 days; the even numbered months coming between, but 29 days. Even the last month of the year, whether it be a twelfth or thirteenth month, has always a regular 29 day length.

Thus *an eight month section of God's Sacred Calendar is free of irregularities* eliminating any chance for confusion as to when the Holydays are to be kept!

Here is the solution to our problem. We have no difficulty knowing which day is the Sabbath. God's Holydays in terms of the Roman calendar are published in The GOOD NEWS and in a calendar distributed to our Church members. The same dates for these Holydays are also found in your Bible in terms of God's Calendar.

But no scripture anywhere commands us to observe any dates other than God's Sabbath and His Holydays. To celebrate birthdays is to add to the law—and whoever does that will be added to the Lake of Fire!