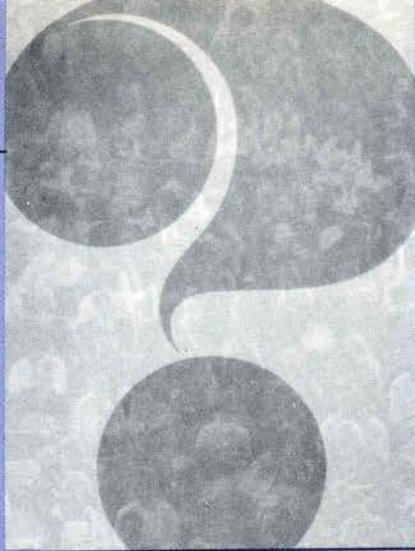


GVN

The Good News

**WHY DID
GOD
PUT YOU IN
HIS CHURCH?**

MAY 1974



ABOUT OUR COVER

What is the purpose and work of God's Church in this end-time age? Why are some called now, instead of later? This month's featured article (beginning on page 1) shows how you can have a part in the most important mission on earth in 1900 years.

Cover Design — Greg Smith

GN

The Good News

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REALIZE THIS! There are more than 3,600,050,000 human beings (three billion, six hundred million, fifty thousand) on earth today. But of that vast sea of humanity, God has in our time up to now called and put into His Church **ONLY** some 50,000 baptized members. The other 3,600,000,000 will all be called *later* — most not even in this age. They could not come to Christ and be put into the Church **NOW**, even if they tried!

Then why were you called now, before the time?

Jesus said plainly: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). And, comparatively speaking, God has been drawing almost **NONE** in this age!

How many of us have become unmindful of the **MEANING** of the Feast of Firstfruits — Pentecost? How many of us have become unmindful of the purpose for which the Father *did* draw us and put us in His Church **NOW** — ahead of time — before the other three billion, six hundred million will be called?

The Day of Pentecost is called in God’s Word the Feast of *Firstfruits*. We are merely the *first* little preliminary harvest of God’s children. Unless we fulfill God’s **SPECIAL PURPOSE** for our calling *now*, we might never go into His Kingdom. This fact must not be taken carelessly!

How many of us become unmindful of God’s purpose and assume we were called and put into God’s Church only to **GET** our *personal salvation* — and to **ENJOY** the fellowship and social life of our local church? **WHY** does God deny the other 3,600,000,000 people that blessing **NOW**? For, except the Father draw them, *none* could come to Christ! He said so!

Most people in the “Christian world” suppose Christ came to “save the world,” to start a “soul-winning” crusade. They assume the apostles and their successors started the program of trying to convert the whole world. They believe this is the “day of salvation” — and the **ONLY** time or age in which humanity may be “saved.”

They misconstrue the following: “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2). Many insist it says now “is **THE** day of salvation” — and they construe it to mean the **ONLY** time when God is trying to convert and “save” the world.

But that verse is quoted from Isaiah 49:8, where it says “**A DAY**” — not “the day.”

The eleventh chapter of Romans makes the truth plain. Some had been saying God had cast away His people Israel. The Apostle Paul denies this. He reminds them of how Elijah had thought *he alone* remained faithful to God and all others had been cast away. God had reminded Elijah that He had reserved seven thousand that had not knelt before Baal. Even so, says Paul,

WHY DID GOD PUT YOU IN HIS CHURCH?

God had a most important purpose in calling you now, instead of later. Are you really mindful of His purpose — are you really fulfilling it?

by **HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG**

there was in the mid-first century a comparatively small remnant that had received God's grace — a very small minority compared to many MILLIONS. And all the rest (verse 7) *were blinded!* God blinded them so that they *could not* see or comprehend God's truth.

Then Paul compares Israel to the olive tree. The people of Israel are the branches of the tree — broken off because of disbelief. That is, they did not *believe* what God had revealed to them, but instead they disobeyed — and sinned. The Gentiles who had received God's grace were pictured as branches of wild olive trees, now grafted into the natural olive tree — Israel. And the Israelites, broken off, upon repentance, belief, and conversion, were grafted back in again.

Thus the apostle was inspired to write that the Church, in this time, is composed of those who are spiritually converted. The Church is this natural olive tree — Israel. The Church, then, is composed of Spirit-begotten people only — it is *Spirit-begotten Israel!*

Now remember, the peoples of western Europe and the English-speaking peoples are the descendants of the so-called "Lost Ten Tribes" of Israel. Most are spiritually "blinded" so that they cannot see the way to salvation. Paul was writing to *only* those converted and in the Church at Corinth in the mid-first century. We know, however, that after the first century not many Gentiles received real conversion and the Spirit of God. A false "Christianity" — deceived by Satan — rose up which kept almost all the Western world blinded and deceived.

This passage continues to show that those blinded to saving truth were to *remain blinded* UNTIL there should come "the DELIVERER" — Christ at His second coming to *rule* the whole earth. *Then*, "all Israel shall be saved." *WHEN?* At and after Christ's coming in all power and glory!

WHEN Salvation Offered to Whole World

Now notice what will happen *WHEN* "the Deliverer" — Christ — comes to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Matthew 25, beginning verse 31, shows Christ coming as King of kings to *RULE* the world and to offer salvation and eternal life to all the world:

"*WHEN* the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (verses 31-32).

This is not referring to separating those of us already converted now from the rest of the world *then*. We have *already been* separated from the world by conversion, and we shall have been separated by *already having received* eternal life prior to Christ's setting foot on earth. For "... the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..." (I Thess. 4:16-17). Thus we, converted now *BEFORE* the time, shall have been changed from mortal to immortal, meeting Christ in the air as He descends — *BEFORE* His feet stand on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11-12; Zech. 14:4) — and *BEFORE* He sits on David's throne which then becomes *Christ's* throne in Jerusalem.

Now, continuing in Matthew 25:33-34: "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

So it is *after* Christ's return to earth, and in the thousand-year reign with Him, that He will set His hand to *SAVE THE WORLD!*

Notice next Isaiah 11. Verses 1 through 5 show Christ as the righteous Ruler and Judge. Verses 6 through 9 show the wild animals tamed, and the earth as full of Christ's knowledge as the ocean beds are full of water. Verse 10 shows the Gentile nations seeking Christ and salvation. Verses 11 through 16 show Christ setting His hand to save Israel and the whole world — during the millennium.

Meaning of Annual Festivals

The annual festivals of God picture God's plan for working out His purpose here below.

The Passover pictures the crucifixion of Christ. The wavesheaf on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread pictures the *RISEN* Christ being accepted (His sacrifice for our sins and His resurrection) of God. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture putting away sin. The Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost), the first small preliminary spiritual harvest. The Feast of Trumpets, Christ's second coming. The Day of Atonement, Satan being put away. The Feast of Tabernacles, the *Great Spiritual Harvest* — Christ setting His hand to offer salvation to the *whole world*. The final holy day pictures the Great White Throne Judgment — the resurrection of all to whom salvation had not been offered, and their time of salvation or rejection of it.

The Bible teaches that this *now* is *SATAN's* world — that Satan has *DECEIVED all nations*; that he has deceived them into accepting him as their *GOD* — being blinded as to the true Christ and His gospel.

Not Just Another Church

Brethren, do we not find ourselves taking for granted that the churches in what is called "Christianity" are also God's churches — that *WE* are just *another* of the many denominations, the only difference being that we hold to some different doctrines?

That is simply not true! We in GOD'S Church are *not* just one of all these churches. They are *of* this world. They do not have, or know, or proclaim, Christ's *gospel* — the message God sent to the world BY CHRIST, as the MESSENGER. Of course, Satan *counterfeits* the gospel and God's truth. He lets his churches have a little truth. But they are DECEIVED and OF this world. But, *you*, brethren, "are a chosen generation" — yes, SPECIFICALLY chosen for a very SPECIAL commission — "a ROYAL priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people . . ." (I Pet. 2:9).

The world as a whole — with its churches which call themselves "Christian" — are DECEIVED. God has allowed it. God has not called them. They do not know THE WAY to real salvation. They do not know even WHAT real salvation is! This is not God's time for saving the world!

What Actually Happened

To fully understand WHY most have been deceived — and WHY God has put YOU in His Church now, in this very end time just before the coming of Christ in power and glory, we need to realize what actually happened to the gospel after the first century.

Malachi prophesied Jesus would come as a MESSENGER, with a MESSAGE from God, which He was to announce (Mal. 3:1). He was to come as "the messenger of the COVENANT." Jesus came as the Messenger of the NEW Covenant.

The "Old Covenant" was made at Mt. Sinai between God and ancient Israel. It was a MARRIAGE covenant, and it made Israel God's wife. It also established Israel as a KINGDOM — one of earth's *nations*.

Likewise, the NEW Covenant, with Christ as Mediator (as Moses was of the Old), will be a MARRIAGE covenant, establishing Spirit-begotten Israel as Christ's Spirit-BORN wife. And it also will establish the "WIFE" as the KINGDOM OF GOD upon earth. That MARRIAGE will produce

Spirit-born children. That is WHEN, and by what process, God will set out to SAVE the whole world. Satan will be GONE! Christ, WITH *the Church*, then will *compose* the KINGDOM OF GOD and will be ruling all nations! And SAVING THEM! (See Matthew 25:31-34.)

They HATED the Gospel

The MESSAGE God sent by Christ was the GOSPEL — and that gospel was the *gospel of the Kingdom of God*. It was the message of the *Covenant*, which Covenant, as I said, shall establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The Kingdom of God is the GOVERNMENT of God which shall rule all nations. But also it is the FAMILY OF GOD into which we may be BORN — the divine family which becomes a spirit-nation, ruling all nations on earth — a world-ruling government!

Jesus was sent to ANNOUNCE that message — *not* to force men to accept it, believe it, and act on it. *Never did Jesus plead with a single one to be converted.* He merely announced the GOOD NEWS of the Kingdom of God, and He left it to people to decide whether to believe it and whether to act on it. He did not come THEN to CONVERT the world! He did not start a "soul-saving" crusade — the Protestants did! He came to ANNOUNCE the GOSPEL — the GOOD NEWS of His coming KINGDOM!

But people hated His message. Many BELIEVED *on* Him — realized and BELIEVED He was the Messiah. But they did not believe His message — His gospel!

Notice, in the eighth chapter of John:

Jesus was speaking in the Temple at Jerusalem. "As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word [IF you believe my message and act on it — live by it], then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (verses 30-32).

This angered those "who BELIEVED ON him." They hotly denied they were not free. They were Abraham's descendants!

"I know," answered Jesus, "that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because *my word* [the gospel] hath no place in you" (verse 37).

It was that message — that GOSPEL — which caused those to whom Jesus came to cry out for His crucifixion. His apostles went out proclaiming the same MESSAGE; they, too, were put to death for it — with the possible exception of John.

Persecution Sets In

In two years (A.D. 33) the persecution started (Acts 8:1). Philip, a deacon, went to Samaria announcing the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12) and performing many astounding miracles — healing the sick and casting out demons. The people were greatly moved. They *believed* and were baptized. Among them was Simon the sorcerer, who had deceived the people with his sorcery. He was their "spiritual leader" — the "Peter" (*pater*, father) in the Babylonian Mystery religion.

Seven hundred years before Christ, when the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel had been moved to Assyria, Gentiles from Babylon had been moved into the land of Samaria, north of Jerusalem (II Kings 17:18, 23, 24). These were the Gentiles which the Jews of Christ's day called "dogs."

This Simon, known in history as Simon Magus, saw his people starting to leave his Babylonian Mystery religion, which he had kept alive. Philip's miracles were REAL, and by hundreds people were believing and being baptized. Simon offered Peter and John money, trying to bribe them to confer on him the power to cause people to receive God's Holy Spirit by laying on his hands.

Peter told him sharply that he was "in the bond of iniquity." That is, *bound* by the grip of lawlessness — hostile to God's law.

Simon had managed to have him-

self baptized along with the scores and hundreds. He knew that all pagan religions were controlled by kings or heads of state. Their religions were used to hold a grip over the people and to keep the rulers in power. Whoever controlled the religion in a country also controlled the government.

Simon saw in Christ an opportunity to head up a UNIVERSAL religion — he saw visions of ruling the world, if only he could lead out in a UNIVERSAL religion that would sweep into all countries. He had to do something, or see his followers all turn Christian.

So Simon claimed to be an apostle in the Christian religion in order to hold his followers. He appropriated the *name* of Christ. He changed the NAME of his Babylonian religion to “Christianity.” He offered free GRACE — forgiveness of sins — which no religion had ever offered. But he turned grace into license (Jude 4); he did away with God’s law.

Before the end of the first century, his new UNIVERSAL religion had gained great strides. He gave great opposition to the true Church of God. This opposition is mentioned in Paul’s epistles, in John’s epistles, in Peter’s epistles, and in James and in Revelation.

The “Lost Century”

By the end of the first century, we come to a gap in the history of the Church. It’s like a curtain had been rung down on that stage of history. When that curtain lifts, a hundred years later, we see a “Christian church” professing Christ, administering grace, but otherwise almost the very antithesis of the Church of Christ’s apostles a hundred years before.

The Kingdom of God had been *changed* to become *the church*. The pagan day of the sun had displaced God’s Sabbath. The Sabbath was called “Jewish,” and persecution against things “Jewish” was a weapon used to supplant most of

Christ’s teachings with the Babylonian Mystery religion, now called “Christianity.”

In the twelfth chapter of Revelation, we find a description of the true Church of God — persecuted, small. It is persecuted by Satan the devil, who is the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4) and of the new false “Christianity.” In the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, we find this Babylonian Mystery church described.

When the curtain lifts on that “Lost Century” of Church history, the gospel of the Kingdom of God was no longer preached to the world. Jesus and His apostles had carried on a dual ministry — proclaiming the Kingdom of God and healing the sick. But after that “Lost Century” neither the gospel of God’s Kingdom nor healing was going out to the world.

The true Church of God carried on through every generation, but its teaching had to be secret — under cover — for fear of martyrdom. The gospel of God sent to mankind through Christ was NO LONGER PREACHED TO THE WORLD!

Where WE Come In

In the pivotal chapter of the entire New Testament, Matthew 24, it is recorded that Jesus had been telling His disciples that the Temple at Jerusalem would be torn down. Also He had told them of His coming in power and glory to rule. Then, on the Mount of Olives, His disciples asked privately: “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world [age]?” (Verse 3.)

Jesus did not give them the sign of His coming and the END of this present world right away. First He warned them: “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (verses 4, 5).

That happened. They claimed to be the ministers of Jesus Christ. They said Jesus was the Christ. They preached Christ (the Messen-

ger) to the world, but NOT *His message* — His gospel — the Kingdom of God. And they indeed have deceived the MANY — the MILLIONS and hundreds of millions!

Finally, in verse 14, He gave them the sign by which we were to know the time of the end of this age and Christ’s imminent coming to establish the Kingdom of God is near. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Notice — not to convert all nations. Just for a witness to all nations.

Gospel NOT Proclaimed 18½ Centuries

Unless Jesus *knew* that a *different* gospel would go out — a gospel about *His PERSON* (and teaching a DIFFERENT JESUS at that!) — the end time proclaiming of the true gospel of the Kingdom could not be a sign by which you may know His coming is *near!*

Jesus plainly said here that the true GOSPEL would not be preached to the world UNTIL NOW!

Notice briefly Galatians 1:6-9. This *false gospel* was already, when Paul wrote to the Galatians, being preached: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another gospel* . . . but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” Then he pronounced a double curse on any who dared to proclaim a different gospel.

A Different Gospel

Consider with that scripture another from II Corinthians 11:2-4. Paul wrote the Corinthians, who were already listening to this FALSE gospel: “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted . . . For if he that cometh [Simon the sorcerer’s followers] preacheth *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive *another*

spirit, which ye have not received, or ANOTHER GOSPEL, which ye have not [as yet] accepted”

Who were these false preachers with “ANOTHER GOSPEL”?

Verses 13-15: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into [claiming to be] the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers [Satan’s ministers posing as Christ’s] also be transformed as [pretending to be] the ministers of righteousness. . . .”

Why the First-Century Church

Now notice carefully!

Jesus taught His disciples the message (gospel) of the Kingdom of God. They were with Him three-and-a-half years. After His resurrection they were with Him forty days (Acts 1:3) to become EYEWITNESSES of the fact of His RESURRECTION. As they announced the Kingdom of God, they also put great emphasis on being EYEWITNESSES that Christ ROSE from the dead.

In order for them — TWELVE men — a complete JURY to unanimously CONFIRM the resurrection — to perform this mission, God *specialy* called and raised up His CHURCH of that period of time to BACK THEM — support them financially — support them by fervent PRAYERS. But they were an infinitesimal *tiny fraction* of all humanity! At first the Church mushroomed in growth (Acts 5:14; 6:1, etc.). But in Acts 7 we find the persecution starting. In Acts 8 it is recorded that the persecution intensified and scattered the members of the Church. Acts 8 also records the facts about Simon the sorcerer.

Before the end of the first century, the persecution had reduced the true Church. Many members had gone out of the true Church by the nineties A.D. (I John 2:19.) John was warning the brethren against the false ministers (I John 2:4; II John 7, 10, etc.). Soon the false

counterfeit church greatly outnumbered them.

Then came the “Lost Century” in Church history. The first-century commission had been carried out. The great false “Christianity” grew great and strong *physically* and *politically* — but not *spiritually* — until it became the largest religion, in number of adherents, in the world.

Through this 18½ centuries, God’s true Church existed, much of the time very SMALL, impotent, *teaching and even meeting secretly*, and unable to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world.

One purpose of the Church — one reason God did draw some to Christ — was to beget a certain number by the Holy Spirit that they might GROW spiritually in grace and the KNOWLEDGE of Christ; that they may be resurrected into God’s KINGDOM *at the coming of Christ* — trained spiritually and developed in spiritual character and knowledge to rule the world under Christ when He comes.

But now, in the past FORTY YEARS there has come a SPECIAL PURPOSE — a SPECIAL TREMENDOUS COMMISSION to be carried out — which today is the principal reason why God has greatly increased the number called over that of the immediately preceding years.

Notice carefully! It is important that you understand!

God’s Church Today

Now we come down to ourselves in God’s Church today.

In the autumn of 1926 God called me. For sixteen years I had been specially prepared for it. I was challenged into intensive study and research into the Bible. I was astonished — shocked — to see that the “Christianity” I had been brought up in was almost the antithesis of the Christianity of Christ and His apostles. Against my will, as it had been at the time, I had to acknowledge I had been wrong about God’s Sabbath.

That was the beginning of learning God’s truth. It was like a sudden awakening to a whole new world. I was impelled to keep on studying. My complete surrender to God, His law, His Word, His will changed my whole life. I was baptized and received God’s Holy Spirit. It was a total new awakening — a new life. Now for the first time God opened my mind to understand the Bible.

The intensive study *became my life*. My conversion was in the spring of 1927. In 1931 I was ordained by the Oregon Conference of the Church of God. After many tests lasting seven years from my conversion, God *chose* me as His instrument to raise up the present era of His Church, to proclaim His gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world and to feed the flock which *He* was to put in His Church.

The END TIME Was Here!

This proved to be the start of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Matthew 24:14.

But the gospel was not to go to all the world right away. First, radio opened in the smallest way at the start. The first week in January 1934, the true gospel — the Kingdom of God — went out to reach perhaps a few thousand people in the northwest corner of the United States — in Lane County, Oregon. *The Plain Truth* started February 1, 1934 with the very smallest circulation — just a few hundred copies. By late 1942, we were reaching a scattered national group of listeners and readers. Not important national leaders — all just the “grass-roots” common people.

Gradually Jesus Christ, the living HEAD of this *Work*, called more and more of you brethren as co-workers *with Him and* with me in proclaiming this GOOD NEWS of Christ’s gospel of the Kingdom. The *Work*, on radio and by the printing press, grew. It spread to reach many MILLIONS over the United States, Canada, and Australia. Still God called

only a comparative very small minority to conversion — at this time!

But when it came to getting God's LAST MESSAGE out to ALL THE WORLD as a witness, we were blocked. I could not buy time on radio in Britain, nor in France, Germany, Scandinavia, nor in Russia, India, China, Japan, Indonesia, nor other countries around the world.

We Were Blocked

Governments in those nations — in nearly *all* nations — CONTROL radio, television, and the means of reaching their people! They try to CONTROL the minds and thinking and teaching of their peoples!

I tried buying radio time in a few *little* countries *adjoining* France, Germany, Belgium, India, Russia, and China. But results were ALMOST NIL — almost NO RESPONSE. We simply could not reach the MILLIONS in these big nations that way.

Stupendous Doors Open

Now, at last, after 40 years of building toward it, the living Christ has opened STUPENDOUS NEW DOORS for getting HIS MESSAGE into the nations whose doors, those 40 years, were *closed!*

In all these huge population nations — China, India, Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Brazil, Bangladesh, the nations of Western Europe, Asia, Africa, South and Central America — God is opening doors AT THE VERY TOP!

He has already given me almost unbelievable FAVOR and CREDIBILITY in the eyes of those at the very TOP of many nations. And the number of nations conferring this unusual grace and favor upon me personally continues to GROW and EXPAND into more and more nations month by month!

There has been NOTHING LIKE IT BEFORE, so far as I know!

THINK OF IT! The chosen servant of the Great God being given great favor and high HONOR by numerous heads of state — who actually *want* to hear my message — who want

their people at the top of their governments to hear it — who want THEIR PEOPLE to hear it!

I know of nothing like it ever before in history — unless it was in the days of the prophet Elijah.

Elijah Went to Kings

God had hid Elijah from King Ahab of Israel — first by the brook Cherith, fed by the ravens, then in the house of the widow in Zarephath. Finally, God told Elijah in the third year to go to King Ahab. In the way Elijah met Obadiah, governor of the king's palace, who greatly feared God. Elijah told Obadiah to go tell King Ahab Elijah had come.

But Obadiah feared for his life! He said: "As the Eternal thy God liveth, there is NO NATION OR KINGDOM, whither my lord [King Ahab] hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not" (I Kings 18:10).

Ahab's servants did not inquire or take an oath of the shepherders, farmers, or common people. Obviously, Ahab's men went directly to the KING of each nation, *indicating that Elijah was known to the kings of the earth in his day.*

Today, after 40 years, the DOORS TO THESE NATIONS ARE OPENING one after another, faster than I can get to them! THIS IS DEFINITELY OF GOD!

And now, PUBLIC APPEARANCE CAMPAIGNS are planned *already* in THREE nations, sponsored by officials high in the governments of these nations. Already I have gotten the message of the Kingdom of God to audiences of 55 to 100 of each nation's LEADERS in banquets or dinners in India, Japan, Thailand, South Vietnam, Ethiopia, and the Philippines.

This is positively miraculous! It is GOD'S DOING!

God had a SPECIAL MISSION for His first-century apostles — giving personal eyewitness proof of the res-

urrection of Christ, as well as proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God.

From then until 1934, the Church existed, comparatively small in number, persecuted, unable to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the world.

WHY You Are Called NOW

But now, once again, there is a dynamic, super-important special commission — to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom in all the world as a witness to ALL NATIONS, *just before the END OF THIS AGE* — and also to prepare the way for Christ's second coming!

And, just as God caused His Church in the first century to grow rapidly, even to multiply in numbers (until the persecution set in) — TO BACK THE APOSTLES, support them financially, support them by fervent *prayers* — EVEN SO God caused His Church *of our day* to GROW at the phenomenal rate of 30% a year, multiplying itself in numbers eight times in eight years — 64 times in 16 years, 4,096 times in 32 years — and maintain that rate of growth over a 35-year span in our time.

WHY? — to make possible and to *support* this very special dynamic commission for our day! (Matthew 24:14.)

And THAT, brethren, is the REASON God has called you and me TODAY — *ahead of time* — *before* He calls the other 3,600,000,000 people to salvation.

We are called, NOW, for a *very*, VERY special commission!

But why YOU?

Prophecy for Second Coming

Let's look a little further into Malachi's prophecy about God sending Christ with this MESSAGE. It's in Malachi 3, beginning in verse 1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall

suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Eternal of hosts."

In Mark 1:2, in Luke 1:17, in Matthew 11:10 and elsewhere, this first messenger preparing the way for Christ is referred to as John the Baptist. But in a greater sense it refers to a Work to be done preparing the way for the second coming of Christ NOW, in our time!

Read the next verse — Malachi 3:2:

"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." The Moffatt translation makes the meaning a little sharper: "For he is like the fire of smelters and the acid used by fullers."

Continuing: "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not, saith the Eternal of hosts" (verses 3, 5).

This is NOT speaking of Christ's first coming, more than 1900 years ago! It is NOT speaking primarily of John the Baptist, who was only as one preparing the way before Jesus' first coming over 1900 years ago.

Primarily it is speaking of one to prepare the way before Christ's SECOND COMING, now, today, IN OUR TIME! It is speaking of things Christ will do when He comes in all POWER and AUTHORITY TO RULE ALL NATIONS!

Does the full significance of that sink into your consciousness?

Now notice Luke 1:17. It is speaking, again, of John the Baptist — but only TYPICALLY of one preparing the way for the SECOND COMING, NOW, at the END of this age.

Notice it! "And he shall go before him [Christ] in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

God's Way of Preparing Us

And God has set before us HIS WAY of preparing us — by GROWING in spiritual character, in grace and the knowledge of Christ, ready for our part in the Kingdom, reigning under Christ! *And THAT WAY is OUR PART in fulfilling the special end-time WORK of Matthew 24:14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the END come!"*

It would have been utterly IMPOSSIBLE for me to carry out this great commission alone. *That is why God has called YOU now*, instead of later, in the millennium! *And this great WORK OF GOD is THE WAY* God has set before us for each to GROW and develop SPIRITUALLY. God's WAY — that of HIS LAW — is the way of GIVING, not getting. Those who try to simply GET their salvation are in danger of losing it!

God's Work is a work of GIVING — GIVING the gospel of the Kingdom of God. In 40 years I have observed that ONLY *those whose hearts are in this great Work* are themselves growing spiritually.

I have mentioned how the early Church GREW and MULTIPLIED in those God added to the Church. But soon the persecution came. Soon the false preachers came, with the *different* gospel — a *different* spirit. They came fomenting a spirit of criticism — of DOUBT! They came saying Jesus' true apostles were preaching WRONG DOCTRINES.

They said to people: "Peter, and Paul, and those apostles won't admit they are teaching erroneous doctrines. Look how many are FALLING AWAY from them. Their credibility is at an all-time low. Don't follow them — forsake them and the

gospel they are proclaiming, and COME OVER WITH US."

Yes, brethren, and THOUSANDS DID — TO THEIR OWN ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION IN THE LAKE OF FIRE!

Look at the Fruits

But LOOK AT THE FRUITS! The work of the original apostles BORE THE TRUE FRUITS!

The Worldwide Church of God has always produced the GOOD fruits — ABUNDANT fruits. It is the ONLY Work in 1850 years that has proclaimed the true gospel of Christ — the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world — now GOING TO THE ENTIRE WORLD!

Prophecy says the END will not come until, also, there is a "falling away" first!

Jesus' parable (Luke 19:11-24) is for OUR TIME, *now!* It pertains to Christ going to heaven to receive the Kingdom officially and then returning. The "pounds" (English money) represent the SPIRITUAL GOODS Christ has entrusted to each of us now, while He is in heaven. When He returns, He will demand of each of us to show how we have used the GIFT of His Holy Spirit — how much we have CONTRIBUTED to *His Work* — the PURPOSE for which He put us in His Church NOW! He will demand of each of us to show how much we have grown spiritually in the way of GOD'S LAW — the way of CONTRIBUTING AND GIVING. Those who prove disloyal or drop out of *the Work* — the only purpose for which you were called now — will find themselves in the position of the one described in verses 20 and 24. They will lose the very salvation they were trying to GET!

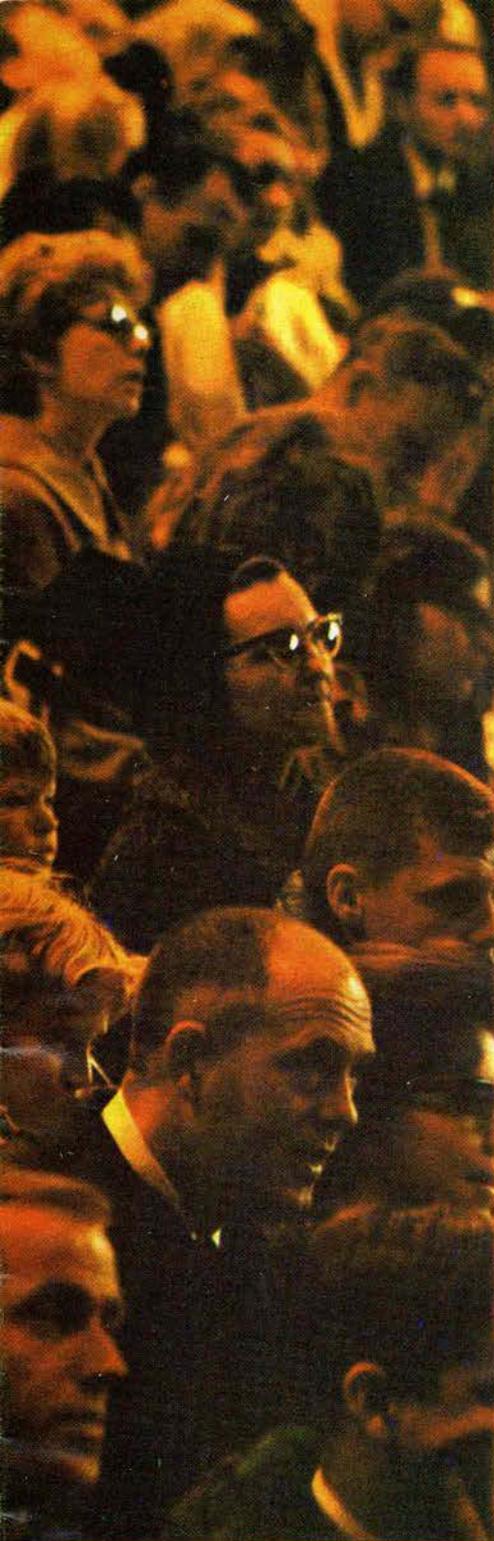
You are each admonished to "make your calling and election SURE"!

Today, as in the time of the first apostles, MANY DECEIVERS are gone out into the world. They will ACCUSE God's Church and His Work. It is Satan the devil who is the accuser of the true brethren (Rev. 12:10).

(Continued on page 31)



WHAT IS THE
“COMMISSION”
TO THE CHURCH?



GN Photo

by Garner Ted Armstrong

Is there a commission to the Church to preach the gospel? Or is the only real mission to preach and teach to local congregations? What is the plain truth from your own Bible about the work of the ministry?

AIN'T NO need to build no walkway — ain't goin' nowhere!" was the sarcastic retort. The farmer spat, hitched up his overalls and headed to his 1930s-model car, skirting the muddy puddles in the churchyard of the tiny building just outside Eugene, Oregon's city limits.

It was a Sabbath day in the early 1940s and the pastor, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, had just finished the sermon. In it he had mentioned the need for members to help build a walkway from the unpaved street to the front porch; perhaps by a combination of donated labor, and tithes and offerings for this simple project.

Many had complained of wet and muddy shoes while negotiating the rutted "yard" in Oregon's drizzly weather. The building had been constructed by several members, Mr. Armstrong included, who had donated labor and materials. Now, the old walkway had rotted, broken up, and decayed. A few dozen boards were needed.

But all this "progress" was too much for one conservative member. "Why build a walkway?" was his question. Quite likely, his farmyard didn't have any. He was completely comfortable with his mossy, rain-slick boards and planks, and his mud puddles.

"Ain't goin' nowhere," he said. And he was right. He wasn't. But the Church was.

It was going to grow national in scope, then international, and then worldwide! Because it was the Work of GOD, and *not* of any man, it was destined to encircle the globe with the dynamic message about a LIVING Jesus Christ who is the soon-coming KING.

That little walkway only represented a "door" to the street, and easy access from a higher, drier roadway to a porch.

A Stifling Misconception

But the attitude of at least one local member represented a misconception that has influenced mas-

sive church bodies, decided various forms of church government, and stifled the true preaching of the gospel for centuries!

For that member life consisted of rejoicing in the truth he knew, going to services each Sabbath, and living quietly on his farm with his wife and children. Involvement in projects of growth, even so small as a board sidewalk, just seemed nonsensical to him.

It was hard enough, in those days of comparative poverty, warfare, and hand-to-mouth existence, to keep one's own family fed and clothed, without all that "foolishness" of trying to worry about someone's children sitting around the wood-burning stove drying their socks during services.

A quiet life on the farm?

Too bad we can't *all* enjoy that; I wish I could.

But if we are called of God, we are called for a purpose; and that purpose transcends our own physical creature comforts. And as we fulfill that great purpose — which is *primary* in our lives — it can result in our own eternal salvation!

That purpose involves not only our own salvation but, more importantly, that of *others*.

The by-product of that transcendental purpose for which we are called is our own personal salvation. But that purpose is far *beyond* just our own individual salvation.

Think! If the only reason God has called us is to grant us personal salvation, then why call us now? Why call us *now* in this age in such numbers? Obviously, there is a great *global purpose* in our collective calling.

Picky Religious Questions vs. Global Conditions

Today's humanity faces the ever-increasing likelihood of massive worldwide famine. This possibility is fueled by the twin problems of the ever-burgeoning population explosion and the dwindling food supplies in poor, "underdeveloped" nations.

On the very day you read this article — and repeated each day —

some 350,000 babies cry their way into existence on planet earth! Most of these infants are destined, tragically, to live out their lives in the dirt-poor, "have-not" nations of the earth.

Even after subtracting deaths, every year there are some 75 million more mouths to feed on this already overtaxed earth. At present rates, demographers and population experts estimate that world population will pass four billion by 1975, double in approximately 35 years and *double again* 35 years later! By the year 2000 it is estimated that world population will reach the dizzying height of six to seven billion; thirty-five years later, twelve to fourteen billion! Obviously that can't occur. Something has to give.

In order to feed all these people anywhere near an adequate diet, world food production will have to double between 1960 and 1980, and virtually triple by the year 2000. Yet the present rate of increase renders this a highly unlikely possibility. In plain English — *when* population passes food production, then worldwide famine, starvation, disease epidemics and resultant *food wars* are inevitable!

"But did Adam have a navel?"

"Where did Cain get his wife?"

"Is it wrong to listen to Burt Bacharach on the Sabbath day?"

"Did Mr. So-and-so *really* hold hands with Mergatroid P. Entwistle?"

"Does the Bible prophesy that oranges would grow in California?"

"Would you please explain the significance of the terms 'hoods,' 'pins,' 'chains,' 'mufflers' and 'tires' in Isaiah 3. Is this a prophecy about the modern automobile?"

In the meantime — while religious hobbyists ask these and reams of other picky, purely academic questions (apparently to satiate their own incredible, self-centered vanity) — in the United States alone over 300,000 people a year are dying of hideous cancers and another one million are succumbing to various heart and circulatory problems.

Every single day — as totally unaware of it as we in the Western world seem to be — a "low" estimate of ten to twelve thousand people on this globe die of simple starvation!

Wars claim their toll too; the blood of humanity, spilled in warfare, stains the soil of India, Vietnam, Korea, Biafra, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Middle East and even "Christian" Ireland.

Massive work stoppages and strikes paralyze Britain. The energy crisis strikes crippling blows to the economies of Japan, the United States and the democracies of Western Europe. Violence, political agitation, demonstrations, assassinations, hijackings, kidnappings, and mass slayings in airport terminals etch deep and lasting scars on the face of a tormented humanity.

"But how high *is* the thigh?" asks the pharisaical religious moralist. "But preacher," asks the Bible student in rich, overfed America, "surely the symbolism of Zechariah is more important than the plight of humanity!" "I think Christians should only wear black shoes as a sign of modesty and humility," claims the self-righteous religious moralizer.

But what about the teeming millions on our poverty-ridden planet who have *no* shoes? — or even in some cases, *no feet*? What about the deliberately crippled children who endlessly wander — meandering through the streets of Calcutta — begging food and money for those who callously relieved them of their little legs and arms? What a tragedy to see their maimed, twisted, distorted, gnomish little bodies standing there in grotesque shapes; looking up into your eyes — not fully comprehending the shame of a hideous, cruel lifetime!

What a monstrous penalty to have to pay for the seemingly endless poverty that has plagued India for centuries.

Jesus Had a World View

Jesus Christ of Nazareth set us an example of concern, compassion

and emotion-charged empathy for the plight of a heedless humanity. He showed that God — the Father — the God of all mercy — is the God of *all mankind*.

When Jesus saw the pitiful spiritual conditions and even the illnesses of the people of His day, He was "moved with compassion" (Matt. 9:36; Mark 1:41). He yearned to help, to save humankind from the heartrending results of its own folly. Christ's message — the good news of the Kingdom of God — was *to* the world and *for* the world. That gospel message was to be preached in "all nations" as a warning and a witness (Matt. 24:14).

Paul revealed the true God to the superstitious Athenians: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth . . . And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:24-26).

God is "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). God the Father did not send His Son Jesus Christ with a message of selfish, personal, ingathering, self-righteous salvation — but with a worldwide message for *all mankind*! "And so *all Israel* shall be saved . . .," said the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:26.

Jeremiah prophesied about *many* nations (Jer. 25:13-26). Isaiah prophesied concerning Assyria (chapter 10), Babylon (chapter 13), Moab (chapter 15), Syria (chapter 17), Egypt (chapter 19) and many other nations and family groups which have since spread to the four corners of the earth.

God is concerned with more than just a few "Bible Belt" religious hobbyists in the southeastern United States (though He is deeply concerned about them, just as He is about any human being who draws breath). He has an *international*

message for all peoples and nations! It concerns the Kingdom of God and the salvation of the whole human family — not just a few Bible-quoting, Bible-arguing religious types.

Notice the deeply moving words of Psalm 67: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. *That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among ALL nations . . .* O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth . . . God shall bless us; and *all the ends of the earth shall fear him*" (verses 1-2, 4, 7).

This is the message of a globe-girdling gospel! It is a message of lasting peace, right rulership, radiant health and ultimate salvation for all races and nations around the world. It announces *the way* to world peace and harmony; the way to end all famines, wars and terrorism. It is a message of firm hope in an age of utter hopelessness.

Is Your Religion Selfish?

Yet, in spite of the biblically revealed international thrust of a giving gospel, religion is still a very private and very selfish commodity to many harboring a spiritual ingrown toenail.

They want that "old-time religion" — a religion that's part of one's neat, orderly, settled and comfortable life; a religion that's like a favorite pair of comfortable slippers, a spiritual tranquilizer, a good book and an easy chair by that old favorite lamp.

It is as familiar and comfortable as that rusting old automobile in the back farm lot that his father drove before him; and it is as much a part of his encrusted environment as that old oak tree out back, or that creaking step on the front porch.

To such people, anything broader in scope than merely going back and forth to Church services every Sabbath is inconceivable. That, and a little fellowship with those who agree on religious matters — part-

ners in spiritual selfishness — is about all there is to their religion. It's no wonder that such a selfish "religion," even in the world, is utterly rejected by so many multiple millions today.

Religion as a Hobby

To millions of people, religion is a mere hobby — an intellectually titillating exercise in apparent spirituality. Some like nothing better than a good, vigorous argument about a technical point of Scripture. They haul out their soggy, ink-saturated, well-marked, dog-eared old Bibles — literally *dripping* with the "righteousness" of their own markings (*not* that it is wrong to mark your Bible for the purpose of easy reference) — and proceed to expound some obscure scripture in the book of Hezekiah (try to find that one!).

To such people, religion, Christianity and fellowship are just *self-feeding*, ingrown activities. They help no one, educate no one, serve no one, and benefit no one but the *self*. (And even then there is a question whether such people are really benefited by such a narrow-minded, selfish religion!)

"Attend the church of your choice," advise the billboards. And that is exactly what most religious types do! They attend the church which most caters to their own *personal*, selfish needs, notions and desires.

Some attend church because they want a sense of "belonging"; others because of the convenience of the parking facilities; still others, because they enjoy the music — all for patently selfish reasons. The point is that a church *exists* to suit every type of personality and approach to religion. One can even find churches that openly worship Satan the devil if that happens to be a person's particular "bag."

Many denominations are in "cut-throat" *competition* with each other. Because of this peculiar "Christian" phenomenon, people who are next-door neighbors go to different churches — which are miles apart —

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . . ."

Matthew 28:18, 19

driving past each other with scarcely a glance.

God's Way Is Giving

Those who prate about "my own salvation" have lost sight of the really big goal in human life — having forgotten that the true gospel has to do with *giving salvation* to as many *other* people as possible.

Jesus likened the Kingdom of God to a "pearl of great price" and to a "treasure hid in a field" (Matt. 13:44-46). The gospel message is an all-important, futuristic announcement of how that Kingdom is going to rule this earth and how those who hear the message may have a vital part in that ruling Kingdom! That message is a *saving*, giving message — *not* a selfishly oriented "get" gospel.

John's Disciples Misunderstood

John the Baptist's ministry was one of frugality and hardship. He apparently ate a stringent, limited diet — mainly subsisting on locusts and wild honey. He lived a very austere life-style, so much so that contemporaries observing his unconventional behavior mistakenly accused him of being demon possessed.

When John heard of the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to try to substantiate who Jesus really was (Matt. 11:2). (John was in prison, but he was aware that somewhere, somehow the Messiah had to appear at that time.) When the two disciples came to Jesus they asked: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Verse 3.)

Jesus answered: "Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see" (verse 4). He then (verse 5) pointed to the miracles which were a vital part of His messiahship. Jesus pointed to *the fruits* — to the *work being done*.

Then Jesus added: "... And the poor have the gospel preached to them" (verse 5). He pointed out that He was in the business of *giving* that gospel message — and this was one

of His most important works. Then Jesus said a seemingly strange thing: "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (verse 6).

What did Jesus mean by this enigmatic saying? Does this veiled warning and blessing really fit in this context?

Yes it does! Let's understand.

After a brief description about John's commission and character (verses 7-15), Jesus began to explain the meaning by comparing the two ministries. "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil [demon]. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children" (verses 18-19).

In other words, *the incongruity* of the two situations showed that no matter what we in God's Work do, we will be criticized for doing it "all wrong"!

Jesus was roundly accused and criticized because of His "hobnobbing" with the leaders of the Sanhedrin, sitting with the Pharisees at a huge banquet table, and going to the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee.

Yet Jesus preached to large *crowds* of people — thousands at a time (Matt. 8:1; 13:2; 23:1). He preached the true gospel to them — the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14).

The fact that Jesus said, "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," strongly indicates that the disciples of John didn't observe what they had *expected* to see in Christ. They probably expected to find someone whose life-style was similar to John's — one of frugality and self-denial. Even John himself may have misunderstood! That's probably why they asked, perhaps preprogrammed by John to do so in a dubious, quizzical tone: "Well, are *you* he that should come, or should we look for another?" They expected the Messiah to be living quite differently.

It is obvious that they were thinking: "You couldn't be the one — or you wouldn't be here in the midst of all this . . ."

Judas Wanted to Change Christ

Judas Iscariot was the one of the twelve who carried the "bag"; he was the group's "treasurer," as John's Gospel shows.

Judas was the one who said: "Couldn't this ointment [used to anoint Christ before His death] have been sold and the money given to the poor?" (Yet he said this *not* because he cared for the poor, but because he wanted to steal the money.) This is just one example of how Judas didn't always appreciate the way Jesus did things. He wanted to change Christ.

But he really didn't want things to get out of hand either; he just wanted Jesus to come around to seeing things *his way*.

Judas, allowing himself to be carried away with his desire to change things, went out and obtained thirty pieces of silver (possibly worth as much as \$192) in exchange for some information about Christ. But Judas' plan backfired on him. When he realized he had gone too far, he went back to the Jewish leaders and said: "... I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4).

Judas actually threw the money down — but where did he throw it? First he tried to give the money back, hoping they would reverse their sentence. But when they refused the money, he went to the Temple as a symbolic gesture (just like we might go down to the Federal Mint and throw down a bag of fifty-cent pieces on the steps and drive away in disgust). Then Judas left the Temple and went out and hung himself (verse 5).

That's an interesting analogy: Judas was trying to force Christ to change to his image — to do things Judas' way; but Jesus didn't change to please him.

Judas tried to bring pressure on Christ by threat of law, and even, so

to speak, bring Jesus' "organization" down. But when Judas found that he had irrevocably set up his Master for the slaughter, it destroyed Judas! He went out and committed a shameful, ignominious suicide.

Christ's Commission to the Disciples

Jesus *commissioned* His disciples in much the same way a person was commissioned at one time in the military service. A "commissioned officer" originally could have been an ordinary private citizen, or even a wealthy or titled person, who was given a directive to carry out a certain mission. The word "commission" means "with a mission"; that is, with a *purpose* or an objective.

Jesus *sent* out the twelve with a specific charge or purpose: "These twelve Jesus *sent forth*, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, *preach*, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt. 10:5-7).

The disciples were *not* sent to the Church — they were sent to preach to the world: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have *I also sent them into the world*" (John 17:18).

The main commission was *to the world*. In turn, the body of believers that resulted from their preaching of the gospel to the world became the "Church." But the Church was the *by-product* of the preaching of the gospel!

IF THE GOSPEL WERE NOT FIRST PREACHED TO THE WORLD, THERE WOULD BE NO CHURCH!

After the gospel is preached and the Church is formed *as a result*, those who are the called members of God's Church make it possible — by their prayers as well as by their *continual* physical and financial support — for *more* people to hear the message of the gospel. And that body of Church members also provides more ministers by which the gospel

is preached to more and more people.

The body of Christ — the Church — is therefore constituted to do the work of preaching the gospel. As a result of our calling to do that work, God also grants us salvation *in advance* of the rest of humanity!

Jesus Set a Precedent

Jesus of Nazareth came to this earth to deliver the gospel of the Kingdom to that local area (Galilee, Judaea, and their environs) at that time — *to set a precedent* for succeeding generations of the Church. He came to teach and train His own disciples through those experiences.

He then sent them out and told them *to do as He had done* — in fact, they were told they *would do even greater works* than Jesus! "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me [that includes all Christians at any time in history!], THE WORKS THAT I DO SHALL HE DO ALSO; and *greater works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

The commission to preach the gospel is a collective charge to all Christians at all times!

New Testament history is a chronicle of the fact that the early disciples fulfilled their commission. They preached the gospel with great zeal throughout the known world.

The Apostle Paul, called *later* than the original apostles — as "one out of due season" — also carried on the commission of preaching the gospel. He was so filled with the sense of a great mission that he said — undoubtedly *with deep feeling*: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for *necessity* is laid upon me; yea, *woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!*" (I Cor. 9:16.)

At the conclusion of the book of Acts, Paul is busy *on the job* in Rome in his own hired house, preaching *that same gospel* to all who would hear. "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Matthew 24:14

"That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."

Psalm 67:2, 4

unto him, *preaching the kingdom of God*, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).

Paul realized that his whole reason for being called was to preach the gospel: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, *separated unto the gospel of God*" (Rom. 1:1).

The Apostles Suffered for the Gospel

Jesus Christ suffered more than anyone for the sake of the gospel; and His disciples ultimately followed in His footsteps. Suffering went hand in glove with the preaching of the gospel in the first century.

And their suffering is also an example of what today's true Christian can expect for putting the work of the gospel *first*. "For even *heretofore* were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example*, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

Most of the early apostles were martyred for the sake of the gospel.

Paul actually left a record of some of his sufferings in II Corinthians 11. He said he had been imprisoned, beaten, shipwrecked, near death on a number of occasions, stoned, nearly drowned, threatened, and in every conceivable kind of danger. But *nothing* would make him stop preaching the gospel!

A Christian Retirement Plan?

Jesus did *not* come to set up some kind of a self-perpetuating Christian retirement plan. He did not come to bring about a peaceful, blissful, Utopian, comfortable, "dropped-out," esoteric society.

He came to preach the gospel — a gospel that would bring about intense personal suffering for those who would dare to proclaim it. It is a gospel that, by the very essence of its message, *invites persecution*. He commissioned His Church to preach that message fearlessly and boldly — *never stopping* for anybody or any-

thing. His disciples were ordained and commissioned to preach that same gospel. They did so at great personal sacrifice — and ultimately even martyrdom.

Paul's own desire was so *outside of himself* that he said he could wish himself accursed for his kinsmen (Rom. 9:3). He would have accepted the loss of his personal salvation if that's what it would have taken to get all his fellow brethren into the Kingdom of God. His main desire was for *others* to get into the Kingdom of God.

There would *be* no salvation apart from the preaching of the gospel! There is *no* way to separate salvation from the gospel.

As I pointed out earlier, if there had been no preaching of the gospel, there would be *no* local congregations! Therefore, it appears to be nothing short of total stupidity that any local congregation — which, after all, is only there as a *result* of the preaching of the gospel — should separate itself into an isolated spiritual community, settling back and enjoying what it has learned, rather than continuing to be *a part of the big team* that is preaching the very gospel that brought about that local church's existence in the first place!

And there is something else — another vitally important point! One thing is utterly unique about the Church of God: the congregation is *not* there because the minister is there. The minister is sent out to be among *the people who are there first* — as a result of the preaching of the gospel! The people are the *harvest* of the gospel which is being preached over the radio, on television, and on the printed page. Can any minister rightly presume to take the harvest of the preaching of the gospel as his own private congregation?

The local minister is sent to feed that congregation spiritual food and to "water" them so that they will grow further. Paul expressed it this way: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers [servants] by whom ye believed, even as *the Lord*

gave to every man. I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God* gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:5-6).

The foundation upon which the Church of God is built is *Christ* — *not any man*. It is God who called us and converted us by His power and His Holy Spirit. We are God's heritage, God's building, His planting, or whatever other analogy the Bible has used for those who are called into the Church. Can any man claim God's heritage for his own and strive to take it away from the parent body into which it was called — and *by* which it was called?

The reason people are organized into a local church and asked to go to a certain place at a certain time, in order to listen to more in-depth preaching and teaching, is *not* an end in itself. It is *a means* to an end! It is *not* merely to satiate the self with spiritual bonbons and to feel warmed and filled personally.

If that were the reason for local congregations, it would be analogous to saying that the only reason we are alive, as physical human entities, is to eat! For a person to say that the only reason for his existence is to feed his face would be crass, piglike gluttony! A person who feels this way is denying the very reason for his own existence.

By the same token, if a local congregation is only for the purpose of feeding itself spiritually, then it denies its very calling. The reason a local congregation gathers at the feet of the minister — to be taught and fed spiritually — is so that it can be a more effective part of that great commission to preach and proclaim the gospel to all the world *before* the end of this age!

Anyone who is really a part of the body of Christ can see that Jesus Christ of Nazareth organized the Church for the purpose of fulfilling and supporting the attainment of that *number-one purpose*. Those who are *not* doing that job are *not* truly a part of the Church, *not* part of the vine; and they will simply wither up — and die! □

POTPOURRI

of news

CAMPAIGN

**St. Louis,
Missouri**

"I think it was the most dynamic campaign that we have had so far," stated Albert Portune, campaign director, concerning the personal appearance of Garner Ted Armstrong held in St. Louis, January 25, 26 and 27.

The campaign was held in Kiel Auditorium in downtown St. Louis. The auditorium, which has a capacity of 3,500, was nearly full for each of the three appearances.

On the first night Mr. Armstrong spoke about the soon-coming Kingdom of God; on the second, he spoke on demonism and exorcism, subjects that have really been in the limelight lately

due to a recent movie that deals with demonism.

On the final night Mr. Armstrong talked about World War II Nazi death camps and the horrors of war. He gave a very stern warning to the people of America to repent of national sins or similar prophesied punishments will befall us.

Concerning the campaign, Mr. Portune said: "I think that we can be confident in the fruit that God is showing in these campaigns — that He is in them and that He is making them a vital thrust of His Work at this time."

And as Mr. Ted Armstrong wrote: "We were both very pleased and inspired by the enthusiastic help from all of the St. Louis congregations, which served in every conceivable capacity.

"I feel the St. Louis campaign was certainly one of the high-lights of our lives. I sincerely

hope and pray that God's Holy Spirit will bear much fruit there. Certainly, those 83 new people who attended the first (follow-up) Bible study are precious lives in God's sight; and, as I have said in the past, if only one person were to come to hear, then that one person is still worth all of our collective effort!"

CAMPAIGN

**Kingsport,
Tennessee**

On February 1 and 2, C. Wayne Cole conducted a successful evangelistic campaign in Kingsport, a city of over 30,000 in the tri-city industrial center of Kingsport, Bristol and Johnson City.

The total attendance for the two nights was 1,462. Forty-seven interested persons attended the follow-up Bible study.

CAMPAIGN

Raleigh,
North Carolina

Raleigh, North Carolina, hosted a two-day evangelistic campaign by David Jon Hill on January 27 and 28.

Attendance for the two nights was 1,741. Randall Kobernat, local minister in Raleigh, acted as master of ceremonies. Twenty persons were present at the follow-up Bible study.

Through the impact of these personal appearances, God's message continues to reach the cities of the United States and other parts of the world.



The Radio Production Department

The Radio Production Department is responsible for the production of *The World Tomorrow* radio broadcast, but the department has not been able to produce

the program in the same manner as it did in previous years.

In the past Mr. Ted Armstrong recorded the broadcast in our radio studio, and the program went out on the air "live." That is, as we recorded Mr. Armstrong, his voice was simultaneously piped through a phone line to a local radio station, which immediately broadcast it over the air. Copies of this in-studio recording were then made.

de ECHTE WAARHEID

een tijdschrift voor een zuiver begrip

The Plain Truth in the Dutch language — *de Echte Waarheid* — has been available since 1968. Circulation of the Dutch edition has now risen to 41,000 copies. Of this total, 13,300 copies are distributed through newsstands in Holland and Belgium.

If you wish to receive *de Echte Waarheid* or other literature in the Dutch language, please write to:

de Echte Waarheid
P. O. Box III
St. Albans, Herts.
England

Nearly 300 ministers of the Worldwide Church of God converged in Pasadena in early January for a conference keyed to unity. The three days of meetings were conducted by Herbert W. Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong. Stanley R. Rader, general counsel for the Work, also addressed the conference.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong stressed the importance of the Work and stated: "No man can stop the Work of God. We are the only Church which has preached the gospel of the Kingdom. We are God's Church." The Pastor General also discussed his visits to world leaders around the globe and showed how this vital new phase of the Work is "the most important part of the Work today."

Mr. Armstrong then took the visiting ministers on a tour of the newly completed Auditorium.

The remainder of the meetings

Ministerial Conference

was conducted by Mr. Ted Armstrong, who addressed many of the critical doctrinal and procedural issues concerning the Church today.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Ted Armstrong said: "I hope these meetings have been catalytic to a greater spirit of unity. I certainly feel that they have. We haven't even begun to scratch the surface of what we really need to get into. . . . I wish we could have hundreds of hours together."

Certainly the meetings demonstrated one of the key factors to unity in God's Church — *communication!*

But as Mr. Ted Armstrong has become more heavily involved in the day-to-day responsibilities of the Work, personal appearance campaigns and in making daily television programs, he has been unable to make radio programs on a regular basis.

However, the Radio Production Department must still meet the needs of the hundreds of radio stations which air our program. So, today, we use *the sound track* of the daily television recordings.

This is not as simple as it sounds. In numerous television programs, Mr. Armstrong refers to a chart, graph, or movie insert, and makes comments such as "the red bar on the left side of the chart shows . . ." and "as you can see, the blue bar on the right . . ."; or he might call attention to lines on a graph, or the "marching men on the screen before you."

Though most of our regular listeners know that the radio program is, for the most part, the sound track of the television pro-

gram, it would seem odd for a new radio listener to hear such terms on his radio.

We must, therefore, edit out such phrases, while still keeping the continuity and completeness of the message. Then we must add time to the program to replace the deleted portions and restore it to the specified length of 29 minutes and 30 seconds.

Commercial messages (generally two per program) are also inserted. These spot advertisements suggest that the listeners write or telephone for related booklets.

After all of this is completed, the finished product is called the "master tape." Once the master tape is prepared, it is repeatedly duplicated at double speed in the dubbing room on our many Ampex tape recorders.

Twice a week copies are shipped by air mail to all stations which carry our program throughout the United States.

In addition to the tapes for the

United States, copies must be made for our foreign stations. These copies of the master tape are called "second-generation masters." When necessary, they are again edited to satisfy the particular requirements of the countries where *The World Tomorrow* is aired.

Then they are again lengthened by adding literature announcements in order to attain the correct program length. The closing address is changed so that the listeners can send their letters to the proper foreign offices. Then these "second-generation master" tapes are sent to the individual countries, where they are duplicated; and the copies are sent to the radio stations which carry our program.

All our dedicated employes and complex equipment serve to ensure that the voice of *The World Tomorrow* program continues to be heard around the world — performing its vital part in this worldwide Work of God.

— Frank Inglima

Radio Production Department

MILESTONES:

1934: At 10 a.m. on the first Sunday in January, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong made the first *World Tomorrow* program. It was on a 100-watt radio station in Eugene, Oregon.



1949: First broadcast in Pasadena (radio transmission — disc recording) in the library building.



1951: Mr. Norman A. Smith, present head of the Media Division, began to work in the Radio Studio.



1952: In the summer, Richard David Armstrong and Herman L. Hoeh recorded some on-

the-spot radio reports from Paris, France.

1953: In January, Mr. Herbert Armstrong made the first broadcast for Europe on Radio Luxembourg.

1955: Mr. Ted Armstrong began to do the broadcast on a regular basis.

1955: Mr. Norman Smith became manager of the Radio Studio.

1957: Mr. Frank Inglima, present manager of the Radio Production Department under Mr. Smith, began to work in the Radio Studio.

CAMPAIGN

COMING PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Charleston, West Virginia
April 27, 28
Ronald Dart

San Diego, California
May 3, 4
C. Wayne Cole

Mobile, Alabama
May 10, 11
Sherwin McMichael

Lexington, Kentucky
May 17, 18
Clint C. Zimmerman

Phoenix, Arizona
May 24, 25
David Jon Hill

QUESTION: "You said that Jesus was a homeowner. But Jesus Himself said: 'Foxes have holes [homes], and birds of the air have nests [homes]; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (Luke 9:58). It is hard to imagine a homeowner who 'hath not where to lay his head.' Did Jesus mean something other than what He said?"

Leo C.,
Tallahassee, Florida

ANSWER: By way of a brief background to this question, remember that Luke, the author of Acts and his own Gospel, wrote (as a historian naturally would) *in chronological order* (see Luke 1:1,3).

Checking the context of the passage in question, we read in Luke 9:51-56: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he [Jesus] should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him [make arrangements for a place to stay]. And they [the residents of the village] did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem."

The Samaritans in this particular village did not allow Jesus to stay there because He was on His way to Jerusalem. The location of the Temple was a bone of contention between the Jewish people and the Samaritans (see John 4:20). The Samaritans maintained a rival "holy site" on Mount Gerizim.

Now read Luke 9:57-58, remembering the preceding verses: "And it came to pass, that, *as they went in the way*, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

So how do we understand these verses *in context*? Jesus had wanted to lodge in a Samaritan village on His way to Jerusalem. The citizenry



wouldn't allow it. Therefore, Jesus — in the light of their denying Him overnight accommodations — told the young man that He had no place to stay at the moment.

In other words, *at that particular time* ("as they went in the way" [verse 57] from one Samaritan village to the next [see verse 56]) He was having difficulty in finding a place to stay overnight on His journey to Jerusalem. It was exemplary of His, at times, difficult ministry.

Jesus did NOT say in Luke 9:57-58 that He did not have a home. A more detailed explanation of this scripture and this whole subject is available in our booklet entitled *The Real Jesus*. Write for your free copy. **Q. "I feel that your insistence on Sabbath keeping is an affront to the liberty of the gospel of Christ. I fail to see why Christians 'have to' keep the ritual law as given in the Pentateuch, but I agree that the moral law is unchangeable. As Christians we must love God and our neighbors, for 'love is the fulfilling of the law.'"**

S. L.,
Teesside, England

A. We respect your right to have an opinion, but we also have an obligation to clarify the issues.

First of all, the Sabbath is *not* a part of a ritualistic law. It is one of the basic Ten Commandments (Ex. 20; Deut. 5). When a young man asked Jesus how he could enter into eternal life, Jesus replied: "*Keep the commandments.*" Jesus then proceeded to quote several of the commandments of *the decalogue* to show *which* law He meant (see Matt. 19:16-19).

Secondly: Since the Sabbath is *one* of those decalogue commandments, the breaking of which is sin (I John 3:4), a person who has

knowledge of the true Sabbath must observe it to avoid sinning.

Thirdly: Jesus Himself talked about the liberty of the gospel. He said: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you *free*" (John 8:32). Not understanding what

Jesus meant, the Pharisees retorted that they "were never in bondage to any man" (verse 33). So "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin [transgression of the law] is the servant of sin" (verse 34).

Some of the Pharisees were indeed in bondage to sin. And anyone who knowingly breaks God's Sabbath is committing a sin and is, therefore, in spiritual bondage. James said: "... To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Fourthly: It *is* fulfilling God's law of love to keep the Sabbath. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments [including the Sabbath] are not grievous" (I John 5:3). Jesus said: "If you love me, *keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). Further: "He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me..." (verse 21).

In summary, keeping the Sabbath is one of the four basic ways in which we love God. It is an *unchanging* moral law — not a ritualistic law. For a more complete understanding of the fourth commandment, write for our free booklets *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*, *Which Day Is the Sabbath of the New Testament?* and *Has Time Been Lost?*

These three attractively printed publications comprehensively answer most of the commonly asked questions about this subject. See the inside front cover (upper right column) for the address of our office nearest you. Remember, they are provided absolutely without charge by the tithe-paying membership of the Worldwide Church of God.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

PART ONE:

THE BACKGROUND

Among the greatest and most profound of all biblical teachings are the parables of Jesus Christ. During His three-and-one-half-year ministry, Jesus spoke from thirty to fifty parables (depending on which scholar's estimate you wish to accept). There are some very important reasons why Jesus used the parabolic method of teaching. And for today's Christian there is much vital meaning contained within these rustic examples which were taken from everyday life in ancient Judaea and its environs. A series of articles beginning in this issue will make that meaning come to life.

by Brian Knowles

SHOULD IT be surprising that Jesus used parables? Not if you understand something of the Jewish world in Christ's day.

States the noted scholar Alfred Edersheim: "Perhaps no other mode of teaching was so common among the Jews as that by Parables" (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972], p. 580).

The Jewish people were quite familiar with the parabolic method of teaching and had been for some time. In a footnote on the same page, Dr. Edersheim informs us: "... Every ancient Rabbinic work is literally *full* of parables."

Even the Old Testament itself contains many parables. The Prophet Ezekiel used about four. A good example is found in Ezekiel 17:2: "Son of man, put forth a riddle, and *speak a parable* unto the house of Israel." The prophet then proceeds to unfold a strange story of a great eagle and a giant cedar tree. Later in the same chapter, he explains the meaning of this unusual story.

In II Samuel 12 the Prophet Nathan tactfully used a parable to convey a message from God to King David.

Isaiah 5:1-6 also contains a parable which was used as a song — again conveying an important message to the people by the parabolic method. Verse 7 explains the meaning.

What Is a Parable?

In most cases a parable is a story drawn from everyday life. It is usually symbolic or metaphoric in nature — often conveying a profound spiritual lesson. Most parables use imagery to which the average person can readily relate. As the hearer comes into daily contact with the image or symbol (i.e., a field, a fig tree, etc.), he is easily reminded of the parable in which the imagery is used.

In order to gain the maximum

value from Jesus' parables, we must, therefore, acquire at least a rudimentary understanding of the elements used in those stories. And we must gain an elementary understanding of the *geography* involved. This we will do as this series of articles unfolds.

Why Jesus Used Parables

There are several very good reasons why Christ chose to use the parabolic method of teaching.

The most obvious reason is that it was commonly accepted among the Jewish people of that day. When a teacher launched into a parable, most listeners were conditioned to respond and knew how to receive such teaching.

In addition, the colorful stories also served as effective devices by which the listener could remember the lesson. (Almost all parables were intended to convey a moral or spiritual lesson of one kind or another.)

But there is yet another reason which has escaped many commentators. Jesus clearly explained it in Matthew 13:10-11:

"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because *it is given unto you to know* the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but *to them it is not given.*"

What Jesus was saying was that *the people* were not really ready at that time to receive the profound truths of God's Kingdom — only the 12 disciples were. Therefore, He sometimes used parables without explaining them *to the people*. He did, however, privately interpret them to the disciples.

When the people heard the parable, it seemed like a simple "folksy" story of no particular spiritual significance. They heard and understood it only on a physical level. The spiritual meaning escaped them!

Jesus continued: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing *see not*; and hearing

they *hear not*, neither do they understand" (verse 13).

Jesus knew that the general populace was not yet ready to receive the deeper truths of His way of life. Had He explained certain parables plainly, they would have been *accountable* for what they had learned. As James later said: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, *to him it is sin*" (James 4:17).

The truth of God is too precious to be thrown about indiscriminately! In Matthew 7:6 Jesus taught us an important principle: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."

He was not calling people "dogs" or "swine"; He was merely explaining the *reaction* of some people to the truth of God. Many people, when exposed to the truths of God's Word, will treat them with contempt and persecute those who have given the truth to them.

A Christian should, therefore, use discretion in determining to whom he will explain the undiluted stronger truths of God.

Jesus sent His disciples on a preliminary evangelistic tour with this instruction: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

And this is exactly what Jesus was doing in speaking to the people in *unexplained parables*. (A more detailed explanation of this important biblical principle is found in our reprint article entitled "Should You Try to Convert Others?" Write for your free copy.)

Some Parables Understood by Religious Leaders

Jesus always privately explained the intended spiritual meaning of each parable to His disciples. But there are *other instances* in which the people to whom the parable

was addressed also *knew* the intended spiritual meaning! It depended upon who was addressed and under what circumstances.

Not all parables were given to the masses of people who followed Jesus. Some were given *exclusively* to the disciples. Others were addressed directly to the religious leaders of the day — the scribes and Pharisees. And they *knew exactly* what Jesus meant, as we shall see as we progress into this series of articles.

The Grouping of the Parables

What many have not realized is that the parables were given in *three distinct* sets or groupings. Each set or group of parables had a theme or overall message. And each set became progressively *stronger* in its meaning and impact.

Each group of parables was presented against a different geographical background and at three distinct points in Christ's ministry. Each set was provoked or stimulated by a different set of circumstances.

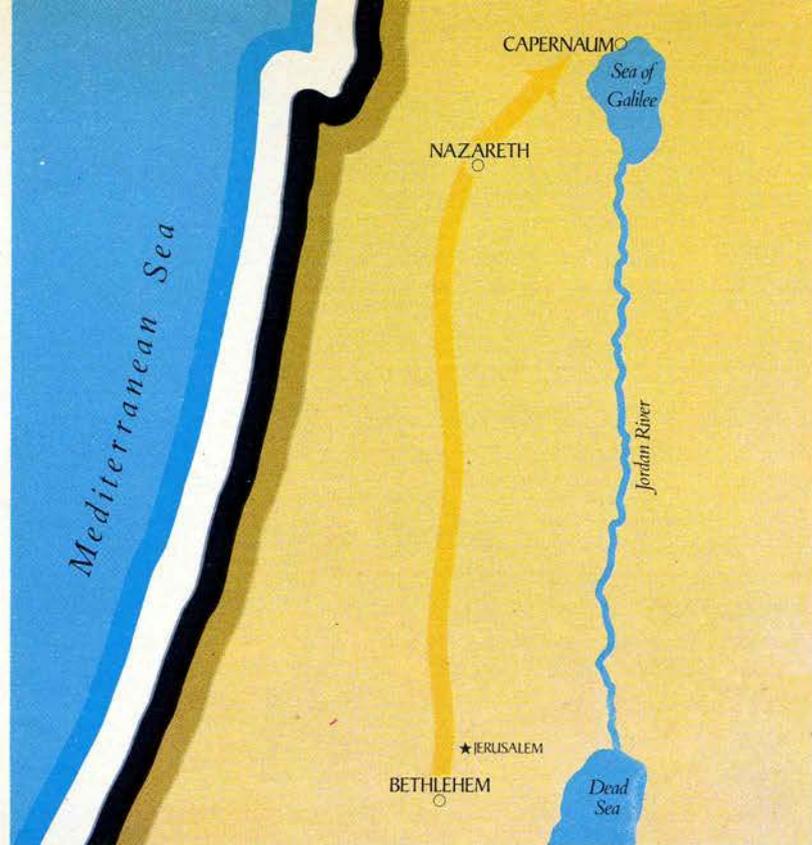
To really gain the most out of a study of the parables, one must examine them in their proper chronological sequence and historical context.

The Galilean Parables

Having grown up in Nazareth, Jesus later moved to the town of Capernaum near the Sea (or lake) of Galilee. He may well have owned a home there. (For more information about the life of Jesus, request our free booklet entitled *The Real Jesus*.) It was in the province of Galilee that He worked as a carpenter following in the footsteps (hammermarks?) of His father Joseph.

This provides the setting for the first group of parables, which may be called the "Galilean Parables." This set of parables was given early in Jesus' ministry.

"The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side



Jesus was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth far to the north. Later he moved to the town of Capernaum in the province of Gali-

lee. The first set of parables were delivered from a ship just out from the shore on the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum.

Map by Randall Cole

[Sea of Galilee]. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables..." (Matt. 13:1-3).

Here we have the setting: Jesus was sitting in a small boat (probably a fishing vessel) near the shore of the freshwater lake of Galilee. A large crowd was standing on the gently sloping hillside, which blended into the calm and beautiful lake.

This setting provided a natural amphitheater. The boat functioned as a speaker's platform or stage; and His voice was carried across and reflected by the water to the shore, where the people were standing. The sloped sides of the lakeshore provided a natural acoustical "backdrop" for the audience. In short, the speaking conditions as found in nature were as nearly ideal as possible in the days before electronic amplification.

Six Parables to the People

This first set consisted of a total of ten parables. The first six of these are addressed *to the people*. The remaining four were *exclusively for the disciples*.

Remember, the account of Jesus' ministry is given in *four* different biographical books, called "Gospels."

To gain a truly comprehensive picture of all of Jesus' parables, each of these accounts must be carefully compared. (The best comparison tool now available is probably *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ* by A. T. Robertson and published by Harper and Row.) The first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are called "Synoptics." That is, they are all thought to have basically originated from a common source — the Gospel of Mark.

Each writer, though *inspired* by
(Continued on page 32)

THE
BATTLE
FOR
YOUR

MIND

An insidious battle is being waged for the control of your mind. Powerful forces are being marshaled in a plot to destroy you. Unless you are on your guard, chances are you are already capitulating. But it's a conflict you can't afford to lose!

by Charles F. Hunting

IT HAS been called one of the most shocking, stunning, mind-bending films of our time.

A youth wrote telling me to be sure not to miss this spectacle. He said it would open my eyes to the reality of the world in which we live. It was the most powerful, dramatic, emotion-twisting cinematic production he had witnessed.

It was a box-office winner. Millions, worldwide, flocked to see it.

I didn't see *A Clockwork Orange*. But did you?



Warner Brothers
MGM

A British judge branded the film as a dastardly, wretched production. Twice in three weeks the judge had dealt with cases concerning violence which were inspired by this film.

One case concerned a 16-year-old British youth who, clad in white overalls and shirt, boots and bowler hat — just like a character depicted in the film — had taunted a younger boy, kicked him, knocked him from a bench and then plunged leadlike boots into his helpless victim's ribs until he coughed blood!

The victim spent three days in

the hospital with badly bruised ribs and a black eye. And he is only one of several around the globe who have suffered violence inspired by this film.

Was the film wholly responsible? No, because millions of other viewers were not incited to such thuggery. It was only a minority, and there were probably other factors too.

But make no mistake about it: this movie reached deep down into every last human being who saw it, and it had a powerful, lasting effect.

If you saw that film — or if you saw *The Last Tango in Paris*, *The Exorcist*, or a host of other violence-drenched or sex-saturated films — you helped fulfill a dramatic, chilling prophecy of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Listen to these poignant words of the carpenter of Galilee as He looked down into our very day: "And because iniquity shall abound, *the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matt. 24:12).

Never in history has the potential for the fulfillment of that sickening, tragic prophecy been so great as it is today.

The Apostle Paul echoed this prophecy when he said: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own

selves . . . without natural affection . . ." (II Tim. 3:1-3).

How often, in previous generations — and even in this very day — would a person witness the actual committing of a murder? In the lifetime of the average man, how many times would he see, before his very eyes, the terror and brutality of rape?

Chances are most people would never see these things — and if they did, only extremely rarely in their totality, with all the grisly, gruesome, ghastly details.

But unlike any other generation, people in our day witness hundreds of vicious muggings, bloodcurdling knifings, and even the burning, rabid, hysterical frenzy of rape — all "thanks" to movies and television.

In the average American lifetime, a citizen will watch ten solid years of television programs. A pre-kindergarten child spends 64% of his waking hours before the television. By the time he attends kindergarten, he will have passed more time viewing television than he will spend in classes in his entire four years at a university. At age *fourteen*, the typical television-watching American child has witnessed the "deaths" of some 18,000 human beings!

Does it make any difference that people today are soaking up vicarious violence and perversion on an unprecedented scale?

Your Bible says it does!

A Battle for Your Mind

There exists a powerful being whose whole purpose is to obliterate your chances of ever sharing in the fathomless future that God holds out to human beings.

Satan is pictured as a *roaring lion* who stalks the earth "seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. 5:8). This is *his* society — *his* world (II Cor. 4:4). It has been brilliantly masterminded as part of a professional, sophisticated plan to destroy mankind.

At the very inception of God's plan, Satan began to appeal to the

human mind. He proposed a glamorous, tantalizing, exciting alternative to God's way. He captured Eve's *imagination!*

The "forbidden fruit" looked so attractive, so appetizing. It appealed to her vanity — as something that would make her wise (Gen. 3:6). It was attractive to the sight — it promised fulfillment of the senses. Yes, the forbidden fruit seemed *so good* to her natural mind.

And today Satan's world is arrayed with glittering, provocative, arousing, sparkling, spicy substitutes for the wholesome, pure, rewarding ways of God.

This society is geared to literally *inundate* us with Satan's influence. Satan ensures that our minds are continually saturated with filth and violence through the media — over which he broadcasts his mind-bending message to the world. He has seen to it that iniquity abounds in this last generation!

Bombarded by a Wretched Environment

Just how powerful is the effect of this continual broadcasting to the human mind? How former President Nasser of Egypt dealt with social taboos in his nation gives us an indication of Satan's ability to sway minds.

When Nasser came to power the upper classes were revered by the common people. Respect and fear for the hierarchy was so ingrained in the lower strata of Egyptian society that even exposing the perverted sexual habits of the upper classes before the public did little to change things.

So Nasser used subtle means to smash the image of the ruling classes.

He created films and television plays which depicted lower-class people rising up for their rights and striking down landlords. "Scenes of this sort in local theaters," writes Miles Copeland in his book *The Game of Nations* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969, p. 125), "at first

brought shocked disapproval, but the crowds soon got used to them. Now, the staged sight of a workman rising against his boss or a mob . . . throwing stones at a former landlord brings loud cheers from the audience. . . ."

So powerful is the mass media that an entire nation's attitude was altered by subtle bombardment. And their change in attitude perfectly parallels the reversal in moral standards which has taken place in Western society in less than one generation — a change also effected by films, television and literature.

Satan has transformed the thinking of most of society toward sex and violence.

And he knows that by continual, subtle bombardment from this society he can alter your attitude — producing in you a near-total *callosness* toward other human beings!

Satan has infiltrated every facet of our entertainment, customs, music, literature and style of dress. We are living in a veritable *cesspool*. And too many of us are actually wallowing in it!

The Serpent Is Still Subtle

Violence and sex — these are the big drawing cards of our day.

We revel in prizefights. One man beats out the brains of another, and we love it. We sit entranced before the television set shouting: "Give it to him! Take him apart!"

We want violence in our football. Gary Pettigrew of the Philadelphia Eagles says of football: "*Love of violence*, the dedication to violence, that's what the game is about."

Pick up virtually any magazine or newspaper and what do you find? A blatant display of female anatomy. Advertising men know the attraction; they know the pull. And so does Satan.

The books at the local store openly display female (and now male) bodies in all kinds of erotic poses. Inside the covers, fornication,

adultery, or other perversions are all intriguingly interwoven in the story to subtly infiltrate an adventure, a western, a travelogue or some other harmless-appearing episode.

Even national newspapers, supposedly reporting "news," use every opportunity to peddle the graphic details of under-the-counter events. They put forth an unbelievable deluge of semipornography, which we swallow with relish because it's "news."

We wallow in the grisly details of the latest murder as they are spelled out for us in the blaring headlines of our morning newspapers. And if there's sex woven into it, it's even more intriguing.

You don't have to seek pornography today. It's blasted at you in a thousand different ways. The vendors of sex scream their wares at the public on television, at the cinema, and in newspapers, magazines and books. This continual "sexploitation" has made what seemed daring a few short years ago seem commonplace today.

Why Love Waxes Cold

What is all of this doing to the human mind?

In our technological era, it's not difficult to expose your mind to every major problem and every form of filth in the world.

You can watch children starving in Biafra, fistfights and even murders over gasoline, or bombings in Northern Ireland. You can intimately come to know the terrible results of smoking as you see human beings dying of cancer or heart disease. You can see mind-shocking documentaries on automobile accidents, warfare, or famine.

Sex crimes, murders, muggings — all are perpetrated in living color right on television in your own home. You can have all of the problems of the world at your fingertips — without moving from your armchair.

But all of this has an awesome effect upon the mind. Writes Allen

Johnson, Jr., in *The National Observer*: "I turn on my television set and see a picture of starving children in Biafra. I see their skinny arms, emaciated features, and pathetic little pot bellies. My heart goes out to this image. Emotionally, the children of Biafra become my children. A kind of world tribalism takes place. A glorious experience on the surface, but let's examine this more closely.

"When my sympathies are extended to the image on my screen, I can't follow up on what my emotions demand. I can't run over and comfort my television set and give it a bottle of milk. I can send money to some organization that may or may not get food to Biafra, but if I send the money, somehow, tomorrow night there are the same starving images back on the screen.

"So at first I am sensitized by the image of the Biafran children, and I see the same image night after night. I have the choice of becoming calloused, or frustrated. A dehumanizing process takes place."

Through the mass media, Satan has been able to destroy the natural human emotions of compassion and concern. We watch thousands of people die on our television screens — until we become so calloused that real-life incidents of violence become *meaningless*. Initial *shock* is soon replaced by *apathy*.

We can become so saturated with sex through films of half-naked bodies pictured in magazines and newspapers that it becomes virtually impossible for us to experience a true romantic relationship in marriage.

A detective investigating a pornography case in London a short while ago had to request that Scotland Yard take him off the case. In his testimony in court, the detective said that having to sit through thirty films connected with the case made him lose interest in sexual relationships with his wife. "I was surprised how my sex interest declined," he said.

Yet millions allow vicarious sex-

In the average American lifetime, a citizen will watch ten solid years of television programs.



United Artists



UPI



Warner Bros.



At age fourteen, the typical television-watching American child has witnessed the "deaths" of some 18,000 human beings.

ual experiences to bombard their minds, never comprehending that this is a direct cause of lack of fulfillment in marriage and a root cause of divorce.

A Chilling Warning

Looking down into our day, Jesus Christ admonished: "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

Two total strangers — angels — came into a part of the society in which Lot lived. The perverts saw a chance for a new sex thrill. "Bring them out so that we can sexually assault them!" they cried (see Gen. 19:1-5).

In desperation Lot offered the mob an alternative: he was willing to give his virgin daughters to them. But so degenerate were these men, that they got no kick out of women (verses 8-9).

The Bible records that Lot was a righteous man (II Pet. 2:7-8). He was seeking to follow God's way. Yet, without being aware of it, he and his family had become deeply affected by the surrounding society.

Lot's wife had seen her husband take their own daughters and offer them to a pack of degenerates. She had seen the aggressive viciousness of that perverted society. Wouldn't you think that she would want to get out of it?

But, no! Her mind had become so *conditioned* to that way of life that she looked back on it *with longing*.

When Lot tried to warn his children, they reacted like many of ours would today. They had been exposed to the filth and violence of society too long to really grasp how bad it was. "God destroy this world? Come on, dad, you're kidding," they probably told their father (see Gen. 19:14). Somehow their world just didn't seem all that bad.

Take a look at what has occurred in our society in the past generation. If you could go back in time fifteen, twenty, even thirty or forty years, would you see any difference in society? If you had lived back then, and *suddenly* leaped forward into

this modern age, you would be dumbfounded! You would *know* that this is a *depraved* society. But it just doesn't seem all that bad, living in it day by day, does it?

That's the way it seemed to Lot's wife. And Christ warns us today to *remember* what became of her.

Control Your Environment

The influences are *subtle*. You are watching television. You can almost sense a questionable scene coming up. What do you do?

Probably you leave it on. You leave your mind, and the minds of those in your family, open to just a little more of the filth of Satan's world. Or maybe you justify watching it, under the guise of seeing what is going on in the world.

This is the opening wedge of Satan's trap.

Do you allow yourself the luxury of viewing fornication-filled films without staging a walkout of protest? Do you stay there and see the film through when the bare bodies begin to appear?

I've had people tell me that a film was pretty good, so long as you don't worry too much about a couple of sex scenes and a little bit of off-color language! People have even recommended "beautiful" films — based on sex *triangles*.

There may be much beautiful scenery in the film — and a gripping story. Satan may well have engineered it that way. Perhaps 99% of a film is clean, wholesome and just interesting enough to communicate a single defiling experience.

Be honest with yourself. You know that inadvertent exposure to an unseemly episode often takes *days* to dislodge from your mind.

Remember the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "Who among us shall dwell with [be unharmed by] the devouring fire? . . . He that walketh righteously, and speaketh *uprightly* . . . that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and *shutteth his eyes from seeing evil*" (Isa. 33:14-15).

Another wedge we should be wary of is filthy jokes. If you joke in an obscene manner about what God considers to be very holy — the intimate marriage relationship — it will soon become cheap and vulgar in your eyes. And if you listen to a comedian purveying this type of filth, you are deepening the exposure of your mind to Satan's wavelength. The Apostle Paul strongly cautioned Christians about foolish talking and jesting in Ephesians 5:4.

And what about your children? Do you expose their minds to violence and weird thinking through the wrong kind of comic books, magazines or television programs? Do you allow Satan to use a broad funnel in pouring his concepts into their young minds?

Take Positive Action

How can you wage effective warfare in this battle for your mind?

Here's the answer: ". . . Be *strong in the Lord*, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10, 11).

If you don't arm yourself with the power of God, Satan will win the battle. If you don't control your mind by actively thinking on those things which are pure, lovely, of good report, honest, just and virtuous (Phil. 4:8), Satan will influence it.

You need to become empowered by God's Spirit so that you can actively put your mind on positive subjects which will fill the vacuum Satan is competing mightily to fill.

In the concluding article, we'll show you how to arm your mind with God's power. In the meantime, write for our free booklet *Just What Do You Mean — The Unpardonable Sin?* It will show you the urgency of winning this battle.

Begin *now* to fight the battle that is raging for the control of your mind — and to WIN! □

How many professing Christians really know what the Bible says about the resurrections?

Most Christians who profess to believe in the resurrection think the "just" and the "unjust" will all be raised to life at the same time — either to be rewarded or punished.

Some, however, believe the Bible teaches there will be two resurrections.

But how many Christians know that according to God's master plan there will actually be *three* resurrections — not just one or two?

In previous articles in this series, we have seen that the first resurrection will take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ and will include only the "just," who will be raised to life and clothed with immortality at that time (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:53).

We also saw clear biblical proof that after Christ's one-thousand-year rule God will resurrect those who in past ages died in sin and ignorance, but who (through no fault of their own) never had a *chance for salvation* — in many cases never heard of Jesus Christ or saw a Bible in their entire lives. Or if they did hear or see, they were spiritually blinded (see Rom. 11:7).

These deceived billions did not ask to be born into a world of ignorance and superstition; and since "God is not willing that any should perish," it is His responsibility to see that they are *raised up* and given a knowledge of the truth (II Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:4-6).

The twentieth chapter of Revelation clearly speaks of *three* resurrections.

After mentioning the second coming of Christ (Rev. 19:11-12), the Apostle John writes that a mighty angel will bind the devil and cast him into an abyss, where he will be unable to deceive the nations for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3).

But what happens immediately after this? The saints who have been caught up to meet Christ at His re-

turn (I Thess. 4:13-17) will then be given charge of this earth — ruling with Christ for one thousand years. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and *judgment* was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were *beheaded* . . . and they lived [again] and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).

Those who take part in this resurrection are greatly blessed by being privileged to take part in the "first resurrection" (verse 5).

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the *first resurrection*: on such the *second death* hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (verse 6).

When do the remainder of the dead rise? "But the *rest of the dead* lived *not* again until the thousand years were finished" (verse 5).

This verse plainly shows that others are to be resurrected one thousand years later.

In last month's installment describing the "second" resurrection, we saw that verses 11-12 (of Revelation 20) describe a coming resurrection and judgment of that portion of the "rest of the dead" who never had their chance for salvation. Verse 12 reads: "And I saw the *dead*, small and great, *stand* before God; and the books [Greek: *biblos*, books of the Bible] were opened: and another book was opened, which is the *book of life* . . ."

When these billions are resurrected, God will open up the Bible to their understanding. They will be given their first real chance to repent, accept Christ as their Saviour and receive His precious Holy Spirit. Their names will then be written in the book of life.

Now consider verse 13: "And the *sea* gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [Greek: *hades*, grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were *judged* every man according to their *works*."

Here is pictured another resurrec-

PART V

THE THIRD RESURRECTION

The first resurrection will be to eternal life. The second resurrection will be for the purpose of giving those who died in spiritual blindness their first chance for salvation. Why must there be a third resurrection? Who will take part in it?

by Raymond F. McNair

tion period. Who are these dead? What resurrection is this?

Notice that there is no statement that the "book of life" is opened up to them. Why is the "book of life" not "opened" in connection with those who rise up in this final resurrection? Simply because they must have *already had their chance* for salvation — and have rejected it!

God is not willing that any perish, yet it is not His will to *force* the truth on anyone. He will not force salvation down anyone's throat.

God offers salvation freely to all those who will receive it (Acts 2:21). And He has made every man a free moral agent — with the power of volition, the power to *choose*. Those who do not voluntarily accept God's offer and follow that *way of life* necessary to receive life eternal will not receive it.

Those who will come up in this *third* resurrection are the incorrigibly wicked. They are the last human beings to be resurrected from their graves — from "the sea" (where they may have perished in their first life), from death (without burial in their first life), or from "hell" (a hole or grave in the ground).

These miserable beings will be *sentenced* by God — and *executed*: "And death and hell were cast into the *lake of fire*. This is the *second death*. And whosoever was not found written in the *book of life* was cast into the lake of fire" (verses 14, 15). Lamentably, none who will be resurrected in this resurrection will have their names in the Lamb's book of life. Therefore they will all perish!

This resurrection (which will result in the second death) is vividly described in Luke's Gospel. A certain heartless "rich man" is resurrected to a horrible fate. "And in *hell* [Greek: *hades*, grave] he lift up his eyes, being in *torments* . . . [And he said,] I am tormented in this *flame*" (Luke 16:23-24).

The wicked will all be cremated when God burns up the earth, turn-

ing it into the final Gehenna (see II Peter 3:10).

But what is the truth of this parable? The rich man is raised up out of his *grave* at the very end of the plan of God for humanity on earth. He has had *no knowledge* of the passing of time — "the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5). The "rich man" thought that his brothers were still alive (Luke 16:27, 28 — but other scriptures reveal they, too, had died).

He now realized that he had missed the boat; he had missed out on receiving salvation. There is now "a great gulf *fixed*" (verse 26) between him and those who are with Abraham in the Kingdom of God. It is *now* impossible for anyone to pass either way through this great gulf: impossible for those who are immortal to become mortal; impossible for the mortal ones to receive immortality.

Jesus said: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in [the Kingdom of God], and *shall not be able*" (Luke 13:24). Continuing with the context, Jesus then goes on to picture Himself as One who refuses to answer the knock of *incorrigible* sinners who have previously rejected salvation (as shown by other scriptures). In verse 28 He says: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves [incorrigible sinners] *thrust out* [not able to enter the Kingdom]."

When the time for the third resurrection arrives, everyone will have had his *chance*. Everyone's ultimate destiny will have then been "fixed" eternally. It will be forever too late for anyone who — after receiving his chance for salvation — sinned *willfully*, thereby rejecting eternal life. Those who rejected God and His way must then reap the consequences of that decision — the *second death*, from which there will be no resurrection. How awful! How tragic!

God is NOT in any sense a sadist. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9; cf., I Tim. 2:4). But to those who refuse His mercy, He is a God of justice and judgment (Heb. 10:29-31). He wants those who leave Him with no alternative but to put them to death for eternity to know what He earnestly desired and wished them to achieve.

So God is going to compel the incorrigibly wicked to see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God *before* they are eternally put to death (see Luke 13:28; 16:23).

Since God made man a free moral agent with the power of volition, *man must choose*. God will insist that each human choose either His way or the devil's way, either *life* or *death* (Deut. 30:19). But God will not force any man to receive eternal life, nor will he arbitrarily consign anyone to death. All must choose, and reap the consequences of that choice.

What will happen if a person chooses the way of sin and suffering? "For the *wages* [reward] of *sin* is *death*; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

But the Bible speaks of two deaths: first and second. "... It is appointed unto men *once to die*, but after this the *judgment*" (Heb. 9:27).

From the time of righteous Abel till this very day, even righteous humans have had to suffer the *first death*. But it is the *second death* that is *final* — not the first (Rev. 20:14, 15).

Notice how the Apostle Peter wrote that the wicked will perish in the lake of fire — which will occur at the time when the earth is burned up and then made into a *new earth*, where the righteous will dwell forevermore:

"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and

perdition of ungodly men" (II Pet. 3:7).

God has decreed that He will not let this earth be destroyed *until* His great master plan for mankind on this earth is finished.

This time of the destruction of the wicked is explained more fully by Peter: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the *earth* also and the *works* that are therein shall be *burned up*" (verse 10).

Furthermore, "all these things shall be *dissolved*" (verse 11) at the time of the perdition (annihilation) of the ungodly — during the time of "the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with *fervent heat*" (verse 12).

What then? After the perdition (second death) of the wicked, God will make "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth [only] righteousness" (verse 13).

The Apostle John, after describing the destruction of the wicked (Rev. 20:13-15), immediately mentions "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1). He then gives a glowing account of the peace, happiness, beauty and glory that will characterize this new earth.

John was taken in vision to a "great and high mountain," where he was able to view "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, *descending out of heaven* from God, having the glory of God..." (verse 10).

Notice that this indescribably beautiful city is not up in heaven, but is to be located right here on this earth. Again, the Apostle John speaks of the "new Jerusalem, which *cometh down out of heaven* from my God..." (Rev. 3:12).

Nowhere in the Bible is there a promise that man will, at death, waft off to heaven. Rather, the Scriptures plainly teach that the new Jerusalem will come down *from* heaven to this earth. Man will not go up to heaven to dwell with God;

but God will come to this earth to dwell with men: "... Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

The Bible is consistent. Jesus Christ plainly taught that man would eternally dwell here on this earth when He said: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall *inherit the earth*" (Matt. 5:5).

And David wrote: "But the meek shall inherit the *earth*; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Ps. 37:9, 11).

But will man only inherit this earth during the millennium, and then go to heaven? "The righteous shall inherit the *land*, and *dwell therein for ever*" (verse 29).

What will happen to the wicked? Will they, as some say, spend a while in hell (or in some other place) suffering for their sins, and then be taken to heaven to live forever?

Long ago, the Prophet Daniel spoke of the wicked who would "awake" in a resurrection "to shame and *everlasting contempt* [or abhorrence]" (Dan. 12:2).

Malachi also spoke of the end of these wretched beings who spurned eternal life: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh *shall burn them up*, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1).

What about the righteous? Where will they be?

Daniel said the righteous would "awake... to everlasting life" (Dan. 12:2). They will then become glorified sons of God — living, serving their Creator eternally: "And they that be *wise* shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness *as the stars* for ever and ever" (verse 3).

The *righteous* will then be made

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Rev. 21:7, 8

immortal. But in the third and final resurrection, the *wicked* will be made to see that they have scoffed at God's priceless offer for salvation. As a punishment, and as an eternal example, they will be annihilated in the "second death."

The Prophet Malachi wrote of this triumph of the righteous over the wicked: "And ye [the righteous] shall tread down the *wicked*; for they shall be *ashes* under the soles of your feet..." (Mal. 4:3).

Man's destiny is so great and glorious that few Christians have ever really grasped it. God, through His Word, repeatedly speaks of humans becoming sons in the very family of God.

Even God's angels are servants of these heirs of divine sonship: "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14.)

Realizing the "high calling" which God has given us, the Apostle Paul wrote that Christians should "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1).

He then asked: "How shall we escape, if we *neglect* so great salvation...?" (Verse 3.)

The book of Hebrews is filled with warnings to the believer not to get careless and lose out on eternal salvation.

Paul warns Christians not to let a "root of bitterness" trouble and/or defile them (Heb. 12:15).

But the sternest warning in the entire Bible is in the tenth chapter of Hebrews: "For if we *sin wilfully* [with deliberate intent] after that we have received the *knowledge of the truth*, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of *judgment* and *fiery indignation*, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26, 27).

The Apostle Paul then speaks of the severe ("sorer") punishment which will befall that wicked person "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*" (verse 29).

Truly, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (verse 31).

[Editor's note: *Willful sin* is NOT to be equated with sin by force of habit or under heavy temptation. "Slipping," making mistakes, or occasionally falling down spiritually do *not* constitute willful sin. A thorough exposition of this principle may be obtained by writing for our free booklets *What Do You Mean — the Unpardonable Sin?* and *Just What Do You Mean... Conversion?*]

But can a *true* believer draw back and be eternally destroyed? "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man *draw back*, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto *perdition* [destruction]; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (verses 38, 39).

We have seen that God is "not willing that any should perish." Furthermore, God has ordained that there will be three resurrections: the *first*, to immortality at the second coming of Jesus — immediately before the millennium begins.

The *second* is to take place shortly after the thousand-year rule of Christ. Those who rise in the second resurrection comprise all the deceived multitudes who died without a saving knowledge of the truth.

The *third resurrection* occurs at the very end of God's plan for mortal man on this earth. Those who rise up in the third and final resurrection are those who had their chance for salvation and deliberately turned it down. God will be forced to extinguish the lives of those who have obstinately chosen the way of death! Remember, God will not force eternal life down anyone's throat.

Now you should be better able to understand what the Apostle Paul

meant by an "order" of resurrections (I Cor. 15:23). He simply meant that there would be a succession of resurrections, various ones rising at different times for different judgments.

Let us remember that our Creator is a benevolent, loving God who wants to do everything possible for mankind. "The Lord is *merciful* and *gracious*, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.... Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:8, 13).

Those who know the truth should strive with all their might to be in the *first resurrection*, the resurrection to eternal life, the "better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35).

But those who are not predestined by God to receive the saving knowledge of the truth now, will rise up in the second resurrection. They will then be given their *first* real chance to be saved.

But those who reject that knowledge and that way to eternal life — regardless of the age in which they were given the knowledge of the truth — will rise in the *third* and final *resurrection*, which will culminate in the "second death" in the *lake of fire*.

But the believer has a wonderful, eternal future ahead of him. "He that *overcometh* shall *inherit all things*; and I will be his God, and he shall be *my son*. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the *lake which burneth with fire* and brimstone: which is the *second death*" (Rev. 21:7, 8).

Your eternal destiny — your future — is up to you! You can choose the way of God and eternal life, or you can choose Satan's way of lust, greed, strife and sin — which will lead to total perdition — to the "second death" in a lake of fire.

Let each one of us make sure that we make the *right choice*. □

(Continued from page 7)

As it was in the first century — in the days of the original apostles, when the Church was MULTIPLYING itself in membership (Acts 6:1) — so is it destined to be NOW!

Before Jesus answered His disciples as to WHEN the END of the age and His return would come, He warned them against FALSE MINISTERS, deceiving the many. If possible, He said, they would deceive the VERY ELECT — YOU in God's Church.

As the Apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus: "For I know this, that . . . grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also OF YOUR OWN SELVES [the ministers in God's Church] shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore WATCH . . ."! (Acts 20:29-31.)

Brethren, could this BE God's true Church, and such things not happen to us? This sort of thing DID HAPPEN to God's TRUE CHURCH in the very first century. They only PROVE this is GOD'S Church which He is USING and blessing! But SATAN IS ANGRY. Satan deceives even some from within us. They will falsely accuse. They will MISLEAD with false doctrines which they will palm off as TRUTH!

As in the days of the Apostle John, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I John 2:19).

Among the false teachers accusing and trying to mislead the Church as Satan's ministers, described in the eleventh chapter of II Corinthians, were "FALSE BRETHREN."

Dear brethren, this could not BE God's true Church, through which HE is carrying on HIS TRUE WORK, unless Satan managed to inject some such in God's Church TODAY.

MUCH of the New Testament is WARNING God's people of these

snares of Satan to hinder — to attempt to DESTROY the very Work of God — the very Work which is THE REASON God has called you NOW — before He undertakes to SAVE THE WHOLE WORLD!

The Fruits Prove It

Remember, Jesus taught us to LOOK TO THE FRUITS BORNE!

Are they who falsely accuse — who seek to draw a following away from God's Church for selfish purpose — proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the nations of the world? Are they fulfilling the PURPOSE for which God has called us NOW? NONE but THIS VERY WORK of the LIVING GOD is fulfilling that PURPOSE — bearing the FRUITS.

Finally, brethren, do you realize how THANKFUL, GRATEFUL, HAPPY and JOYFUL you and I should be that the mighty God looked down from heaven and selected YOU and me to be called to salvation NOW, before the time, that He might USE US as His human instruments in GETTING HIS MESSAGE TO THIS ENTIRE WORLD — preparing THE WAY for the coming of His KINGDOM on earth to END the nightmarish evils, agonies, sufferings, violence, wars and injustices on earth?

When I go before kings, presidents, emperors, prime ministers, and the LEADERS of many nations, I go and am received as AN AMBASSADOR FOR WORLD PEACE. I go before them not only as GOD'S representative, but also as YOURS.

I go in Satan's disfavor — in Satan's eyes and those he has deceived into being used AGAINST the Work of the living God, with no credibility. But in GOD'S EYES, and in the eyes of the nations' leaders, I go with great FAVOR, THE HIGHEST CREDIBILITY, and in high HONOR!

WHY were YOU called NOW — instead of later when God sets out to save the world? That you might have the glory and honor of YOUR PART with me UNDER THE LIVING CHRIST in HIS WORK — in getting HIS MESSAGE of the Kingdom of God into all the world as a witness to all nations — just before THE END of this age!

THAT'S the reason for this Worldwide Church of God — for this Work of God — the most SERIOUS — the MOST IMPORTANT MISSION ON EARTH IN 1900 YEARS!

Let's put our hearts and fervent PRAYERS into God's Work as NEVER BEFORE! □

Personal Counsel

Many hundreds have written asking if we have representatives in their areas to counsel with them personally and to answer their questions.

The answer is yes, we do.

The Worldwide Church of God stations personal representatives (ordained ministers) in most communities in the United States and British Commonwealth, and in many other areas of the world. These men of God can visit you, if invited, directly in your own home.

So if you do have questions

or require private counseling for whatever reason, please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are on the inside front cover.

Or if you would prefer faster service, please dial this toll-free number in the continental United States: 800-423-4444. (Readers in California, Nevada, Alaska and Hawaii should call 213-577-5225 collect.)

Remember, this service is absolutely free and without personal obligation.

(Continued from page 21)

the Creator God, wrote from a somewhat different point of view. The Apostle John apparently wrote much later and did not see the need to include much of the material written in the first three books.

For an accurate picture of this first grouping of parables, it is best to compare Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8. In so doing, you will notice that Mark includes two parables in this first set which are not found in Matthew 13.

The list of parables in the first set is as follows:

- 1) *The Parable of the Sower* (Matt. 13:3-9)
- 2) *The Wheat and the Tares* (Matt. 13:24-30)
- 3) *The Lamp Under the Bushel* (Mark 4:21-25)
- 4) *The Grain of Mustard Seed* (Matt. 13:31-32)
- 5) *The Kingdom Like Leaven* (Matt. 13:33)
- 6) *The Seed Cast Into the Ground* (Mark 4:26-29)

This represents the set of six parables given *to the people*.

"All these things spake Jesus *unto the multitude* in parables; and without a parable spake he not *unto them*: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:34-35).

The prophet spoken of is Asaph, a Levite and the leader of the singers in ancient Israel. He wrote many centuries earlier: "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old" (Ps. 78:2). So Jesus was actually *fulfilling prophecy* when He spoke these parables.

The first group of six parables was not explained to the people at that time. But Jesus, in private, did *personally* explain each one to the disciples at a later time.

"Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, *Declare unto us* the parable of the

tares of the field" (Matt. 13:36). (He had already explained the parable of the sower to them — verse 18).

The Remaining Four Parables

After explaining the parable of the wheat and the tares to the disciples, Jesus also gave them four additional parables. In each case the explanation was self-evident. These last four parables in this first set were *not given to the people in general*. They may be listed as follows:

- 7) *The Hidden Treasure* (Matt. 13:44)
- 8) *The Merchant Seeking Pearls* (Matt. 13:45, 46)
- 9) *The Net Cast Into the Sea* (Matt. 13:47-50)
- 10) *The Householder and His Treasure* (Matt. 13:52)

These parables were given as lessons *to the disciples* in particular. Jesus did *not* obscure the meaning in any way. Rather, He illustrated some very important moral and spiritual lessons which were aimed directly at the disciples.

The Theme of the First Set

A common theme runs throughout these ten parables, whether they be addressed to the general public or to the disciples. They all refer to the *Kingdom of God*. Each parable is designed to motivate those who understand to really *want* and *desire* the Kingdom. They show how the Kingdom will grow, flourish and ultimately dominate the entire world. They demonstrate the need to seek God's coming Kingdom with every fiber of our beings.

Future articles in this series will explore in detail the marvelous truths contained in this first set of parables. Also expounded and explained will be the many deep truths contained in the remaining two groupings of parables given during Jesus' three-and-one-half-year ministry. Be sure to watch for these informative articles in succeeding issues of *The Good News* magazine. □

How your Good News subscription has been paid

Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached [and published — Mark 13:10] in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14) at this time, just before the end of this age. A price must be paid for this magazine, the Correspondence Course, booklets and other literature.

But how? Christ forbids us to sell it to those who receive it: "Freely ye have received, freely give," said Jesus to His disciples whom He was sending to proclaim His gospel. "It is more blessed to give," He said, "than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

God's way is the way of love — and that is the way of giving. God expects every child of His to give freewill offerings and to tithe, as His means of paying the costs of carrying the gospel to others.

We, therefore, simply trust the Living Christ to stir the minds and hearts of His followers to give generously, thus paying the cost of putting this precious gospel truth in the hands of others.

The faithful, tithe-paying members of the Worldwide Church of God and our ever-growing family of co-workers gladly give of their incomes that we may give this precious gospel to an ever-widening number of readers.

The living, dynamic Christ Himself enables us to send you this *Good News* magazine without charging a price. God's way is right — the way of giving to others.

WHAT OUR READERS SAY

Update

I have just finished reading "Update" in the December 1973 *Good News* regarding "What Is the Worldwide Church of God?" Our two boys are away from home and I've often wondered how their lives might have been influenced. I didn't have to wait too long to hear from one of them. Our married son called from Florissant, Missouri, and during the conversation mentioned that two of your representatives had called on him and his wife and that they had attended a meeting. He stated they were very much impressed; and although they still had a few questions, they felt they were closer to the truth than they had ever been before.

Mrs. Jeanne F.,
Reed City, Michigan

Does Christmas Honor God?

I have received two copies of *The Good News*. You asked if each of the new subscribers would write you telling how we liked it. I enjoyed the one by E. Michael Heiss, "Does Christmas Honor God?" Will you please send me the booklet *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days - Which?* I'm sixty years old and never knew anything about the fact that there were holy days to be kept. I sure would enjoy an article or two on that subject in *The Good News* sometime.

Mrs. Ethel P.,
Waco, Texas

We enjoy *The Good News* - although the article "Does Christmas Honor God?" is disturbing. What is the difference if we don't celebrate Christ's birth on the right day, just so we remember His birth by giving to unfortunates?

Mr. and Mrs. John A.,
Spring Green, Wisconsin

• Read *Deuteronomy 12:29-32* again. It was quoted in the article.

Please Explain

In reading the November 1973 issue of *The Good News*, I read in the first paragraph, page 14, where it states that volume one, number one of *The Good News* magazine came out in April of 1951 as a private church magazine going only to members of The Worldwide Church of God. However, on the inside cover in a block of space provided for "About Our Cover" it states that there have been over *thirty years* of *Good News* magazines. Will you explain this?

Mr. Jerry D.,
Blackburn, Missouri

• Our mistake! A few early mimeographed issues were published prior to April 1951.

The Fourth Commandment

Thanks for sending me *The Ten Commandments*. I've only read up to the fourth commandment, but just that much made me realize that the commandments are so very much deeper than just ten sentences. And after reading the fourth commandment I felt a "shudder" within me. I don't know what it is or its meaning, but please

send me a copy of *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* I'll be glad to have it.

M. C. L.,
Perak, Malaysia

An Open Mind

I am an officer in the merchant navy and correspondence piles up while I am away from home. I usually write to you for a long list of booklets and take them with me on my next voyage. I can spend the time (which would normally be spent with novel after boring novel) doing some worthwhile study. To be completely honest, I used to be very "religious"; but I was turned off by the many churches. They all have different doctrines - claiming they follow the same man with the same instruction book - and yet all manage to abuse those instructions in some way or other. I am still not sure that you are not just another dissident sect which says that it is right. However, when I approach your publications with an open mind (and an open Bible) I find that there is very little I can find fault with. When I do find fault and query you, I get an intelligent answer instead of "Ah, well, that is a mystery of God." I don't want mysteries; I want to understand. You have restored my faith in God.

I. F. M.,
Dundee, Scotland

• You are doing as the Bereans did (see *Acts 17:11-12*).

Gospel Offered Free

I had a formal theological education which left me confused and dispirited. You have answered some of the awesome questions which my poor mind oftentimes begged, and I am more at peace with myself than before. I became interested in your work because you did not ask me to join anything, or wear a badge, and the gospel was offered free. With thanks to God please accept my small donation.

Roland S.,
Shropshire, England

Answer to Prayer

I am a member of the foreign service of my country. I am a very small man in the office, and I was being hard pressed by the people above me. Things came to a head when it looked like I would be recalled back home, which, of course, means a very bad record. I cried to the Almighty God and He, the Father of all mercies, heard me. All the officers who wanted to starve both me and my family were transferred away from the station. The locally recruited staff all resigned and so I am now at peace with an assurance of staying in Geneva for another two to three years. This wonderful gift of the Father I believe was due to prayer and the steadfast gift I and the family made to God. I received this news barely two weeks after I had sent you the money.

J. S. K.,
Geneva, Switzerland

Ambassador College

I have had the fortunate opportunity to visit Ambassador College [Bricket Wood]

twice this year, and I cannot attempt to describe the peace and tranquility I experienced on each occasion. The cordial welcome and the hospitality extended to my companions and myself was so sincere; the happiness radiated by every member of the College with whom we came into contact was completely unaffected. I did express my gratitude and thanks to all concerned during these visits, but I would like to reiterate those same sentiments in this letter for the magnificent work that you are achieving.

H. M.,
Essex, England

Christianity an Oversimplification?

I feel that Christianity, as an answer to the world's many problems, is an oversimplification. What is really needed is a "modernization" of the Christian views and policy as regards the many problems facing the world. I personally feel that the Christian Church has lost complete touch with reality and will in the next 50 years fade into the background. This "fade out" will occur despite the near 2,000 years of existence of the Church. The Church still counts millions of adherents, but how many of these are actually genuine adherents?

Philippe A.,
Hochdahl, Germany

• If you are talking about the mainstream of professing Christianity, we couldn't agree more.

Correspondence Course

I have just finished reading Lesson 11 of your Correspondence Course. I like your course because it makes religion a really vital part of life, not some wishy-washy, every-Sunday-morning routine. When one truly believes in God, it becomes a way of life, not just a habit. Through your lessons I have learned the truth about many things concerning life, and I found a few of them hard to swallow at first. But because it was the truth, one must eventually come to accept it.

Stephanie B.,
New Zealand

His Version Different

In the December 1973 *Good News*, you state that Isaiah the prophet was sawn asunder by a wooden saw (Heb. 11:37). It is the next to last paragraph on page 26 under heading, "When a Leader Goes Wrong." My King James Version doesn't say it that way.

C. L.,
San Jose, California

• The author of the article stated: "Tradition has it, according to Clarke's Commentary, that Isaiah the prophet was put to death by Manasseh, sawn asunder by a wooden saw. (See *Hebrews 11:37*.)" Reference was made to this verse ("... they were sawn asunder...") to show that this tradition was at least a possibility.

GN
The Good News

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What do you mean... **SALVATION?**

Do you realize not one in a hundred knows what salvation is — how to get it — when you receive it? Don't be too sure you do!

Could you, yourself, answer these questions? If someone asked you to open your Bible and show him exactly where the Bible says salvation means "going to heaven" — could you do it?

Is salvation a place, a destination, a condition, a reward — or what? ... and where would you turn in your Bible to find it?

Could you open your Bible and show a questioner where it tells you when you receive salvation? Do you actually get it now, when you die, when Christ returns — or at some other time? This booklet will show you plainly.

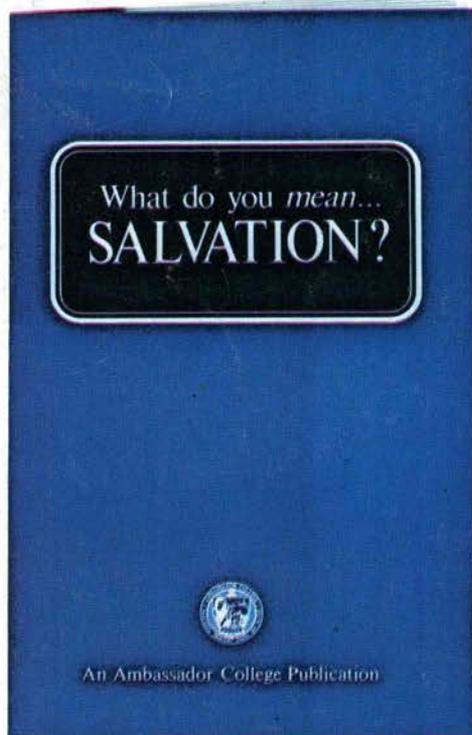
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Here, once and for all, is the truth made so plain that you will really understand it.

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If you live outside the United States, please see the inside front cover of this magazine for the address of our office nearest you.

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