

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1983

# The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

## MOTHERS AND HOMEMAKERS

Biblical  
Heroines!

See Page 4

**Life in Christ's Time**

By Herbert W.  
Armstrong

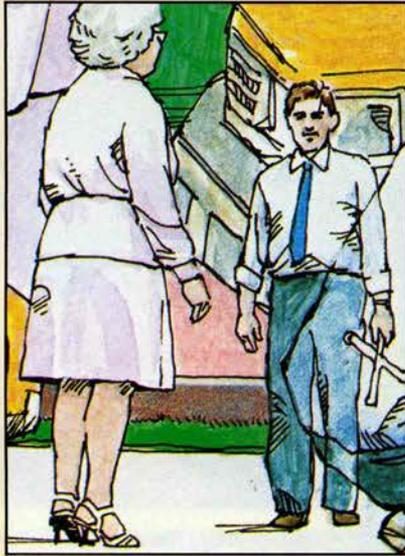
# The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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**COVER:** The family unit is the foundation of a healthy, happy society, and mothers and homemakers are an important part of the family unit. Read about how God views the role of mothers and homemakers in the article beginning on page 4. Photo by Hal Finch.

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# If You Had Lived in the Time of Christ

*Would you have believed Him — turned against  
Him — or checked up on Him — which?  
Don't be too sure! Here's a way to test yourself.*

By Herbert W. Armstrong

**J**ust for the moment, **SUPPOSE** — suppose you were living in Jerusalem when Jesus Christ was teaching there.

You are walking along with a friend. You come upon a small group. Standing in the center a man is talking, answering questions. He is Jesus of Nazareth. You and your friend find yourselves stopped.

## Do you know WHY?

But what would have caused you to stop with this little group — do you know? The reason probably is not what you think. You may suppose that it was the overawing *appearance* of Christ that would have stopped you. But notice what happens next.

Two men come walking by. It is an unusual coincidence, because one is deaf, and he is leading a man who is blind. The deaf man notices the little group standing, sees the man Jesus in the midst talking to them, is completely unimpressed, continues walking on by. But suddenly the blind man tugs at his arm, stops, pulls the deaf man back. He wants to listen.

Nothing the deaf man *saw* caused him to stop. But what the blind man *heard* arrested his attention, surprised and shocked him.

And what about you and your friend?

Your friend at your side is suddenly astonished, angered and resentful. You find yourself caught with mingled feelings of surprise, curiosity and shock.

But it was nothing in Jesus' *appearance* that would have startled you!

When Jesus returned to the town of His youth, the people of

astonished, angered, even as you would have been.

Put in today's expressive language, this is approximately what they said: "Now where does he get that stuff? Who does he think he is, anyway? The very idea! An ordinary local man like he is, saying such ridiculous things! Why, he grew up here! We know him.



*The illustrations with this article are hand-colored lithographs by Louis Haghe, based on drawings British artist David Roberts made of historically important sites when he visited the Middle East in 1838-39. Above, a view of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.*

Nazareth were *astonished*, just like other people. But not because of anything out of the ordinary about His looks. To them He looked just like an ordinary local boy now grown to manhood. The people of Nazareth mocked Him — jeered at Him. Yet they were

He's only the son of that carpenter who lives down the street. We know his mother, Mary. We know his brothers and sisters. They're all just common, ordinary folks like we are. Who does he think he is, saying things like that?" (compare with Matthew

13:54-58). Yes, *what* Jesus said aroused carnal surprise, indignation and anger in the people of Nazareth. You will notice, in verse 54 of Matthew 13, *they were astonished* — not at His appearance — not at anything unusual in His voice — but at *what He said!* He wore no halo over His head!

### Why would YOU be astonished?

Had YOU lived in that time and at that place, you, too, probably would have been *astonished* when you stopped to join this little group. The REASON is very important to you *now!*

Had you lived then, you would have been born knowing *nothing* at birth, even as you were born in our day, *knowing nothing*. Your mother would have fed you, cared for you, taught you as you grew up, even as mothers do today.

You would have been taught and reared in the concepts, beliefs, ways and customs of that time and place, even as you actually *have been* reared in the ways and concepts of this day in your country.

Yes, and you would automatically have *taken for granted*, without question, the beliefs, teachings and ways of life of that people and time — just as today you have grown up assuming, as perfectly natural, the general way of life and general beliefs of this time.

Whatever society accepts and does seems perfectly natural. It becomes part of one's life — indeed, it *is* one's life! It was the same in the time of Christ.

### What would you have done?

Had you lived then and chanced to walk by this little group, and your ear had caught a few of the words from the lips of Jesus, you, too, in all probability, would have been *astonished!*

You would have heard this very ordinary-looking man from Nazareth making positive, dogmatic statements totally at variance with the concepts and beliefs you had always heard, been taught and taken for granted.

You would have heard Him expounding the Scriptures in a manner absolutely contradictory to what you had been brought up to believe. You would have heard things utterly different from what everybody believed.

Certainly *it would have sounded like fanaticism!*

And here is the strange paradox: In spite of yourself, what you would have heard Him say would have sounded quite logical and plausible — it would seem, somehow, to ring true — you would find yourself half admitting that *it made sense!*

Perhaps that is the very reason your friend would have become suddenly angry and resentful. Down deep, he would recognize that this man from Nazareth was speaking the TRUTH! Down deep, he would be forced to the half realization that he had been absolutely wrong! Nothing wounds human vanity quite so much as being told one is *wrong!* And when one really senses it is true — when one simply cannot refute this emphatic correction — it is humiliating, indeed.

SURELY, you would reason, all these religious denominations, recognized by the society of your country, so highly esteemed, could not be wrong! *Surely* the people of your whole nation could not be wrong!

And yet — what Jesus said did seem reasonable, even though it hit you at first as being some strange new and fanatical religion. You probably would have found your head swimming. You would have felt all mixed up.

You would have found yourself unable to answer Jesus' sayings, or to show anyone where He was wrong. Indeed you would not have been able to convince *yourself* that He was wrong. Yet everything within you would have rebelled against believing He could be right.

*Could* this man speaking these unheard-of things be a real prophet, bringing truth? Or was

he just a clever false prophet after the money or a following?

### What would you have done?

Would you have said to yourself: "I know what I'll do — I'll



**The Fountain of Cana.** Tradition says the water Christ turned to wine (John 2:1-11) was drawn here.

check up on this man from Nazareth. I'll go to the chief ministers of the big, reputable, established denominations. They have standing. I'll ask *them* whether he is properly explaining and expounding the Scriptures."

Would you have done this — or would you have simply gone to the sacred Scriptures direct, yourself, and searched through the Scriptures with open mind, without prejudice, yet cautiously, to PROVE all things, deciding to believe *what you found there with your own eyes?*

There is a TEST given later in this article by which you can *test* yourself to *know* what you *would have done*.

### How they would have answered

Had you gone to the officials or top men of the larger recognized and established religious denominations, do you realize what they would have answered?

They would have done everything in their power to discredit Jesus. They would have assured you He was a false prophet, even as they did accuse to those who *did* listen to Him. They would have warned you against Him.

For they — the very highest ministers of the most reputable, established denominations — the *CHIEF priests* — were the very ones who not only sought to discredit Jesus and turn people

against Him — *they are the very ones who plotted and conspired to MURDER Him!*

Finally, as more and more of the people began to believe what Christ was preaching (John 7:31), “the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him” (verse 32).

Many people began to believe Jesus — others did not. “So there was a division among the people because of Him” (verse 43). Then the officers returned to the chief priests, who said to the officers, “Why have you not brought Him?” (verse 45).

“The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man’” (verse 46). That was precisely WHY the chief priests were trying to discredit and even to murder Jesus. See how they answered:

“Then the Pharisees answered them, ‘Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?’” (verses 47-48).

These CHIEF ministers of the BIG established and reputed denominations said Jesus, the very Christ, was a false prophet. They asked, *Have any of the leaders of recognized, established religious groups believed Him?* The argument was, If these reputable and important MEN did not believe Him, then *you* shouldn’t!

Yet it was these very same religious leaders of the big, reputable denominations who conspired, and paid Judas 30 pieces of silver to turn traitor and betray Jesus. It was they who stirred up the crowd against Jesus, to demand that He be put to death, when He stood before Pilate. It was they who jeered at Him, mocked Him, caused Him to be MURDERED!

And HE was the Son of GOD! HE was the true MESSIAH! He was *your* SAVIOR!

### What you SHOULD DO!

Would you, had you lived there and then, have gone to the big religious organizations and asked whether Jesus spoke the truth?

What a terrible, tragic mistake you would have made, had you done that!

Or would you have done as the Bereans were commended for doing when they heard the apostle Paul? Paul, too, came speaking the same Gospel as Jesus. He, too, preached a message altogether different from the beliefs and customs of the time. These Bereans did not just gullibly swallow whatever Paul said without checking.

How could THEY know? Possibly this Paul was a false prophet. But they did not go to the chief preachers or the big, established denominations. **THEY WENT DIRECTLY TO THE SCRIPTURES!**

Yes, they checked up on Paul! But they went to the RIGHT PLACE to check up! They did not go to MEN, who could easily have partisan interests to protect. They did not go to Paul’s critics or opponents. **THEY WENT TO GOD!** They knew the Scriptures were God’s WORD! They received Paul’s word without prejudice for or against — with open mind —

day, *what WOULD you have done?* There is a TEST that will tell you.

Today you hear an astonishing broadcast, *The World Tomorrow*, on radio and television! On it, I CLAIM to be preaching the very same identical Gospel Jesus preached. I literally preach THE BIBLE. I expound it, as Jesus did.

And today, even as then, THE PEOPLE ARE ASTONISHED! What I preach, *right out of the Bible*, is just as *different* from what YOU have been brought up to believe today as Jesus’ teachings were different from what people then believed!

And it is the same today. The message catches the interest of people. The ratings of listener interest are unbelievably high. Millions are listening. They are astonished, surprised, often shocked. Somehow, down deep, it *does seem to ring true!* It does seem to MAKE SENSE!



**Bethlehem**, Christ’s birthplace. Rising between the town and the mountains bordering the Dead Sea, in the distance, is the Hill of the Franks, named from a legend of the Crusades. On the slope are Roman ruins said to be those of a fortress of Herod the Great.

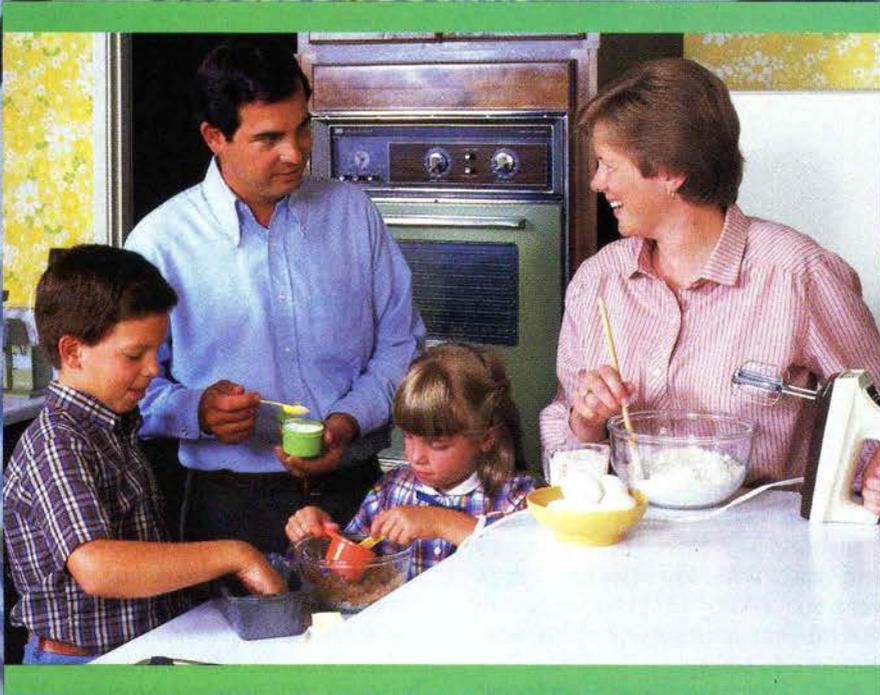
yet they checked up — they PROVED all things — they “searched the Scriptures daily to find out *whether* these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

And that is precisely what YOU should do, today!

But, had you lived in Jesus’

But it is SO DIFFERENT from what many have been brought up to believe. Surely this couldn’t be right? — and yet, listeners by the thousands begin to realize *they can’t refute it!*

One woman who claimed to be  
(Continued on page 21)



# MOTHERS AND HOMEMAKERS Biblical Heroines!

*The family is in trouble! Never has understanding God's point of view on the function of mothers and homemakers been more important.*

By K. Neil Earle

**P**aradox of paradoxes! The family is that sacred institution God created as the warm haven and positive foundation for facing the storms and stresses of life successfully.

Yet today, far too often, the family is a ferment of psychological terror and even physical danger. The resultant emotional scars are sometimes nearly impossible to live with.

The family, the bedrock of all decent society, is in convulsion. The result? Staggering human tragedies and social problems piling atop one another like debris from an earthquake.

Bible prophecy stands fulfilled (Isa. 1:9)! Sodom and Gomorrah cannot be forestalled much longer (verse 10)!

Personality weaknesses, social fragmentation and hopelessness grip millions upon millions of people (II Tim. 3:1-4). Yet few seem to equate the skyrocketing rise of these problems with the

undermining of family life in the Western world.

## **A pillar of the family**

Even into the 1960s, one pillar upholding the family was the mother and homemaker. Honor was attached to this responsibility. Yes, few other options existed. But the easy affluence of the 1960s, the growing presence of women in the work force and a generally self-seeking attitude on the part of everyone began to change that.

Increased mobility, the tediousness of modern life, the economic downturn (which fueled the need for two breadwinners) and the movement to "liberate" women all combined to erode the woman's position in the home.

So today, the hand that rocks the cradle is often that of the babysitter!

How tragic, for there is no satisfactory substitute for the sense of warmth and security generated by capable, concerned mothers. What else steers young

Photos by Hal Finch

minds and bodies through the minor but significant slips and starts of childhood, or the bewildering physical and emotional changes of adolescence?

What an enormous responsibility falls upon mothers! They bear the minute-by-minute supervision of their children, little personalities made in the miniature image of God. It is no joke that mothers need the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, the watchfulness of an eagle (Deut. 32:11) and the stamina of a thoroughbred horse (S. of Sol. 1:9).

The stakes are literally life and

death. God's Word is emphatic: "The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it" (Prov. 30:17).

"Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands" (Prov. 14:1).

"A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother" (Prov. 10:1).

How unerringly accurate God's Word is! What a tragedy that for many people the later years of life

are not lightened and immeasurably gladdened with the sure knowledge of their children's successes. And all because of the lack of solid parental guidance in the early years (Prov. 17:25, 22:6).

### **Fight for the vision**

What is happening to the institution of the family?

Our industrial societies value systematic efficiency and technical competence over the nurturing gifts prized by other generations (Matt. 24:12). Secretarial skills, keypunching, managerial

# Home Economics: Becoming an Efficiency Expert

By Ann Hays

Food for the dinner table, clothing for the children and on occasion a night out — day-to-day money management weighs heavily on the minds of many.

You are not alone in your struggle to make ends meet. With high unemployment, inflated prices and devalued currency, homemakers the world over are faced with the battle of managing the funds available to them.

Providing the best possible services for your family is of primary importance. Every woman is in a position to greatly contribute to the financial stability of her family simply by using most effectively what money she has.

And in doing so, she can become an efficiency expert.

Buying less expensive items, buying less often, eliminating waste, making it yourself and simply doing without are a few of the many ways to save money.

These principles can be applied to many areas in your budget.

### **Family food budgeting**

Certainly one of the biggest week-

ly expenditures in the home is food. An effective way to minimize grocery bills yet still provide nutritious, creative meals for the family is by efficient meal planning.

Before doing the weekly grocery shopping, plan the meals to be served during the coming week. Use the four food groups — milk and dairy products, grains and cereals, meats and proteins, fruits and vegetables — to meet nutritional needs. Be familiar enough with the alternatives within the groups to substitute certain items, based on store specials.

By putting this information down on paper, you will be able to ensure variety in your meal planning and have an organized shopping list at the same time.

Another important tip is to plan meals around foods that can be served in several different ways. This enables you not only to add variety to your meals but also to utilize leftovers more effectively.

The next step in your shopping strategy is to select a market that has the best buys and specials. Based on accessibility in your area, you may

want to consider a "no-frills" supermarket.

"No frills" generally means picking a product out of a cardboard box instead of neatly organized shelves and then bagging your own groceries at the checkout counter. You will save the cost of the service of these added conveniences on the price of the products you purchase.

When shopping, read labels for content, weight and grade. Purchasing the supermarket's own label or a generic name can provide additional savings without losing nutritional value. Buying cheaper cuts of meat can give you basically the same nutrients and taste if cooked properly.

Be aware of advertising and merchandising gimmicks. You don't want to be induced into buying a product that you don't really need.

Another way to save is by buying in bulk or large quantities. If the price is right and the product is something that your family regularly needs, you may want to consider stocking up. Don't be tempted to use these goods to excess, however, just because they are available.

In most areas, it is possible to include the use of coupons in your shopping strategy. Don't use them, however, on products you don't normally use or need. And check to see if another brand is less expensive.

Perhaps one of the biggest ways to stretch your food dollar is by eating at home. According to statistics released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, on the average, meals eaten out cost at least two and one-half times more than meals prepared at home. By preparing it yourself, you can also be certain of the quality

roles, computer operations, competing in business — that's where the action is, society tells us.

It's not that women should not acquire certain job skills, but solid, enduring human values like tact, patience, understanding and sympathy or the skillful and concerned direction of offspring based upon years of keen observation — these skills are often considered of lesser or no value.

"Surely you have things turned around!" exclaims the great God (Isa. 29:16).

This society is in desperate trouble (Matt. 24:22).

Even God's own people need to fight today for the vision of the mother's responsibility in the home. Indeed, there is no substitute for this responsibility.

God's viewpoint on the seemingly ordinary tasks of the everyday housewife is plain indeed (Prov. 11:29)! God in His Word lavishes praise on individual mothers as an enduring witness to their matchless contribution to His plan.

### The example of godly women

God values the role of homemaker. He sees the mother's func-

tion as one of the best bulwarks against the encircling hopelessness of a dying civilization. Godly women have helped transform society more than once.

Sound farfetched? Then why did God place this record in His accounts of the kings of Judah?

"In the second year of Pekah . . . Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done" (II Kings 15:32-34).

Did you catch it? A righteous king, yes. But "his mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok." What more precious gift, what more outstanding contribution could a woman make to society than the steady character of a strong, wise leader, one who could turn God's blessings toward a whole nation?

Read on: "Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done" (II Kings 18:1-3).

Jedidah, wife of wicked King Amon, is praised in the same way (II Kings 22:1-2). Her son was Josiah, whose personal righteousness prolonged the life of his country (II Chron. 35:25).

What made these women so successful — what caused God to record their names for all eternity in His Holy Bible (I Pet. 1:25)?

Jerusha, Abi and Jedidah had one thing in common: They found fulfillment in serving their families and pointing their children in

and preparation of the food your family eats.

### Cutting clothing costs

Another area where costs can be cut is clothing. In most areas, clothing is seasonal. Just before the start of a new season is the time when prices are the highest. If you are able to wait until end-of-season sales, you will be able to save money.

Waiting can also help you avoid the pitfalls of the latest fad, which is not so fashionable in a few months. Plan your wardrobe around classic, timeless styles.

Buying quality clothing can save money in the long run, even though the initial cost may be greater. Purchase only what you are able. If you simply can't afford certain items, even a few accessories can give a new look to some old outfits.

Sewing your own clothes can result in significant savings. Developing your talent as a seamstress can also be a marketable skill.

One other way to save on clothing costs is by seeking out used-clothing stores. Also, check garage sales in more affluent neighborhoods. This can be particularly economical in the case of small children's clothing. Children often outgrow garments long before wearing them out.

### Other ways to save

Have you ever considered bartering for the goods and services your family otherwise couldn't afford?

Bartering is simply a cashless exchange of merchandise, skills or services. It can be as simple as exchanging baby-sitting services for a neighbor chauffeuring your child to

school or other activities. A more complex exchange may be ironing, mending and sewing in return for music lessons for your child.

What about that occasional night out? Can you really afford it?

Recreation and leisure time spent with the whole family is extremely important. If dinner at a restaurant is simply unaffordable, consider having a picnic at a park. Commercial entertainment such as going to a movie can be quite expensive. An evening at home with popcorn and games can be just as much fun and more profitable. Even a weekend camping trip can be surprisingly inexpensive.

Home gardening, family haircuts at home — once you've become a trained efficiency expert, you'll think of many more ways to economize.



For more information on building financial stability in your family, write for our free booklet *Managing Your Personal Finances*. □

# Make Yourself at Home!

By Colleen M. Gus

It's a welcome sight: your host and hostess standing at the door, holding it open wide as you get out of your car and head toward the house.

"Come on in and make yourself at home!" your host calls, with a smile of welcome. Whose spirits wouldn't rise at such a sight? You know you're in for some real hospitality.

A hospitable person, according to the dictionary, is "one who is disposed to entertain with generous kindness." Hospitality, then, is not just having a lot of parties, but showing genuine interest in people. It's an attitude of mind.

How can we practice this attitude when we share our homes with others? Here are a few pointers.

## Inviting people

Real hospitality begins, not when the guests arrive, but even before the invitations are issued. Everyone likes to show hospitality to his or her friends, to those whose company is sure to be stimulating and enjoyable. But what about that widow with the three children? What about those new people in the area? These people appreciate hospitality even more than those who already have lots of friends and social opportunities.

Good hosts and hostesses think about the combinations of people they invite over together. For example, they might balance a guest list including several talkative, gregarious people with one or two quieter people who are better listeners.

Also, thoughtful hosts take care to invite people far enough in advance to make it convenient for them to plan, but not so far ahead as to make it awkward for them to refuse if they prefer not to come. (It's hard to say you're busy three months in advance!) A week or two in advance is just about right.

The host remembers to explain in detail the directions to his home, if the guests have not visited before. He might even provide them with a map.

He mentions what kind of clothing will be appropriate, and the parking arrangements.

Have you ever been the guest of someone who was so worried about the table, the dinner rolls and the mashed potatoes that he or she seemed to have no time for you? A truly hospitable host understands that, while the guests enjoy the decor and the food, they have really come to see him or her. This host plans ahead, taking care of as many details as possible before the guests arrive, so that he can enjoy visiting and fellowship with them.

## Make guests comfortable

When the guests arrive, the host greets them warmly at the door and makes them feel welcome. "Hi, Mary! Hello, John! Glad you could make it. Did you find the place without any trouble?" He takes their wraps and shows them around the house.

A skilled host knows his guests may feel a little uncomfortable at first, being in a strange place and completely dependent on him. With his warm and friendly manner, he puts them at ease, and sees that their food, drink and other wants and needs are amply provided for. He tries to prevent any awkwardness or embarrassment for them.

The story is that a guest at one of Queen Victoria's dinners was overwhelmed by the finery and formality. When the servants brought out finger bowls, crystal bowls of water with flower petals floating inside, the awestruck guest looked around nervously, lifted his bowl to his lips and drank it — whereupon, Queen Victoria did the same! That gracious woman understood the importance of putting her guests at ease.

## What about food?

In planning the food, his guests' preferences are a good host's prime considerations. He tries to find out

beforehand if they are allergic to some items, dislike some kinds of food, are watching their weight or are avoiding alcohol.

A good rule is to plan for one or two people more than are actually coming. That way, guests will feel welcome to take seconds if offered.

Of course, no one can be expected to entertain beyond his means. If he can't afford to have someone over for dinner, a person can practice hospitality by asking another in for cake and coffee or for popcorn, lemonade and a game of cards.

## After-dinner conversation

After the meal is over, what should the host or hostess do? Rush to clear the table and wash the dishes? No, after-dinner conversation is often the best part of a visit. The guests are filled and happy, and the hosts are more relaxed because the bulk of the work is already past.

It is the host's responsibility to lead the conversation. To lead does not mean to dominate, but to focus on the guests, directing the topics toward them and their interests.

A gracious host or hostess is careful to see that no one is left out. He does not allow the conversation to dwell long on a topic to which only a few can contribute.

Many people enjoy a lively back-and-forth discussion. This can be fine, even desirable, if everyone takes it in fun and has a good time. But the moment a host senses that someone will have his or her feelings hurt, he smooths over the controversial point and changes the subject.

## Ending the evening

Sometimes a host and hostess might be tempted to think they have done their jobs too well, for while they are exhausted, the guests linger on!

It is not wrong to give such seemingly oblivious guests a hint. Often, just standing to clear the table will be enough. If not, a subtle remark like "What a great time we've had today! How we've enjoyed your company!" might do the trick. Then try mentioning the time. A host knows he can entertain his guests more willingly next time if they don't overstay their welcome this time.

Showing hospitality is a superb — and pleasant — way to practice the *give way* of life. □

the right direction. They prized obedient, stable children. They believed that expanding and improving a child's mind was a full-time job (Prov. 23:26). They strived to eradicate the bad habits of the neglected child (Prov. 29:15).

They were happy to work quietly, out of the limelight, providing the support, encouragement and correction that all children require (Prov. 29:17). Their warm attitudes, their calm strength provided their homes with a background atmosphere of quiet confidence and stability. They were an ever-present source of solace, answers and kind direction.

Else God would not cite them so conspicuously as admirable mothers (Prov. 22:1).

Evil King Amon must have been an awfully antagonistic mate sometimes, yet Jedidah, with God's help, produced a Josiah. What an example!

Some women have actually helped alter the course of history through their children! Jochebed was one of them (Ex. 6:20). This courageous, intelligent Levite outsmarted the genocidal policy of an evil nation (Ex. 1:22).

With God's help, Jochebed concocted a plan whereby her infant son would not only survive but be reared by her. Read the whole account carefully in Exodus 2. God blessed her faith and boldness (Ex. 2:9). She is not well-known to human historians, but she is permanently inscribed in God's spiritual hall of fame (Heb. 11:2).

Her son is still ranked as one of history's greatest leaders (Acts 7:22). His name was Moses!

Moses' early sense of mission was undoubtedly instilled to a large degree by his daring, dauntless mother (Acts 7:25).

### **Mary's important role**

Few servants God chose ever walked a more difficult path than that of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She had to endure sneers and sarcasm because of what was considered a premarital pregnancy. In fact, though, it was a major

extension of God's great plan (Matt. 1:18). This required mental toughness, tact and sensitivity few mortals possess.

Mary came through with flying colors (Luke 1:30)! The misguided veneration given her by some religionists should not blind us to her high human qualities of competence and coolheadedness.

Imagine being chosen as the mother of the Savior of humanity. What a stupendous responsibility! Thankfully, she had the case histories of righteous Sarah, Rebekah and Hannah to glean from (II Tim. 3:15). All these mothers received children through divine intervention (Ps. 113:9).

Yet the tone and atmosphere of Mary's rather large household (Matt. 13:55-56) had to be extra special. She had to nurture that robust and vigorous yet brilliant and perceptive child who grew up the sinless Savior of us all. What a task!

With God's help Mary succeeded. As a child Jesus reflected sound parental teaching and instruction. By the age of 12 the learned doctors of law sat stupefied at His insight (Luke 2:46).

Jesus' stable home life emerges indirectly in His teaching. Think about it for a moment.

Remember the spiritual principle He gleaned from one of the most common household chores, patching old garments (Luke 5:36)?

Certainly the neatness displayed after the miracle of the loaves reflects the personality of a well-trained child (Matt. 15:37).

Then there is the simple, homespun account of the neighbor borrowing three loaves from his friend in the middle of the night, probably a warm recollection from Christ's childhood among the common people of Palestine (Luke 11:5-8).

What about the parable of the woman carefully measuring the ingredients for three measures of meal (Matt. 13:33)? See how Jesus' analogies revealed a firsthand acquaintance with normal housework?

Jesus probably spoke from warm personal knowledge in His

discourse of Luke 15:8-9: "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'"

Where did Jesus derive these insights into normal family life? Mary, evidently widowed from an early age (Matt. 12:47), must have been the source of most of them. It's a good thing for God's plan that she didn't feel her combined roles as homemaker, mother, counselor, domestic engineer, nurse, clerk, teacher, home economist, cook, seamstress, dietitian, physical education adviser — all of the jobs that make up the daily lot of the "everyday housewife" — were beneath her, unimportant or unchallenging. It's a good thing that Jesus' mother didn't seek status or fulfillment elsewhere.

Where might God's Work be today?

Jesus obviously respected this intelligent, sensible woman (Luke 2:51). He knew her deep reserves of inner strength and quiet confidence. He knew how often she had to subordinate her deep feelings in a humble surrender to the sometimes mysterious ways of God (Luke 2:51, Matt. 12:46-50). Jesus' last earthly thoughts revolved around the woman who helped train and inspire Him and who stuck with Him to the bitter end (John 19:25), even in partial spiritual blindness.

Mary was a living fulfillment of Proverbs 23:24-25: "The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice."

### **The virtuous woman**

Proverbs 31:10-31 presents a brilliant and tasteful tribute to the best that is in women. Let's review this section and notice how many challenging and demanding traits and skills effec-

tive mothers and homemakers must exemplify.

The word *virtuous* in Proverbs 31:10 actually conveys more than moral purity. It also implies forcefulness or strength. "Full of mental energy" is how Adam Clarke's *Commentary* defines this word. Perhaps "capable" is a good modern rendering.

Verse 12 celebrates stability, consistency and maturity: "She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." This model woman is not a shallow person. She puts first things first. She knows her priorities. She derives her emotional and psychological sustenance from seeing her family succeed. This is the first but most important observation!

Therefore she "willingly works" at her household duties (verse 13). She has vision. This is seen from her enthusiastic devotion to sometimes tiresome and unglamorous chores.

Think what enormous financial savings each year derive from a wife's diligent patching, sewing, shampooing, refinishing, polishing and scrubbing. Maintenance prevents speedy deterioration. Every man should appreciate this continual contribution the Proverbs 31 wife makes to the family income — "no lack of gain" (verse 11).

The diligent wife actively shops for bargains (verses 14-16). She has a keen eye for enduring commodities, alert to the expanding needs of her growing family.

No wonder she is in good shape physically (verse 17); she is a fit, healthy person who likes the out-of-doors (verse 16), not a self-pitying recluse (S. of Sol. 1:6).

The virtuous woman shops for the best quality her budget allows (Prov. 31:18, 21), and she has time and resources left to help the truly needy (verse 20). Yet she is no do-gooder or gadabout (I Tim. 5:13).

She is productive. Her dress-making and tailoring skills supplement the family income — note the surplus commodities (Prov. 31:24). "Her husband is known in the gates" (verse 23). No wonder!

Yet how many men foolishly squelch the talents and abilities of their wives, unwisely believing that they — the all-powerful Supermen — must have complete charge of every last detail in the home (Prov. 11:29)?

The author of Proverbs 31 knew women better than that. He respected their intelligence: "She opens her mouth with wisdom" (Prov. 31:26). He could see from the many examples she set that "on her tongue is the law of kindness."

### **Emphasis on child rearing**

"Her children rise up and call her blessed" (verse 28). The children don't fear school. They are intellectually curious from an early age. Why? Their mother doesn't believe in letting young minds stay idle (verse 27)! Therefore it's certain that "she shall rejoice in time to come" (verse 25). The real payoff for a successful mother comes years down the line, as well as good report cards in the short run.

Why? Because the exploits of her offspring provide joy and satisfaction for the second half of her life (verse 31). Successful children are a healthy source of interest and fascination to people in their senior years — a source of right pride for parents.

The rootlessness and frustration that senior citizens can feel today could be cushioned tremendously by the jubilation that diligent parents experience in their extended families, attending joyous weddings, occasionally baby-sitting grandchildren and even offering financial assistance (Prov. 13:22).

### **Grasp God's perspective**

No wonder Paul was so emphatic: "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house" (I Tim. 5:14, AV). And, "Admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands" (Tit. 2:4-5).

Mothers and homemakers: What a future is yours if you can

grasp God's perspective on your vital purpose! Here are three ways to help crystallize your priorities, to help counteract the propaganda that surrounds us:

1) *Never downgrade your responsibility in your own mind.*

While society downgrades the sanctity of the family, remember God labels our world as modern Sodom and Gomorrah (II Tim. 3:1-4). You aren't missing a thing.

God has something much better to offer: peace and fulfillment now and blessings for all eternity through the family unit (Prov. 23:17-18).

2) *Study godly women; build their traits into your life.*

"As he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). How do tennis players improve their game? They watch the pros, read their books, study their moves.

Mothers and homemakers need to regularly read Proverbs 31, Ruth, Esther, I Timothy 5, Titus 2. With the help of a concordance, study the lives of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah and Mary. Make them armchair companions. Take notes on your reading. Write down their strong points, the lessons they learned, their blessings for faithfully supporting their husbands.

3) *Don't lose the vision in child rearing.*

Dishes, scattered toys, messy clothes — these are the present realities. They are vivid, immediate and must be dealt with.

But apply Proverbs 29:18. Today you may be only trying to get your 8-year-old son to pick up his overcoat, but the principles you are teaching are neatness and responsibility. These last for all eternity. Try to see things in the light of building permanent character traits in your children, future children of God, and you will be more vigilant, more motivated.

Mothers and homemakers, awake to your high calling! Don't surrender your birthright! The future payoffs are worth every effort now. Hasn't God Himself promised it (Prov. 22:17-20)? □

# Which Laws in the Old Testament Have Authority Today?

*Here is how you can know which laws in the Old Testament were changed or are no longer necessary, and which we are commanded to observe today!*

**N**ew Christians often ask: "When I read the Old Testament, how can I know the difference between the ceremonial laws no longer binding on the Church, and those laws that have authority today?"

Christian growth depends in no small measure on understanding the answer to this basic question.

## **Ten Commandments have authority**

The patriarch Abraham kept the Commandments. "Abraham obeyed My voice," said God, "and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen. 26:5).

God's basic spiritual law that regulates human life is authoritative. It is "holy and just and good," said Paul in Romans 7:12-14. This law is summed up in the Ten Commandments God gave to Israel on Mt. Sinai. The Ten Commandments were not new — only the written, codified form in which God spoke and wrote them was new.

David was inspired to write: "All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness" (Ps. 111:7-8, Authorized Version).

Jesus said: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the

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By Herman L. Hoeh

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Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17).

God's Church believes David. It believes Jesus. It does what He commands. He is, after all, the Head of the Church of God!

## **Other laws based on Ten Commandments**

Abraham kept the Ten Commandments. He also kept God's statutes and laws. What were these statutes and laws?

In addition to the broad principles of the Ten Commandments, God gave to the patriarchs statutes for the general well-being of the people, together with judgments for the protection of everyone's legal rights.

*Statutes* are lesser expressions of a lawmaker, usually commanding or forbidding that certain things be done. *Judgments* are binding decisions of judges based on God's previously revealed law. These decisions are used to settle similar future disputes and to render a sentence or verdict.

In general the Ten Commandments apply to individual conduct, the statutes to national or Church affairs and the judgments to decisions rendered according to the principles of the Ten Commandments and the statutes.

The world had strayed so far from the truth by the days of Moses that God had to reveal His

laws and statutes anew to the Israelites. Ancient Israel had lost much of the knowledge of God's ways while in Egyptian bondage. Notice, however, that God was revealing laws that were already in force.

In Exodus 16:28 God challenged Israel, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?"

Israel could not refuse what did not exist!

In Exodus 18:16 we read that Moses explained to his father-in-law what he did when the people had a dispute: "I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

Both these instances occurred before the nation reached Sinai — before the covenant was made.

As these statutes and laws existed before the covenant made at Sinai, they were not thereby abolished in A.D. 31 at the death of Christ. The Old Covenant could not destroy what it did not bring into force.

The Old Covenant, remember, was a marriage agreement in which Israel promised to obey the Eternal (Christ) who was the Husband, and He, in turn, promised to provide for the nation. To obey the Husband meant to keep God's laws that were already in force!

## **Magnifying the law**

The statutes and lesser laws of God magnify the Ten Commandments. The First Commandment

says, for example, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3). The statutes regarding annual festivals magnify this principle — explain how, in a positive way, to ensure that one worships the one true God: "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year" (Ex. 23:14).

Many additional laws — such as Exodus 22:16, 19, for example — specify in greater detail how the principle of the Seventh Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14), is to be applied in various instances.

Notice also that God made provision for additional judgments to be established over the centuries (see Numbers 27:6-11, for example). The judgments are binding *decisions* based on God's previously revealed law.

But when did the carnal ceremonies and sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood begin? When did they cease to have force and effect? And how can we distinguish them from the statutes and laws that existed before the covenant made at Sinai?

### **When did sacrificial laws begin?**

When God brought Israel to the foot of Mt. Sinai, He gave the Ten Commandments to them. He allowed Moses to declare to Israel the statutes and judgments that the people didn't want to hear directly from God (Ex. 20-24). These statutes and judgments magnify the Ten Commandments.

Now notice carefully. There is only one sacrifice mentioned thus far in the book of the law — the Passover sacrifice (Ex. 23:18). God called it "My sacrifice."

The Passover was instituted in Egypt, weeks before Sinai. It had to be included in the covenant made at Sinai, but it was not instituted by that covenant.

Next, turn to Jeremiah 7:22-23. Listen to what the inspired Jeremiah wrote: "For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak . . . or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacri-

fices. But this command I gave them, 'Obey my voice . . . and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you'" (Revised Standard Version).

God did not command these added sacrifices to be offered originally. This explains why none of those temporary sacrifices were perpetuated by different symbols in the New Testament Church.

Only the Passover is continued — with the different New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine. Why is the Passover continued today? Because it began before the covenant at Sinai was made! (See its institution in Exodus 12 before the Israelites left Egypt.) The very fact that Jesus substituted unleavened bread and wine for the Passover only, and not for the temporary Levitical offerings, is proof that the ceremonial Old Testament offerings are not binding today, but that the Passover, in its New Testament form, is binding!

Paul explains that the temporary rituals and sacrifices were afterward "added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19) — because God's spiritual law was being broken — to last until Christ should come. They foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ and were a "reminder of sins" to teach the people the need of the Messiah — the true Passover Lamb — who would pay the penalty of human transgression (Heb. 10:3-10).

Notice that these temporary rituals did not define sin. They were reminders of sin. God's spiritual laws define sin. The laws that define sin — that explain what sin is — these laws we are to keep today.

### **Sacrifices forever?**

The principle of voluntary offering of sacrifices existed before Moses. Abel made offerings to God, for instance (Gen. 4:3-4). But in the period from Moses to Christ the practice of giving offerings was reduced to a ritualistic plane and regulated in great detail. Why?

Because the children of Israel were without promise of the Holy Spirit. They could not offer themselves in spiritual obedience to God (Deut. 29:4), so they performed ritualistic washings and offered animals and other physical types instead — as a type of the true spiritual worship to come (John 4:24).

They needed to be reminded of Jesus' then future sacrifice, so God gave them physical types in the "law of Moses," "till the Seed should come" (Gal. 3:19).

Today, however, we offer spiritual offerings and sacrifices. We are being "built into . . . a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5, RSV).

We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, our spiritual service (Rom. 12:1).

It is a spiritual principle to offer one's self in living obedience — to sacrifice the self — to God. God Almighty is worthy to receive such service.

"But," some have asked, "weren't the Levitical sacrifices ordained forever?" Let us look at what the Bible really says. We may find some surprises.

Yes, the Bible does say that the sacrificial rites and other ritualistic functions belong to the Levitical priesthood forever. But nowhere are the people commanded to offer bloody sacrifices forever. Let us understand the real significance of the Hebrew word *olam*, translated "forever." It means continuous, so long as the factors involved exist.

Take, for example, the three statements found in Exodus 21:6, Leviticus 25:46 and Deuteronomy 15:17. All three speak of men being the slaves of a master forever, which obviously can only mean continuous until the death of one of the parties.

Now what factors may limit the duration of the offering of sacrifices? One, the need of a physical, human priesthood. Two, the need for sacrifices. And three, the existence of a temple or tabernacle.

In other words, as long as sacri-

fices are offered, the functions of the physical priesthood will never be transferred from the family of Levi. It is theirs forever. "For if He [Christ] were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law" (Heb. 8:4).

The physical priesthood is Aaron's, of the tribe of Levi. The spiritual priesthood is Jesus', who is of the order of Melchizedek, not Aaron.

What is the purpose of a priesthood? To offer sacrifices and to act on behalf of men in relation to God (Heb. 5:1, 8:3). But how long do physical offerings as reminders of sin need to be made? Paul tells us, "Now where there is remission of these [sins], there is no longer an offering for sin" (Heb. 10:18).

To offer sacrifices today as reminders of sins already paid for by Jesus, who gave His life in full payment for all sins, is needless after A.D. 31, when Jesus died to pay for the sins of the world. God signaled this fact to the Jews in A.D. 70 by allowing the destruction of the Temple.

Moreover, since the Holy Spirit was made available to mankind beginning Pentecost, June 17, A.D. 31, physical offerings and various washings, which are types of the Holy Spirit, are no longer needed and hence no longer binding. The factors involved ceased to exist.

The ritual laws were subject to change because they were only types of the promised seed, Christ (who was to take upon Himself the sins of the world), and of the Holy Spirit, which would regenerate men spiritually.

When the circumstances were altered in A.D. 31, at the crucifixion and on Pentecost, the obligation to practice the ritualistic laws ceased. These rituals had no further use when the Lamb of God died for our sins and the Holy Spirit became available.

But what about spiritual laws?

Spiritual laws describe the very character of God. They enable us to know what God is like. Since

the character of God remains unchanging (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8), God's spiritual laws cannot change.

### **Ritual laws distinguished from others**

In Hebrews 9:9-10 we read of the material gifts and sacrifices, which included "only . . . foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation."

Notice that these temporary laws did not pertain to murder or theft or Sabbath breaking but were only those ordinances regulating meat and drink offerings and different washings or ablutions of the unclean. (These external washings were a type of the Holy Spirit cleaning us up from within.)

Any other laws not included in Hebrews 9:10 were not part of the rituals added because of sin!

Remember this point!

It will help you to know which rites in the Old Testament were added to the statutes and judgments already in existence.

### **What is the law of Moses?**

Some people are easily confused by the trick argument of some that the Ten Commandments are the law of Moses. They read in Luke 2:22-24 that the ordinances of the "law of Moses" are also called part of the "law of the Lord."

Why is the "law of Moses" also called the "law of the Lord"? Because all law comes from God! Moses was not the lawmaker! He merely told the people the laws God set in motion (John 1:17).

However, the Bible never calls the law of Moses the Ten Commandments. The law of Moses comprises civil statutes and judgments that God gave him to communicate to the people. The difference between the law of Moses and the Ten Commandments is that God spoke the Ten Commandments, but Moses delivered the statutes and judgments.

When Moses first delivered the statutes and judgments, the law of Moses had no sacrifices connected with it. Jeremiah said so

(Jer. 7:22)! The law of Moses was originally the civil law, based on the principles of the Ten Commandments. These civil statutes and judgments are also right and good (Ps. 119:7-8). Some of these civil laws were included in the covenant made at Sinai (Ex. 21-24) and others were promulgated at later times (Deut. 12:1 and following chapters, for example).

After the ratification of the Sinaitic Covenant (Ex. 24), the Levitical priesthood was established and the laws regulating offerings were added to the law of Moses (Ex. 28:1). (Before this time offerings were voluntary and young men were priests — Ex. 24:5.)

Therefore the law of Moses has more than one part!

Notice God's definition of the original part of that law in Malachi 4:4, RSV: "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel."

This law we are not to forget. We are to keep it!

But added later to this law were other statutes regulating material rituals, such as sacrifices, lighting of candles, burning incense and various washings for the unclean. This almost unnoticed fact, that the law of Moses was composed of two distinct parts — the civil and the ritualistic — is what causes so much difficulty in understanding.

### **Part of law of Moses still in force**

Jesus said the two great commandments were love to God and love to neighbor. Do you know from where He quoted these laws?

Out of the book of the law — the laws that Moses spoke to the people! Read it in Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5.

In II John 5 and 6, God commands Christians to obey these two basic laws that He communicated to the people by Moses. In II Kings 23:25, Josiah is praised because he did so.

Notice how plain it is. The civil  
(Continued on page 19)

# CHRISTMAS

## *Questions We Are Asked*

*About this time each year our Personal Correspondence Department receives — and answers — numerous inquiries regarding the coming holiday season. Here are just a sampling.*

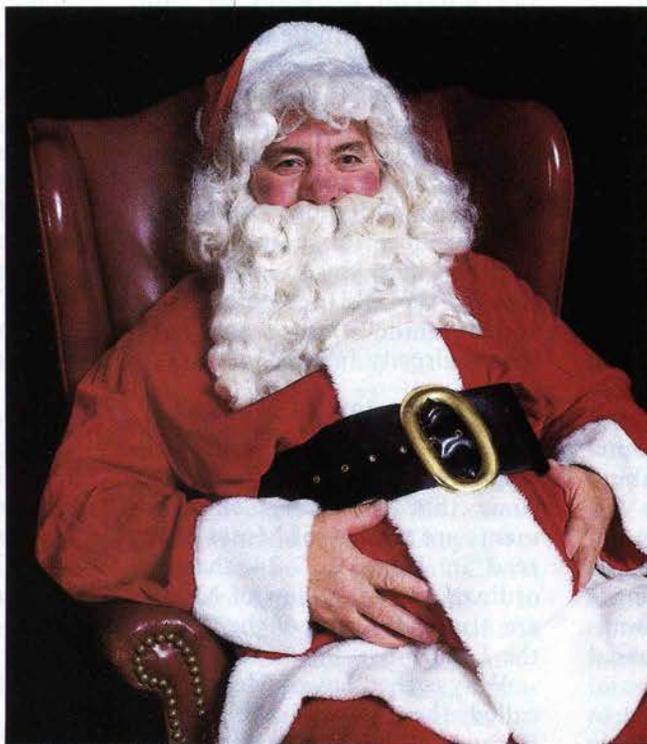
**I've heard you say on your television program that Christmas observance does not come from the Bible. Where does it come from, then?**

Where Christmas customs came from is really no secret. You can read the origins of Christmas customs in encyclopedias and other reference works.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, for example, draws the reader's attention to these facts: "Christmas customs are an evolution from times that long antedate the Christian period — a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition" (15th ed., art. "Christmas").

It's a fact. At the end of December and the beginning of January festive celebrations were taking place in various nations of Europe centuries before Jesus was born!

When that festive season rolled around, little children were filled with anticipation and excitement. The whole family got busily involved in putting up decorations. Boughs of holly and evergreen were assembled and placed about the house. The mistletoe was hung. A tree was chosen and decorated with ornaments.



It was a season of giving and receiving presents, a time to sing songs, admire all the pretty lights and burn the yule log. There were parades with special floats, sumptuous meals and merrymaking.

All this and Jesus wasn't even born yet!

In ancient times, many of the earth's inhabitants, realizing their dependence upon the sun for light, heat and the growing of crops, watched the sun's yearly course in the heavens with deep interest. At different seasons, feasts and celebrations were held to help, it was thought, the solar orb on its way.

The end of December was an especially significant time in the Northern Hemisphere. The days were short. The sun was at its lowest point. Special festivals of thanksgiving and encouragement to the sun were held. When, at the winter solstice, the days began to lengthen, there was great celebration lasting into the first part of January. The sun — the light of the world — had been (re)born!

Such festivities, once meant to honor the sun and its god, were freely adopted by the spreading and increasingly popular "Christian" religion. Why not, in the same way, honor Jesus — the real light of the world

(even though He was not actually born in December)?

The modern Christmas tree is supposed to have originated in German lands in the Middle Ages. Since evergreens were green throughout the dead of winter, people looked upon them as especially imbued with life. It was in honor of the tree spirit or the spirit of growth and fertility that greenery was a prominent part of ancient pagan winter celebrations.

The Romans trimmed trees with trinkets and toys at that time of the year. The Druids tied gilded apples to tree branches. To

Photos by Warren Watson

certain peoples an evergreen decorated with orbs and other fruit-like objects symbolized the tree of life in the garden in Eden.

Branches of holly and mistletoe were likewise revered. Not only do these plants remain green through the winter months, but they actually bear fruit at that time, once again a type of the spirits of fertility. Still today, catching someone under a branch of mistletoe can serve as a convenient springboard for romantic activity.

Few people stop to wonder what in the world such strange customs have to do with the birth of Jesus!

The ancients lit festive fires in the last part of December to encourage the waning sun god, just as Christmas bonfires, candles and other lights burn today at the same time of the year. Use of the "yule log," part of the "yuletide" season, harkens back to the ritual burning of a carefully chosen log by the Druids. The word *yule* comes from the old Anglo-Saxon word *hweol*, meaning "wheel," a round wheel being an appropriate symbol for the sun.

You thought the Christmas shopping spree was a 20th century phenomenon?

Listen to how fourth-century writer Libanius described end-of-the-year gift-giving and partying in the ancient non-Christian Roman Empire: "Everywhere may be seen . . . well-laden tables. . . The impulse to spend seizes everyone. He who through the whole year has taken pleasure in saving . . . becomes suddenly extravagant. . . A stream of presents pours itself out on all sides" (as quoted in *Christmas in Ritual and Tradition*).

Of all times in the year, it was indeed the season to be jolly. Drunkenness was widespread. Fortunately, however, the modes of transportation in those days did not lend themselves to the high rate of drunken-driver-induced traffic fatalities that are part of the Christmas season in many nations today.

An important part of the pagan harvest festivities — beginning in October-November with what has become Halloween — involved good and bad spirits. In many lands, visitors — usually bringers of good or evil — made their appearance in the winter season. Through blending pagan legends with traditions about saints, certain figures emerged, with similar personalities. We recognize them today in different nations as Santa Claus, Father Christmas, St. Nicholas, St. Martin, the Weihnachtsmann, Pere Noel. Whatever name is used, all these winter visitors fulfill a similar role. These fictional persons — "Christianizations" of the pagan Germanic deities — clearly perpetuate certain folk-ritual themes wherein varying degrees of rewards and punishments were dealt out to the celebrants. Through the centuries these customs came to be centered around children.

It is not too hard to see a connection between Santa using the chimney or the shoes and stockings hung by the fireplace and the ancient superstitions about hearth spirits. For thousands of years, especially among the Chinese, it was customary to sweep and scour the house in preparation for the visit of the hearth spirit. Each year, dressed in a pointed, fiery red cap and red jacket, this fire god traveled from the distant

heavens to visit homes and distribute favors or punishments. Today he is welcomed in the Western world each Christmas season.

Popular Christmas customs, as we can see, plainly reflect non-Christian legends and practices. Some of the very Christmas customs observed today were once banned by the Catholic Council of Rome, the English Parliament and the Puritans of New England. The logical question to ask is, What is there that is *Christian* about Christmas?

**All right. So Christmas is based on pagan traditions and myths. What is wrong with borrowing some of those customs and using them to honor Jesus on His birthday?**

To begin with, the Bible nowhere says Jesus was born December 25. In fact, it doesn't tell us which day Jesus was born. It doesn't even tell us the month. The Bible does, however, show that Jesus' birth did *not* take place in December or, for that matter, in any of the winter months.

This is clear from Luke 2:8. When Jesus was born, "there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night." The shepherds were living out in the open fields, sleeping with their flock at night. As many Bible commentators admit, the shepherds would not have been doing this during the



*The Bible nowhere says Jesus was born December 25. It doesn't tell us which day or month Jesus was born. However, the Bible does show Jesus was not born in any of the winter months.*

cold and rainy winter months. It was hardly the kind of weather for sleeping out in the fields. Or for having a baby in a stable and laying him in a manger (Luke 2:7)!

So we know when Jesus was not born. If we are supposed to

how God views the pagan origins of Christmas customs, be sure to read our booklet *The Plain Truth about Christmas*. You may have a free copy by writing to our address nearest you.

**Even though I**

*Who can deny the fact that Christmas is a crassly commercial holiday? Who would not rather spend the money — as economic conditions worsen — on more needful items, like heating the house?*



celebrate His birthday, why doesn't the Bible give us the date of that event? Elsewhere in the Scriptures, when God revealed certain days He wanted His people to observe, no room was left for doubt as to when those days occurred. Information for determining the exact days for celebration was abundantly clear and precise: "the fourteenth day of the first month" or "count fifty days to the day" or "in the seventh month, on the first day of the month" (see Lev. 23, entire chapter).

The instructions were specific because God wanted His people to observe those particular days. Why, then, the silence as to which day Christ was born?

The plain truth is that the Bible nowhere commands us to observe birthdays in the first place!

But an even more important point to consider is this: When Jesus' name is applied to borrowed pagan ideas and practices, does Jesus really feel honored? After all, it was Jesus Himself who told His people Israel not to seek to worship Him with customs borrowed from other religions (Deut. 12:29-32). Time and again He made it clear through His prophets that He wanted His people to remain "cleansed . . . of everything pagan" (Neh. 13:30).

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8)!

For further clarification as to

**have ceased to celebrate Christmas because I know the truth about it, is there anything wrong in continuing to exchange gifts out of the motive of giving rather than wanting to follow pagan customs?**

There is nothing wrong with giving to others. Part of God's overall purpose for our existence is that we learn to give instead of seeking to get. But a Christian needs to be careful about giving a gift around Christmas time.

The reason? Christians are to be lights to the world. They must set the example of righteous living. To engage in gift giving with those who are celebrating Christmas may give the appearance to them that you are participating right along with them in Christmas festivities.

God tells us to come out of the religious system of this world and to be "separate" (II Cor. 6:14-18). How can a person be separate from such goings on and continue at the same time to dabble in them?

The very idea of exchanging gifts is based on an erroneous interpretation of the Bible. The giving of gifts by the Magi has been used as justification for this custom, but what has been overlooked is that the Magi did not exchange gifts among themselves. Rather, they presented all their gifts "to him" — to Jesus (Matt. 2:11).

How different from the modern custom of trading Christmas gifts and giving nothing to Christ! Even if it were appropriate to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, can you imagine a birthday celebration where all the guests bring gifts and exchange those gifts among themselves, and the person they are supposedly honoring receives nothing? Doesn't make sense? Neither does the modern custom of trading Christmas gifts while supposedly honoring Christ.

Why not give gifts at other times of the year when they will be appreciated as spontaneously sincere and heartfelt?

**How do I tell my friends and relatives that I no longer wish to exchange presents?**

With a smile! That's right. Show firmness, yet at the same time be relaxed and friendly about it.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to come across as a religious fanatic fired up with purple-veined emotion on the subject. There's no need to make friends and relatives feel condemned and guilty by what you say. Your example will be testimony enough to them.

Most of them haven't the faintest idea where Christmas customs

came from or why they are following them. It's more superstition than it is religion. They're just doing what everyone around them does.

If you haven't read our reprint article "Should You Try to Convert Others?" you should request a copy.

Many of the problems arising from the Christmas season can be resolved if you apply three principles:

1) *Stress your objection to the commercialism of the season.* Immediately you have everyone, with the possible exception of some shopkeepers and commercial interests, on your side.

Who can deny that Christmas is a crassly commercial holiday, that it is budget-bustingly expensive? Who would not — especially as general economic conditions worsen — rather spend the money on more needful items, like maybe heating the house? Who does not dread the wearisome Christmas shopping experience, the time-consuming uncertainty as to what to buy for whom?

All you have to say is you've had enough of it, that when you give a gift you want to do it spontaneously instead of as a slave to some custom. After the initial shock wears off, most people will respect your stand and secretly wish they had the courage to do likewise. Some, in fact, heartened by your example, may do just that!

2) *Maintain a sense of humor.* Let's face it, cutting trees down and then setting them back up loaded with ornaments, the whole gift-trading rigmarole, the thought of an overweight, bearded individual decked out in flamboyant red and traveling through the air in a sled or some

other conveyance when he is not slithering up and down someone's chimney — these and so many other traditions are ridiculous. Feel free to point that out. Who can deny it?

3) *Put the burden of proof on those who are celebrating Christmas.* It's not that there isn't overwhelming proof to back you up in your decision to cease celebrating Christmas. There certainly is. But most people have neither the time nor the interest for a detailed explanation. So shift the burden of proof to them.

Say, in effect, "If you can show me where the Bible says I ought to observe Christmas, or where it says early Christians celebrated Jesus' birthday, I will celebrate it also!"

The discussion will probably end very suddenly at that point. Of course, if the person to whom you are speaking shows an obvious interest in learning about the real origin of Christmas, you should be prepared to give an appropriate answer.

**What happens if someone gives me a gift anyway? Should I return it?**

That depends. If a person is testing you to see how deeply your religious convictions lie, returning the gift is a proper response. On the other hand, in cases where the person sincerely doesn't know or comprehend your stand, a polite note of thanks for the gift and a brief statement that you no longer observe the Christmas holiday may be sufficient.

By the way, you will find that most people will stop giving you Christmas gifts after a year or two of not receiving one in return.

**My friends and relatives**

**continue to send me Christmas cards. Should I write back to each of them and explain that I have quit celebrating Christmas?**

A brief note to that effect may be in order. As with gifts, most people will cease sending Christmas cards when they stop getting them in return.

**What do I tell my children now that they will no longer be receiving presents at Christmas?**

Why not tell them the truth? Why not tell them that you have come to understand that the world is wrong in its observance of Christmas and that you are going to do God's will because it is better than Christmas?

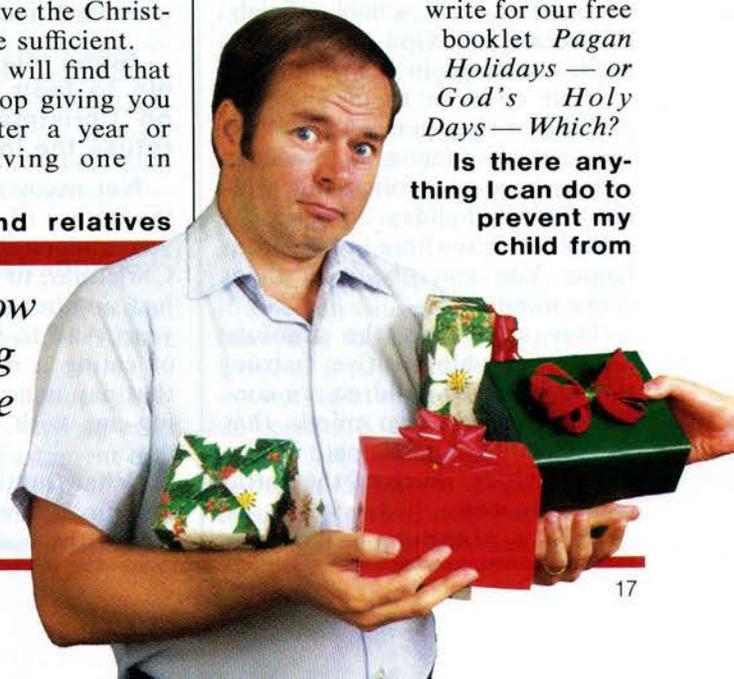
Be sure to emphasize the positive side — that God's way is better than Christmas. As proof of this, tell your children you are going to give gifts to them throughout the year because you love them all year long, not just on Christmas Day. That, in turn, is precisely what they can tell their friends who will be showing off their Christmas gifts.

It is important not to leave a void in your children's lives by removing Christmas observance and putting nothing in its place. Arrange special activities with them often, and especially centering around the Holy Days God has ordained in the Scriptures — the days He does want us to observe. For more information,

write for our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?*

**Is there anything I can do to prevent my child from**

*If a person is just testing you to see how deeply your convictions lie, returning the gift is proper. In other cases, a note of thanks and a statement that you no longer keep Christmas is enough.*



**having to participate in Christmas activities at school?**

One of the most important steps you as a Christian parent can take is to discuss the subject with the children's teachers, addressing the problem ahead of time. Politely inform the teachers

**the company where I work to give all employees a Christmas bonus. Should I accept this bonus?**

Bonuses given at the end of the year are usually not considered as Christmas gifts. They are often given in

If they look on the meal as part of Christmas festivities and place religious significance upon it, then you would be out of place there. Your attendance could give the impression that you are observing Christmas with them or, if they know about your beliefs, that you are willing to compromise on your beliefs.

On the other hand, if the meal is merely a convenient opportunity for a family get-together, and there is no objectionable connotation placed upon the meal, then it might be all right to accept the invitation.

Better be prepared to answer some questions, though, because sooner or later the conversation is sure to focus on why you don't observe Christmas.

**What should I say when someone wishes me "Merry Christmas"?**

It is often sufficient to respond with a question such as "Where has this last year gone?" or "It's that time of year again, isn't it?" or "Do you think it is going to snow?" or even a parting statement on an entirely unrelated subject such as "Good-bye now" or "Have a good day!" The surprising fact is that few individuals will even notice that you haven't wished "Merry Christmas" in return, so meaningless is the expression.

At other times, a smile and a "Thank you" (meaning you are grateful for their concern) may be more appropriate.

Because of space limitations we will have to stop at this point. If you have a question regarding the Christmas holiday and it has not been answered by this article, please feel free to write our Personal Correspondence Department. They will be glad to help you. □

*You should avoid leaving a teacher not knowing what to do with your children. You can advise that they may draw winter scenes or snowmen instead of those things immediately associated with Christmas.*

involved that you do not observe certain holidays and that you do not want to have your children take part in celebrations centering around those days.

Seek to avoid, as much as possible, leaving a teacher in a difficult situation with children to teach but not knowing what to have them do while others, for example, are drawing Santas. You can advise that your children may draw winter scenes or snowmen instead of things immediately associated with Christmas.

If the whole class is having a Christmas party perhaps you could offer to come to school and take your children home that afternoon to relieve the teacher from having to find something else for them to do.

In any case, try to be very cooperative with school officials. Above all, ask God for wisdom, grace and favor in their sight.

Your children themselves, especially as they get older, will be a determining factor as to whether they become involved in worldly religious holiday activities at school or elsewhere away from home. You can't be with them every minute.

This underlines the absolute need to provide positive instruction at home. If children are convinced in their own minds that they should not participate in certain activities, much of the battle is already won.

**It is a standard policy for**

gratitude for work done throughout the preceding year. It is logical to wait until the end of the year before giving such a bonus, and Christmas seems to be as good an occasion as any.

Most large companies are not interested one way or the other in the personal convictions of their employees and, when that's the case, there is no reason to refuse the bonus.

If you are working for a smaller company where you know your employer personally, it may be advisable to mention to him or her that you don't celebrate Christmas. If he or she wants to give you the bonus regardless, as simply a gift or token of appreciation, you can accept it with a clear conscience.

**Some relatives have invited me to their house for dinner on Christmas Day. Should I refuse the invitation?**

Not necessarily. It depends on the nature of the occasion. Since you understand the truth about Christmas, to you the day will be just another ordinary day of the year. And to you the simple fact of eating a meal with others on that day is no different from eating one with them on any other day.

What matters in this case, though, is how your relatives will regard the occasion.



# Old Testament

(Continued from page 13)

law of Moses expounds the Ten Commandments by revealing how the 10 basic principles are to be applied. We are to keep this part of the law, not in the old strictness of the letter, but according to its full spirit and intent.

Then why do we read in Acts 15 that gentile converts do not have to observe the "law of Moses," except for four points? The answer is made plain in Acts 21:21.

The law of Moses, here called in question, involved "customs." Read it for yourself. The Jews were mistakenly accusing Paul, saying that he taught Jews living abroad "that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs" (Acts 21:21)!

The controversy in the early Church did not involve the spiritual intent of the original civil law of Moses. It involved the ceremonial additions to the original civil law of Moses — customs — added ceremonies or rituals.

## Why four points specified in Acts 15

This fact is further proven by noticing the four points, included in the law of Moses, which are binding on all Christians everywhere. We are not to eat blood, animals that have been strangled or meats offered to idols (when another's conscience could be defiled), or to commit fornication (Acts 15:20).

These four points were originally part of the civil law of Moses. But these points were also included later within the added ceremonies because gentiles ate their sacrifices with the blood, often strangled their animals, presented them to idols and commonly committed fornication in their religious ceremonies.

To prevent these pagan customs being practiced by Israel, God included the four civil points of the law along with the rituals (Lev. 17:7, 10, Num. 25:1-3).

Because some newly converted

Christians would have thought, therefore, that they were abolished along with the temporary rituals when those ceremonies were declared no longer binding (in Acts 15), these four points had to be specifically declared still in effect. Since these four points were part of the civil law before the addition of the rituals, they remained binding after the need of the physical sacrifices and washings ceased.

The civil law of Moses that defined sin was not called in question in Acts 15 — it was not involved. (Paul, of course, explained elsewhere that the civil law, formerly administered in the letter, was now to be observed in the spirit and full intent of its meaning — II Cor. 3.)

The many civil laws regulating tithing, clean and unclean meats and the annual Sabbaths are still for the New Testament Church because they help explain what sin is. They were not part of the ceremonial law of Moses mentioned in Hebrews 9:10 and in Acts 15.

One other point must be clarified. Certain Jews accused Paul of teaching that Jews should not circumcise their children, a custom instituted long before the law of Moses and therefore not really a part of it. This accusation was false.

And even for gentile Christians circumcision, in its spiritual intent, is not done away — like the Ten Commandments, is still in force. But, like the Passover, the manner of circumcision is now of the heart, not of the male foreskin (Rom. 2:28-29, Col. 2:11, Deut. 10:16, 30:6), though of course Jewish Christians also continued to practice physical circumcision.

## A different administration

Now let us consider the use of the death penalty in Old Testament times.

In Matthew 5, Jesus gave instructions not for a civil government as in the Old Testament but for a spiritual Church.

Jesus commenced by saying He came to fulfill the law, not to

destroy it. He then proceeded to magnify the application of the civil laws as they were given to ancient Israel — not abolishing them, but magnifying them and making them more honorable (Isa. 42:21).

He raised them from narrow, national laws, given to a nation to be administered according to the strict letter, to a spiritual plane regulating the whole of human society. Six times Jesus said: "You have heard that it was said to those of old . . . But I say to you . . ." And He then proceeded to expound the spiritual principles underlying the civil laws of Moses.

## An eye for an eye?

The intent and underlying principle of the law of God is love of God and neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40). For a Spirit-begotten New Testament Church, Christ showed how to love our fellowmen better.

But the instructions given to Moses about "an eye for an eye" were not intended as some people take them. They were laws set up to regulate one human society, with all its faults, in a fair and just manner. And these principles are still in effect today.

Many have read the command in Exodus 21:24-25 with shocked amazement at the assumed cruelty of the God of the Old Testament. They suppose anyone causing a person accidentally to lose an eye would immediately be seized, held and have his eye gouged out in just retribution!

But is this a right understanding of the verse?

The context in which we find this command of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" is explaining the principle of just recompense for any wrong done.

The very next verse shows that if a person causes his slave to lose his eye or tooth, the slave must be freed as a payment for the injury — workmen's compensation.

Verses 18 and 19 discuss the matter of one person injuring another. What is the punishment? "He shall only pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide

# Letters



## Preparing children for school

I would like to take the time to thank you, Joan C. Bogdanchik, for your two articles in *The Good News* entitled "Is Your Child Ready for School?"

The suggestions that you made about using the time in the grocery store have proven to be quite helpful for my preschooler.

I enjoy working with children. I respect your teaching position and pray that God will give you and all teachers patience, courage and strength (physical and spiritual) to continue your wonderful, fascinating jobs.

By the way, those who think computer programming is interesting should try mind programming. The potential of the little minds we program every day is far greater than even we realize.

Edith H. Dolive  
New Orleans, La.

## Apostolic Sabbath

Thank you for your faithful effort in putting together the instruction-packed *Good News*. It seems each month the articles pertain especially to me.

Leroy Neff's article "What Was the Apostolic Sabbath?" [June-July] was especially great.

This article really made me stop and think about several scriptures that I've read many times over. Even though I've been keeping the Sabbath over about

four years, that article made my belief in God's Sabbath much deeper.

May God continue to inspire His writers and make this instructional magazine possible.

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Sheppherd  
Redmond, Ore.

## "Five Ways to Love Your Mate"

I must comment on the two-part article by Earl H. Williams in the May and June-July issues of *The Good News* entitled "Five Ways to Love Your Mate." You would think that after almost 25 years of marriage I would know what love is all about, but this fine article showed me that I still have much to learn — and give.

I think the biggest eye-opener for me was the fact that *agape* is not a feeling, that you choose to love or not love your mate.

You wrote this article, Mr. Williams, at a time when my marriage was at a real low and it just hit me right between the eyes and I spent much time on my knees crying because I felt so badly about my shabby feelings towards my husband. With God's help daily, I feel so much differently towards my husband and I do desire to please him and to show him I do love him. And it becomes easier and more natural each day when my mind is on giving to him and off what I thought I wanted for myself.

It seems like every human situation we have, whether personal or worldly, can be summed up in the way Mr. [Herbert W.] Armstrong has stated so many times — it is a matter of the way of *give* or the way of *get*.

Thank you so much, Mr. Williams, for helping me to put my marriage back on the track by straightening out my attitude at a time I really needed correction.

Reader  
Concord, N.H.

## Needs every article

On receiving my June-July issue of *The Good News*, I had to write and tell you how much I learn and need each and every article.

It is just such a wonderful extension of the ministry, and I for one am truly thankful for the quality and abundance of all that lies between its covers. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Delia A. Kane  
Whitefield, N.H.

## Who gets the GN first?

This magazine is such a treasure of understanding to my husband and me that we often fight over who gets it first. We then must practice the art of giving and hand it over!

Rachel Frampton  
Pasadena, Calif.

for him to be thoroughly healed." It was a matter of payment or recompense — not revenge by inflicting the same injury.

Then verse 22 shows that a person should be punished if he causes a pregnant woman to have a miscarriage. What is the punishment in this case? Again it is that "he shall pay as the judges determine."

The whole context of the "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" command is concerned with the matter of just recompense or payment for the injury caused — an "eye-value" for an eye, a "tooth-value" for a tooth.

Why did Moses give the spiri-

tual principles only in the letter to ancient Israel?

## Why the "letter of the law"?

Ancient Israel was a national church — a nation organized into the congregation of Israel. The people did not have the promise of the Holy Spirit; they were a nation of this world. Moses said they did not even have the power of will to keep what little he commanded them (Deut. 5:29).

Paul said, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God" (Rom. 8:7). For that reason letter-of-the-law Israel needed punishments for lawbreakers to keep

peace and ensure obedience in the land. God ordained that human judges exercise certain of His divine prerogatives and execute punishments on their fellowmen.

The One who became Jesus — the Lord who spoke to Moses — gave the civil law to Moses in the strict letter at Mt. Sinai for a *physical* church.

Almost 15 centuries later that same Jesus emphasized the spiritual intent of the law. He also made it possible for the members of His *spiritual* Church — the New Testament Church of God — to keep all His spiritual laws by sending God's Holy Spirit! □

# Time of Christ

(Continued from page 3)

an atheist listened awhile. Then she shrugged her shoulders. "I can't refute what he says, but I'm just not interested."

A nationally known artist chanced to listen to one program. He was a skeptic — an agnostic. He was a little upset, because what he heard was so logical — seemed to make so much sense — he could not refute it. Yet it was the opposite of what he thought he believed.

"I'll listen again," he said. "Next time I'll have the satisfaction of being able to answer his statements."

But next time he was more confused than ever. He could not resist listening. It was a challenge. He wanted to be able to refute the truth to his own personal satisfaction. But he couldn't! Finally he searched the Scriptures. He was more astonished than ever! With his own eyes he saw that the BIBLE does not say what he supposed it said! It made sense. It punctured and deflated his vanity to have to acknowledge he had been wrong. After six months he did.

He repented of what he was, what he had thought, what he had done. He accepted Jesus Christ as Savior. He was baptized. His whole life became *changed!* That was many years ago.

What OUGHT you to do? Remember that on *The World Tomorrow* and in *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News* we say, "DON'T BELIEVE US — don't believe MEN — check up in your BIBLE — believe what you see with your own eyes *there!*" That's what you should do!

## If you go to men

But today, as in the time of Christ or of Paul, if you go to men — or to religious denominations — and put your trust in MEN, do you know what they will tell you?

Yes, that's right! Just as those teaching things different from Jesus' teaching in that day

accused HIM of being a false prophet, so it is TODAY! Any who are teaching things different from CHRIST'S OWN GOSPEL, heard on *The World Tomorrow* and appearing in *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News*, will naturally disagree, oppose this true message, probably accuse us, today, of being false prophets.

They may even attempt to discredit — to impute evil and diabolical motives — to *accuse* of dishonesty — to try to assassinate character. Possibly they will malign, impugn, use every psychological trick to set up PREJUDICE, so that you won't listen or check up, for yourself, in your own Bible!

They will not say to you: "Go and look in your own Bible, for yourself, and see WHETHER these things be so. Just take him at his own word — check up in your own Bible for yourself!" No, they will not answer you that way.

Stop and think! If any religious

you to RELY on MEN. Don't go to MEN to learn whether we preach the TRUTH! Unless they accept it, too, they cannot endorse it! Your Bible tells you NOT TO PUT YOUR TRUST IN MEN (Ps. 146:3). So we say, DON'T put your trust in US — or in any man or men. Don't believe it because WE say so. Check up, in your own Bible, for yourself. BELIEVE YOUR BIBLE! BELIEVE GOD, not man!

## What some are saying

We do not want to discredit anyone. We do not *need* to refute the errors of others. We merely point you to the very Word of the living GOD. But we can tell you, now, what some few are saying.

A very small printed bulletin was sent to us some little time ago, warning people against Christ's own Gospel, which we preach, calling it "religious rubbish." Of course, such expressions are designed to discredit and set up prejudice.



**Sea of Galilee**, looking toward ancient Bashan, now known as the Golan Heights. The lake, located in hilly territory, is exposed to summer gusts and winter tempests. The gospels record that Christ calmed one such storm; He also walked on the lake.

person does not teach the same GOSPEL of the SAME CHRIST that we teach *right out of the Bible*, he *cannot* endorse us or what we proclaim! IF HE DID THEN HE WOULD HAVE TO PREACH THE SAME TRUTH, ALSO!

NOWHERE does your Bible tell

Then followed the false accusation that we preach "a religion of works for salvation." All who listen regularly or read the magazines know we preach nothing of the kind!

Reports have come that some here or there have claimed, false-

ly, that I have been a Seventh-day Adventist, a Jehovah's Witness and many other such things. I have been — before conversion — a Quaker and a Methodist. But I have never, directly or indi-



**Bethany**, near Jerusalem, where Christ resurrected Lazarus and proclaimed His power over the grave.

rectly, in any form, shape or manner, had any affiliation, association or connection with ANY other denominations. Incidentally, the TRUE Church that Christ established is *not* denominational!

We do not need the recommendations of men. We seek not *their* endorsement, but GOD'S. Like the apostle Paul, we need no letters of approval or commendation from MEN.

The true Gospel going to the whole world in POWER — the thousands of converted, changed lives that are the FRUITS the living Christ has produced through this Work — they are our letter of approval written in their hearts by God's Holy Spirit (II Cor. 3:1-2)!

### Here is the TEST!

Now back to our original question. If you had lived in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?

Would you have gone to the chief priests, the scribes and Pharisees and *believed them*? Would you have allowed them to cause you to reject the very Savior and HIS TRUTH?

Again, DON'T BE TOO SURE!

There is a TEST that will tell, definitely and absolutely, what you *would have done*! It is a BIBLE TEST! Jesus Christ Himself gives this test. To those who then denied Him, turned against Him, rejected the very living Gospel —

the message of LIFE sent by God the Father through Christ — He said, "And say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets'" (Matt. 23:30).

Yet those who said "If we had lived back in that day, we would not have been a partaker in the killing of the prophets God sent" *were the very ones who did partake in MURDERING THE CHIEF PROPHET OF ALL — the GREATEST minister God ever sent!*

Jesus says, then, in plain language, that the test is THIS: Whatever you do today is precisely what you *would have done then*. They DID participate in murdering the greatest of ALL prophets! Most certainly they *would have* been party to killing a lesser prophet, had they lived in a previous generation.

Today Jesus Christ has raised up a WORK. It is GOD'S WORK! It is proclaiming the very same identical MESSAGE — the SAME GOSPEL — Jesus brought and proclaimed. Jesus only *started this Work*. Today He continues it from heaven where He directs those of HIS CHOOSING.

He said that if they persecuted HIM, they would persecute those of us whom He sends!

"You did not choose Me," said Jesus to those He was sending out with His message, "but I chose you and appointed you. . . . If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. . . . Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. *If they kept MY WORD, they will keep yours also*" (John 15:16-20).

Today many listen, are astonished, then GO TO GOD by checking in the Bible. They PROVE for themselves whether these things be true. And if, *seeing* the TRUTH with their own eyes in their own Bibles, they BELIEVE it and follow it, then *these* are they who, had

they lived in Jerusalem in Jesus' day and had heard Him, *would have believed and followed Him!*

But if there are any today, being astonished at Christ's Gospel, which may sound as strange as it did 1,952 years ago, WHO THEN GO TO MEN, AND TAKE THE WORD OF PARTISAN MEN about the message of Christ — THEY are the ones who, had they lived then, would have gone to the chief priests and the Pharisees — Christ's enemies! They are the ones who would have believed these enemies instead of Christ!

They are the ones *who would have rejected Christ and His message* — WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN PARTY TO MURDERING THE VERY SAVIOR!

Yes, strong words, those!

But Jesus Christ Himself has given you that test! WHAT would you have done, had you lived then? *Precisely what you DO, today!*

If you will not hear and believe Christ's message today, even if heard from one persecuted, defamed, warned against by some MEN (even as Christ Himself was), then you would NOT have believed Jesus Christ, nor followed Him, had you lived then! That is CHRIST'S OWN TEST! It is HIS WORD! And it is THE WORD THAT SHALL JUDGE YOU at the final judgment!

Again and again we say, DON'T believe BECAUSE it was on *The World Tomorrow* program or in *The Plain Truth* or *The Good News!* Don't follow us or any MEN. Go to YOUR BIBLE! "To the law and to the testimony! *If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*" (Isa. 8:20). The expression "the law and . . . the testimony" simply means the BIBLE.

But if we DO speak according to this Word, then YOU HAD BETTER BELIEVE GOD'S HOLY WORD! It is LIFE-giving knowledge! Even though some label it a "strange religion" — even though astonishing!

BELIEVE GOD'S WORD, regardless of men. □

## The Last Great Day Completes God's Master Plan

Prepared by Richard H. Sedliacik

In this series of studies covering God's seven annual festivals, we have learned that God has a plan for reproducing Himself through mankind.

The first six festivals show how those called of God through the ages — especially since the first coming of Christ to the end of the Millennium — fit into God's great master plan for expanding His universe-ruling Family.

But what about the billions who have lived and died from the time of Adam and were not called of God (including, now, perhaps, most of your loved ones) — who didn't have a chance to know and really understand God's purpose and plan for mankind? Are they lost forever?

The surprising answer is revealed in the meaning of the Last Great Day — the seventh and last of God's annual festivals — the festival that shows the final step in God's great master plan.

1. Is it God's will that all who have ever lived come to the knowledge of His plan of salvation? II Pet. 3:9, I Tim. 2:4.

In His loving concern for all mankind, God has planned for everyone who has ever lived to receive an opportunity for salvation and sonship in His Family, just as the already spiritually called and begotten children of God have been given opportunity.

Just as the week is not complete without the Sabbath Day, God's master plan is not complete without His seventh and final annual festival.

The number 7 in the Bible signifies completion and perfection. Without knowing the meaning of this seventh festival of God, you can't understand the perfection of God's great master plan — that God's love and mercy toward mankind extends beyond the Millennium.

2. Was there an eighth day of worship immediately following the seven days of the

Feast of Tabernacles? Lev. 23:34-36. Is it the final festival — the final annual Sabbath of rest? Verse 39.

The last annual high Sabbath Holy Day is observed immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles. But because of its close proximity to this seven-day Feast, it was associated with the Feast of Tabernacles and was called the "eighth day." In the New Testament it is referred to as "the last day, that great day of the feast" (John 7:37). The Last Great Day is, then, clearly a separate festival.

3. Revelation 20 holds the key to the meaning of the Last Great Day. As we already know, verses 4 to 6 speak primarily of the resurrected saints ruling with Jesus Christ on earth for 1,000 years. But exactly what is said in the first sentence of verse 5?

These are not the dead in Christ, but simply "the dead." They are the billions who were *not* Christ's (Rom. 8:9) — those who have not been spiritually begotten by the Father and who may have not even heard the name of Jesus Christ.

The first part of Revelation 20:5 is really a parenthetical comment. The verse should read:

"(But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection."

The sentence "This is the first resurrection" refers to the spiritual resurrection of the "firstfruits" of God's plan, which occurs at Christ's return and just before the 1,000-year period begins (verses 4, 6).

But now notice the first sentence in verse 5: "But the rest of the dead [those people who have not had an opportunity to come to understand God's truth and participate in God's great master plan] did not live again [would not come up in a physical resurrection] until the thousand years were fin-

# MINISTRY

ished" (verse 5). This resurrection, which occurs *after* the 1,000 years have elapsed, is the second resurrection.

4. How does John further elaborate on the second resurrection? Rev. 20:11-13. How will these people be "judged"? Verse 12.

The Greek word that is translated "books" in Revelation 20:12 is *biblia*. It is from this Greek word that we derive our English word *bible*.

The books that are opened are the books of the Bible! They will be opened to the understanding of the billions of people who had not been able to know and understand God's purpose and plan for them. This simply was because the Father had not yet called them (John 6:44, 65) and given them His Spirit of understanding.

I Peter 4:17 shows that Christians today are now being judged (not sentenced) by how well they live by the Word of God, the Bible. Those resurrected after the Millennium will be judged the same way.

These individuals will be given enough time to live a life of overcoming and obedience to God, just as Spirit-begotten Christians today.

Those who continue to live God's way of life will be changed from mortality to immortality at the end of this period of judgment, which the Bible apparently indicates will last 100 years (Isa. 65:20).

5. How did Jesus refer to this special "day" or period of judgment for people who have yet to hear the wonderful message of salvation? Matt. 10:15, 11:20-24, 12:41-42.

Christ first mentioned the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, then Tyre and Sidon, Sodom again, Nineveh in Jonah's time and finally the Queen of Sheba. All of these examples of people who lived in different generations are compared to the citizens living in the cities and towns of Jesus' generation, the vast majority of whom did not understand or believe Christ's message. Jesus tells us that they are all to be resurrected with the generation that lived during His time.

Jesus gave enough examples of generations of people living at widespread and different times in human history to prove that most of humanity will be alive at the same time on this earth. There will be pre-Flood men and women, all 12 tribes of Israel, those who lived during the Middle or Dark Ages

and the vast majority living now. Even babies and children who died untimely deaths will be resurrected then. They will all rise in the second resurrection simply because they had not been called by God during their previous lifetimes.

This group includes all people of all times everywhere on this earth, except, of course, those who will be in the first resurrection, those who will have already been born of God during the Millennium or those relatively few unrepentant people who will be resurrected in the third and final resurrection to have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15), becoming ashes under the feet of those already born into God's Family (Mal. 4:1-3).

This latter group, incorrigible, understood God's truth and had the opportunity to receive eternal life, but deliberately rejected it (Heb. 10:26-27).

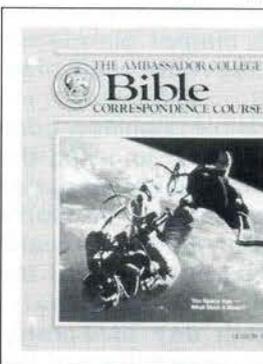
The ancient peoples Jesus mentioned in Matthew 10, 11 and 12 would have repented if He had personally come to them in their day. And they *will* repent when resurrected and given access to the Holy Spirit after the Millennium.

Your Bible shows that the vast majority of the billions of humanity will finally be born into God's Family at the end of the coming period of judgment, pictured by the Last Great Day.

God's master plan of salvation for mankind will then be complete.

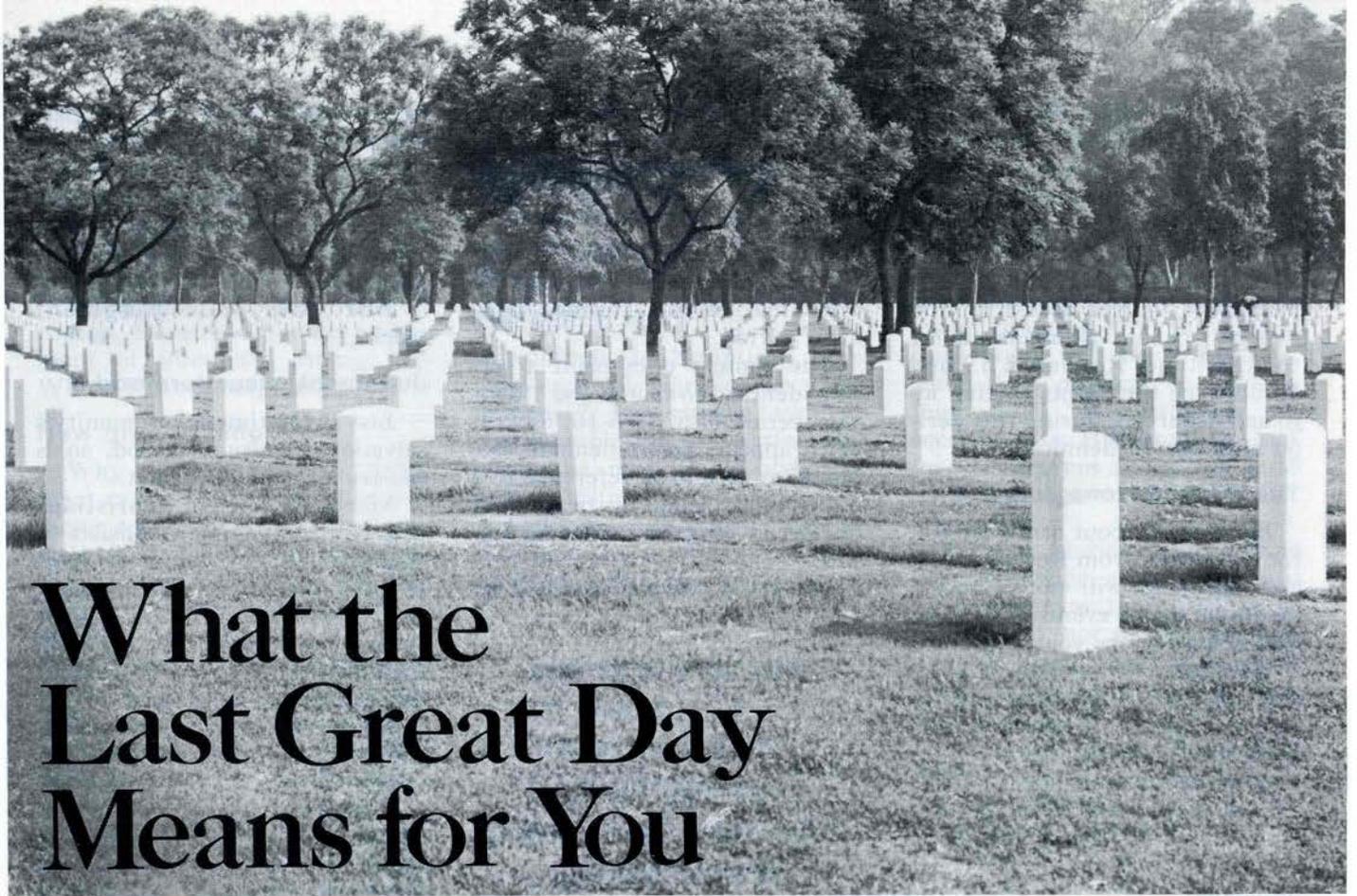
How wonderful and reassuring is the truth of our all-wise, loving and merciful Creator God!

(For more information about God's annual festivals, write for our two free booklets, *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which? and How Often Should We Observe the Lord's Supper?*) □



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# What the Last Great Day Means for You

*Do you understand the vital meaning of God's seventh annual festival? What part will you play in its fulfillment?*

By Jerold W. Aust

**K**now this: Today is not the only day of salvation!

According to the generally accepted view among professing Christians, it's "now or never." Millions believe that God is feebly attempting to save the whole world right now, and that if we do not "get saved" during this life, it's all over for us.

In effect, man himself — not God, as this article will show — has consigned humanity to an ethereal heaven or an asbestos-

suted hell. From minister to missionary, from rector to revivalist, from churchman to congregation, most seem to think this is the only day of salvation.

Yet this assumption lacks understanding, and God desires for you and me to know His will fully (John 17:17). Let's discover the truth!

## God's annual Sabbaths

God has given us guideposts by which we can trace our history in advance. These are God's annual festivals and Holy Days (Lev. 23, Col. 2:16-17).

Passover, the first festival, shows Jesus' sacrifice for man. The Days of Unleavened Bread instruct Christ's disciples to conduct themselves in a holy manner. Pentecost pictures the coming of God's Holy Spirit to God's Church. The Day of Trumpets warns mankind of impending war and troubles and foreshadows Christ's Second Coming. The Day of Atonement shows that Satan will be incarcerated for 1,000 years. And the Feast of Tabernacles pictures Christ's mil-

lennial reign of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

(For more information on God's true Holy Days and their meanings, request our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* You may write to us at our address nearest you — see the inside front cover for a list of addresses.)

But that's only six festivals, and there are seven in God's annual calendar. That brings us to the Last Great Day, which pictures an incredibly great and separate day for salvation for the vast majority of mankind.

Notice the instruction in Leviticus 23:36: "On the eighth day [after the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles] you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it."

Here is a festival separate from and occurring after the Feast of Tabernacles. It pictures the time — not now — when salvation will be offered to mankind, resurrected, as a whole — the time

referred to in John 7:37: "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.'"

During this Last Great Day — during the Great White Throne Judgment — free access to God will be open to all mankind for the first time. Revelation 19 and 20 describe the events leading up to and occurring during this period after the Millennium.

### The White Throne Judgment

Back away about arm's length, for a moment, from Revelation 19 and 20. You will notice increments of signal events and times take shape before your eyes.

Revelation 19 introduces us to the glorious and astounding return of Jesus Christ to a war-torn, shell-shocked world — to save humanity from itself!

And Revelation 20 covers not less than five colossal events in God's salvation of most of humanity:

1) Christ incarcerates Satan and the demons (Rev. 20:1-3).

2) Christ establishes His 1,000-year reign (verses 4-6).

3) Satan is released after this Millennium and deceives the willing wicked, who are then destroyed (verses 7-10).

4) Christ judges the people, now resurrected, who lived during the first 6,000 years of human history on earth. This is the Great White Throne Judgment (verses 11-13).

5) The lake of fire, fueled by God, provides a merciful death for those who refuse to live God's way (verses 14-15).

Let's concentrate on the Great White Throne Judgment. This will be a time unprecedented in the annals of human salvation. At no time before or after will so many be resurrected and judged in such a short period of time!

An estimate of the number of people to be resurrected might be about 50 billion! Can we imagine the breathtaking scene when Christ will, by divine fiat, raise from the dead these untold billions to a vibrant physical existence?

This judgment will require a period of time. Where, in Scripture, is such a period discussed?

### A 100-year period

Isaiah 65:20 mentions a 100-year life span that lends itself to the Great White Throne Judgment period.

The context does paint a setting identical to that of the 1,000-year period (Isa. 11:6-10, 65:25), yet it appears postmillennial, too. No other scriptural reference to a millennial setting of peace and prosperity hints of a 100-year life span.

We know Jesus Christ will be

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the great Judge seated upon this Great White Throne (Acts 10:42, Rev. 20:11, 6:14-17).

We know the "books" mentioned in Revelation 20:12 are the books of God's Word, the Holy Bible (John 12:47-48).

And we know that the names of the faithful saints, those being mercifully judged during the White Throne Judgment, will be recorded and preserved in the book of life (Rev. 21:27).

Since Christ will be the great Judge then, and since that same Christ will have ruled and judged for 1,000 years previous to this period, it should not seem surprising that the White Throne setting will be a continuation of the conditions to prevail during the Millennium.

Whether this 100-year life span is *the* time segment for the Great White Throne Judgment, it is sure that this special judgment does follow the Millennium,

just as the eighth day or Last Great Day Festival follows the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. The very existence of this final annual festival indicates a separate and distinct period for judging billions of human beings.

But how does judgment work?

### Judgment misunderstood

Just as the time for humanity's salvation is misunderstood, so is the truth about judgment.

Many professing Christians believe that judgment consists of Christ lining up humanity (this would require a very long line!), and pronouncing them either "sheep" or "goats" — deciding their eternal fate. But this is not Christ's judgment process.

Isaiah 65:20 explains how "the sinner . . . one hundred years old shall be accursed." What else but a judgment *time period* could account for the possibility that a sinner could live for 100 years under Christ's rule?

Judgment requires a judge, laws, a group ruled by the laws, knowledge of the laws, time to be judged, a verdict and execution of the verdict. Once one understands that godly judgment is not demagogic caprice, but a deliberate evaluation based on love for the participant's benefit, one can see the profound mercy of God (Rom. 5:6-9). Judgment is a necessary blessing!

### Why a white throne?

In Scripture, white can refer either to light or righteousness, which, spiritually, are one and the same (Rev. 19:8, 14).

It's fairly plain, then, that the white throne in Revelation 20:11 implies a judgment effected in righteousness.

The word *throne* in Revelation 20:11 means a stately seat or a potentate's seat or throne. It indicates a monarch who rules alone, with uncontested and unequalled power.

This truly fits with Scripture, for before the Great White Throne Judgment begins, Satan and the demons will be cast into outer darkness, beyond the

reaches of God's whole universe. They will be "wandering stars [fallen angels] for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever" (Jude 13). In Isaiah 50:3, God says, "I clothe the heavens with blackness."

Satan will not be around to contest Christ's righteous judgment of humanity during the White Throne Judgment!

### How great a judgment!

Why is this particular judgment called a great one? For two major reasons:

1) Jesus Christ, the Judge, is astonishingly great in all His makeup, purpose, mercy, power and love.

2) This particular judgment is great because of the untold billions upon billions of physical human beings who will be mercifully and lovingly judged at one time.

Jesus personally observed the Last Great Day, for it was He who instituted the day to symbolize this very White Throne Judgment (John 1:1-3, 14).

What Jesus knew, you can know. That last and great day of the annual festival days foreshadows the greatest time of salvation for the greatest number of people at one time. How wonderful it is to know the truth!

The prophet Ezekiel sheds light on those incredible numbers. The setting in Ezekiel 37 is postmillennial. Remember that the first resurrection, to occur as the Millennium begins, is to spirit essence (Rev. 20:4-6). The resurrection at the beginning of the White Throne Judgment, however, is to a physical state.

Here God resurrects the whole house of Israel, which had lived and died during mankind's first six millennia (Ezek. 37:1-2, 11). Israel may number into the billions themselves.

But what of all the greater numbers of gentiles who also lived and died during that same period of time and who, too, will be awaiting their one and only opportunity to be judged and saved (I Tim. 2:4)? They will also be resurrected at that precise

time. The opportunities extended to Israel will also be offered to the gentiles (Rom. 2:9-10, Isa. 19:24-25).

Thank God this is *not* the only day of salvation (Isa. 49:8, Revised Standard Version).

### The eighth day

Numbers in Scripture often carry special significance. The number 7, for instance, symbolizes completion or perfection, while the number 40 indicates trial or testing.

The same is true in the case of the Last Great Day, which is referred to as the *eighth* day of

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the Feast (Lev. 23:36). The word for the number 8 is related to a Hebrew word meaning "fatness," and can imply abundance, fertility, resurrection or regeneration.

Listen now to God's words of warning and encouragement concerning these latter days: "Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth" (Eccl. 11:2). We are told, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days" (verse 1).

This exhortation should ring loud and clear to us in the context of the Last Great Day, for God sets the example, follows His own instructions and inspires us to do the same.

God Himself will cast His spiritual bread upon the waters or nations of this earth both during the 1,000-year period, portrayed by the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, and during the Great White Throne Judgment, sym-

bolized by the Last Great Day Festival or the eighth day of the Feast.

Following this White Throne Judgment comes a purging of this earth (II Pet. 3:10-11) and an end to human procreation and existence. But don't be sad — be happy and grateful! Your future spiritual body will be everlasting, while your physical one now is temporary. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (verse 13).

What a glorious time! "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Will you be there? Will you be waiting and anticipating throughout the millennial rule of Christ, while helping refurbish this earth for those billions to be resurrected at the beginning of the White Throne Judgment? Someone will!

And those who will be there at the dawning of that Last Great Day will be waiting as spirit beings — already literally born as spirit-composed children of almighty God and younger brothers of our Savior, Jesus Christ (Dan. 12:3).

At Jesus Christ's Second Coming, humanity will be saved from extinction because of a tiny group of "elect" people (Matt. 24:22). A similar lopsided ratio will be apparent at the raising of multiple billions of people at the beginning of the White Throne Judgment.

By comparison, the number of those who will already have been born into God's Family, though numbering in the hundreds of millions or billions, will be small. But those children of God — you among them — will have the tremendous opportunity to help the rest of humanity fulfill its awesome potential and also be born into God's Family.

Never will so many owe so much to so few. And they, even now, are waiting for you! Please — be there! □

A drunk driver careening down the highway is a threat to not only himself but everyone else in his path. He is jeopardizing his life as well as the lives of any others who, by chance, are on the road.

Drunk drivers are responsible for many of the accidents, injuries and deaths that occur daily on the highways. Because of the actions of drunk drivers, families suffer, with parents or children being killed or maimed. Numerous lives may be wantonly affected by the selfish, foolish actions of one individual.

This type of driver grossly violates God's commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39).

And yet, however apparent it is to others, it may not occur to the drunk driver that he is taking action that can affect someone other than himself. The drunk driver may even survive one accident only to cause the same kind of distress to other unsuspecting drivers and passengers or pedestrians.

It all boils down to a question of responsibility.

### **Our spiritual responsibility**

Most of us who study the Bible know that God "desires all men to be saved" (I Tim. 2:4). We also understand that God was willing to sacrifice His only Son, Jesus Christ, so that salvation could be offered. We know that God now calls some to repentance and gives them His Holy Spirit.

To teach those people He has chosen, God uses a called ministry. The minister and the congregation together form the Church through whom God is working out His holy purpose.

But what spiritual responsibility does each Church member have in the salvation of others?

Christ related that no one can come to Him unless God the Father draws or calls the person (John 6:44). And we must work

out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).

But do we really have a responsibility for others? After all, most of us have sufficient difficulty striving to progress spiritually ourselves.

### **The impact of one's actions**

The Old Testament example of Judah and Tamar illustrates how the actions of people really do affect each other, sometimes tragically.

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob (Israel) and Leah. Judah apparently did not give a great deal of thought to his choice of a wife; he married the daughter of a certain Canaanite. Three sons were born of this marriage (Gen. 38:1-5).

Er, Judah's firstborn, took a wife named Tamar. Er and Tamar had no children because Er was so wicked that God actually took his life (verses 6-7).

Judah required that his second son, Onan, marry his dead brother's wife, to perpetuate his brother's name. Onan refused to fulfill his responsibility and would not let Tamar conceive. Onan's actions so displeased God that God slew him, also (verses 8-10).

This left only Judah's third and last son to fulfill the responsibility to Er, his deceased brother. But Judah would not require his youngest son, Shelah, to marry Tamar. Tamar was commanded to remain a widow (verse 11).

In due time, Judah's wife died. Tamar still desired to have a child, but she realized that Judah did not intend to give her as a wife to Shelah, who was by then fully grown. So Tamar concealed her identity and induced Judah to commit sexual sin with her. She did conceive and later bore twins (verses 12-18, 27).

In this situation between a father and his daughter-in-law we see several selfish actions that,

apparently, the two did not realize they were committing.

Judah recognized that he was wrong in withholding his last son from Tamar and forcing her to remain a young widow in his household (verse 26). He was also wrong in consorting with a woman he thought to be a harlot. Either way it was sin.

Tamar certainly was wrong in inducing Judah to commit a sexual act with her so that she could conceive.

These individuals weren't really aware of the other's needs. Or, to whatever degree they were, they did not exhibit right concern for each other's welfare.

Of course, God was not offering these two people spiritual salvation at that time. They committed sins that they will have to repent of before God gives them His Holy Spirit, and they vividly demonstrated their selfish attitudes for all to see. They were not even concerned about one another's welfare or interests in a physical way, much less spiritually or eternally.

### **Our actions affect others**

Perhaps we can see more clearly now how our actions affect others. Virtually everything we do has an impact on other people.

In the Garden of Eden, there were only two people. But when Eve believed Satan, it had an impact on Adam.

Adam did not have sufficient character or strength to remind Eve that God had forbidden them to take of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam sinned. Therefore, the entirety of the human race — all of Adam's offspring — have been condemned to death (I Cor. 15:21-23).

Did Adam perceive the impact his wrong decision would have on all humanity? It probably did not enter his mind.

We all have a dramatic impact

on others. Parents affect their children. Husbands affect their wives and wives their husbands. Neighbor impacts neighbor.

No one grows up in a spiritually sterile society. There is the ever present, unseen influence of Satan, as well as the influence of other people, who are either influenced by Satan, or by God through God's Holy Spirit. We do not live in a spiritual vacuum. And all of our relationships are spiritual. We all have impact upon others.

When God related the Ten Commandments to Israel, He intended for each Israelite to obey them. This was for the good of each individual. But it was also for the good of the entire nation. The actions of each person had an impact on everyone else.

This is as true today as it was then. Whether we heed the commandment "You shall not kill" or hate and harm other people, it directly affects our salvation.

When Cain slew his brother Abel, it had a direct bearing upon both. Abel no longer had life. Cain's problems were compounded and the murder had a personal impact on him.

The same is true of every act or deed

elaborate on this principle, instructing us to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). We must always consider how our deeds affect others.

To express our love to God and neighbor, we must identify with God's purpose for human life. God's whole purpose, as true Christians know, is to reproduce Himself. (For more information, request our free booklet *Your Awesome Future — How Religion Deceives You* by writing to our mailing address nearest you.) To fulfill our purpose in this life, we must each build godly character, and we must love our neighbor enough to assist him in the same pursuit.

Our actions must always reflect an understanding of this

and Eve. Just as Cain's actions affected Abel.

What each of us does as a true Christian affects not only our spiritual lives but the spiritual lives of others. Do we see the spiritual impact and responsibility that we have?

### Conducting ourselves in a godly way

All of our desires, goals and purposes must be fulfilled in obedience to God's law, for this is the only way we can both enhance our spiritual lives and the spiritual welfare of others.

It is a gross mistake and a spiritual sin not to consider each of our actions from this point of view. We must consider what effect our actions have on the salvation of others.

God commands us to owe no one anything — to wrongly desire nothing of anyone — to love one another. He who loves another fulfills the law. Love works no ill toward his neighbor (Rom. 13:8-10).

Rather, we are to help, assist and strengthen one another to keep God's commandments. We are to provoke one another to love and to good works.

We are to assemble ourselves together for this express purpose (Heb. 10:24-25).

Yes, we do have a part in the salvation of other people. We cannot convert or change anyone, but our actions and attitudes toward each other can either hinder or help others.

What each of us must consider is the impact we have on other people. Do we always consider the salvation of other people in our conduct toward them?

The epitome of love is to help others in the spiritual process of becoming sons and daughters born into God's Kingdom. This is the greatest love we can have, for it is godly love. □



we commit! How we live directly affects our relationship with either God or man, and usually both.

This is why Christ summarized our activities toward one another by commanding us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:39).

Later, God inspired Paul to

precious truth. God is not just saving us, but seeks to save all mankind. And keeping His commandments affects our personal salvation as well as the salvation of others, just as Judah's actions affected both his and Tamar's entire physical lives. Just as Adam's and Eve's actions affected both Adam

# UNMASKING The Christmas Myth



**W**here did we get Christmas? Does it really celebrate the birthday of Jesus? How much do you know about the origin of Santa Claus — mistletoe — the Christmas tree — Yule logs — exchanging gifts? Very few people know why they believe what they do about Christmas and

its customs. If you want to know the facts, write for a copy of our free booklet *The Plain Truth About Christmas*. For a copy, just send your request to our *Good News* mailing address nearest you. You will find a full list of our addresses on the inside front cover of this magazine.

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