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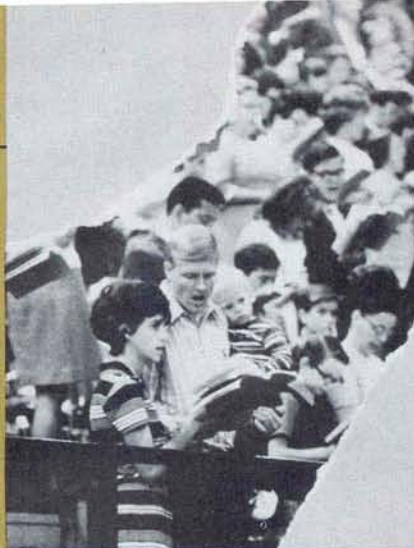
The Good News



WHAT
IS THE
WORLDWIDE
CHURCH OF GOD?

(Page 14)

DECEMBER 1973



ABOUT THE COVER

This month's "Update" (beginning on page 14) features "What Is the Worldwide Church of God?" Pictured are members of this church — a church unique in practicing Christianity as a way of life as well as a faith. Be sure and read the fascinating story of a church that is motivated with purpose, and understands the way that makes life truly meaningful, rewarding and abundant.

Ambassador College Photo

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The Good News

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Even if you don't believe it...

IT'S STILL GOING TO HAPPEN!

by Garner Ted Armstrong

Millions know the story of "The Great Disappointment" when a denomination set a specific date for Christ's return — only to see the date pass, and their hopes frustrated. Millions know the Bible contains much prophecy, but fallible humans have time and again misinterpreted prophecies of the Bible: setting dates for specific events — only to see those dates come and go without any prophetic fulfillment! Does this mean prophecy is fallible? Or does it only mean that human beings have been all too prone to use prophecy as a badge of their own credibility, only to see their interpretations fail? It's time you knew the truth about the surest prophecy of all — and know it is not an interpretation of any man.

THE scene is the United Nations General Assembly.

Speaking before the assembled dignitaries from nations all over the world, the Secretary General is soberly summarizing several days' lengthy speeches. Those addresses have covered the incredible crunch of the population explosion, global pollution, the energy crisis, the worldwide economic crisis, the threatened trend toward new international alliances and the breakup of old ones, and the ominous military build-ups by several of the major powers.

Peace has been the topic. How to achieve peace in a world of chaotic unrest, squalor, disease, filth, poverty, and the threat of war.

At the final "thwack" of the gavel, the Secretary General takes the rostrum, and all eyes are fixed on his graying head as he faces the huge assembly of international representatives.

"Gentlemen," he begins, "we have been assembled here to assess the accomplishments of this great body through the trying period following World War II, in attempting to achieve a peaceful world where all mankind may realize the fullest benefits of personal and national development.

"We have heard through the ambassadors to the United Nations a complete summary of the monumental problems facing all nations; facing this body; facing humanity itself.

"It is my gravest and most seriously considered opinion . . ." he continues in a voice rising with emotion, causing a greater quiet to descend on the big room, ". . . that only one great event can ever save this world from the spectre of nuclear war. . . ." Glances of sharpened interest are exchanged; members of the press lean forward, check their tape recorders to insure they are running properly; the U.N. secretaries pause momentarily from their dutiful, swiftly typing shorthand machines to glance up in expectancy.

What is he about to say?

Minds speculate; perhaps he will

say something really different this time — or will it only be another of the endless speeches about the U.N. itself, or "brotherhood and cooperation among nations," or "multi-lateral diminution of the arms race," or "absolute cessation of nuclear testing, with inspections," or "demand for greater support from the big powers for the United Nations"? A few yawns are barely stifled as tired dignitaries shift position, glance at their watches, and wonder whether they're going to be late to their luncheon date.

"... That only one great event can ever save this world from the spectre of nuclear war, wherein more than half of all mankind would surely die — and *that great event is the return of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to this earth!*"

The Obvious Reaction

A ripple of laughter softly flows through the big room, as dignitaries shift positions, cross and uncross legs, look at one another incredulously, doodle on note paper, and wonder how the Secretary General of the United Nations ever came in contact with some idiotic, "pie-in-the-sky" idea such as that.

Has he gone crazy? Since when has the Secretary General of the United Nations taken up with American fundamentalist religion? Reporters snatch up recorders and notes, and dash to exits and waiting telephones. The Afro-Asian bloc stands, almost as one, and begins angrily and purposefully striding to-

(Continued on page 3)

The 2nd Coming of Christ

O.T.

N.T.

Mal. 3:1-2 "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant. . . . But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap."

Jer. 23:5 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

Dan. 7:13-14 "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days . . . And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away . . ."

Psa. 96:13 "Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

Isa. 40:10 "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him."

Micah 1:3 "For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth."

Isa. 26:21 "For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

Isa. 13:9-11 "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate. . . . And I will punish the world for their evil. . . ."

Zech. 14:1-4 "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives. . . ."

Job 19:25 "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

Dan. 2:34-35 "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces . . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

Acts 1:9-11 "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. . . . this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Heb. 9:28 "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

I Cor. 11:26 "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

I Pet. 5:4 "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Luke 12:37-40 "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. . . . Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

I Cor. 4:5 "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

Matt. 26:64 ". . . Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Matt. 24:27 "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Matt. 16:27 "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Matt. 24:30 "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Luke 9:26 "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."

I Thes. 4:16-17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

(Continued from page 1)

ward the exits. After all, they are mostly either the major Oriental faiths, such as Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Taoism, or Confucianism, or perhaps Muslim or animist, or holding with tribal religions or Communism (and therefore atheistic).

To hear a leader of a respected international body propose such a ridiculous solution to world affairs is to wonder if the poor man has suffered a stroke. But at least they can plainly demonstrate their indignation at this terrible effrontery; that someone could inject religion — and at least what would seem to be Protestant, American, fire-and-brimstone, second-advent, Bible-thumping religion at that — into the formal speech in this vast assembly, concluding days upon days of the most serious discussions of the biggest problems facing mankind.

The meeting is obviously over — with several at the main dais standing in small knots gesticulating and wildly waving hands. The Secretary General's cheeks are red, as he is confronted by several other leaders who instantly surround him demanding an explanation.

The throngs head for the exits, while the Secretary General's wife, who was seated in the place of honor, is slumped in her chair, with an aide vainly dipping his handkerchief into a water pitcher in futile attempt to restore her to consciousness after her dead faint following her husband's shocking words.

Shouts of disbelief and anger are followed by pushing matches near at least two of the exits, which, on one occasion, erupts into a fistfight between two Muslims dressed in their Arabic robes and two "Christians."

Unlikely?

Sure, it is! That is: it's unlikely the Secretary General of the United Nations would ever *make* such a statement in public, or, for that matter, in private either — but if he *should*, then the reaction is very likely — though I believe I have un-

derstated the actual chaos which would occur.

But Do We Believe God?

Can we get the picture?

To seriously suggest that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is this world's *only hope for world peace* places one in the position of "religious fanaticism," instantly destroying his credibility as a member of the intelligentsia and upper-diplomatic circles of the world, and would, for all practical purposes, ruin his future political and diplomatic career, just as surely as a Justice Department indictment! He would probably be called "insane."

But this is no *new* reaction to bold assertions of impending divine intervention.

As one ad on TV goes, "They laughed at Fulton, at the Wright brothers, etc.," and, to be sure, the millions have chuckled, chortled, sniffed, and sneered, or laughed openly at either the loud Bible-belt sermons warning of Jesus' impending return, or the more-polished assertions of some such futuristic event in the more-cultured tones of accepted evangelists who are recognized by heads of state.

Even during Jesus' day, when He said He would heal the girl whom He claimed was "...not dead, but sleepeth," the people "laughed him to scorn" (Matt. 9:24).

Since when do people *believe God*?

When does the general public, let alone governments, BELIEVE biblical prophecy? And, more importantly, since when does whether men believe or not believe determine the *outcome* of prophecy?

Does the disbelief of man negate the power of God?

Does the fulfillment of biblical prophecy — the SUREST prophecy of all — that of the return of a glorified, all-powerful Jesus Christ of Nazareth to this earth to rule it with a rod of iron, totally depend upon the number of human beings who ultimately believe it?

The Surest Prophecy

Is Jesus waiting in heaven, impatiently glancing at His heavenly watch, hoping against hope that more and more of the churches, evangelists, missionaries, and various denominations and sects can finally learn to cooperate together, so that a brand-new wave of second-advent evangelism can sweep the earth until finally there will be a sufficient number *expecting* His return that He will say, "All right then, they have talked me into it"?

Again, can we get the point?

Whether this article convinces you or not about the surest prophecy in the entirety of your Bible makes no difference whatsoever to Jesus Christ of Nazareth, except as it may involve His own personal desires where your life, your happiness, and your future are concerned. Your rejection or acceptance of biblical truth does not alter the divine plan of God one whit.

God's Word makes this eminently clear — He has said, "Let God be true, though every man be found a liar." God also says, "I change not," and "My purpose shall *stand*"!

Please believe one thing! The combined thousands of sermons, whether screaming, sobbing, gasping and wheezing, or whether sedate, carefully prepared, and intellectually stimulating; the tens of thousands of ceremonies occurring in churches all over the world; the missionary efforts; the millions upon millions of tons of printed literature; the combined efforts of all evangelical preaching and teaching from the time of Jesus to this day do NOT represent God's own personal struggles and God's "BEST EFFORT" to prepare this world for the second coming of Jesus Christ!

Perhaps you should read that again! Jesus Christ of Nazareth speaks to you with authority from His Word — and tells you He has not tried to save this world in the past, and is not trying to save it now!

(Continued on page 31)



THE RESURRECTION:

THE HOPE OF MANKIND

by Raymond F. McNair

What is mankind's true hope? Is it an immortal existence in heaven — looking on God's face throughout eternity? Or is the hope of the Christian a resurrection to eternal life — and rulership in the Kingdom of God through endless ages?

TODAY, Christianity is divided into literally hundreds of sects and denominations — with many interpretations about life, death, and the *hereafter*.

But why should there be so many different ideas regarding man's afterlife? Why should there be such a state of confusion regarding what the *reward* of the Christian really is?

Why do so many believe they are (or have) an immortal soul which survives death in heaven, limbo, paradise or hell?

The biblical teaching on this subject of man — what he is, his purpose in this life, his destiny and how to reach that destiny — is crystal clear.

Isn't it high time that we cleared away the cobwebs of denominational and sectarian confusion and looked into the Word of God to see what it says about man's ultimate destiny — and how he is to attain that goal?

A Common Assumption

As a young boy I was taught by my parents, by churchmen, teachers and others, that we were born with *immortality*, and that every believer in Jesus Christ was destined for heaven — way up beyond the clouds. I fully believed this. I thought, like all others who accepted Christ, I would some day go to heaven and live there forever.

Concurrent with this idea that I was immortal, or that I had an immortal soul somewhere in me, I also heard a great deal about a *resurrection* of the dead. These two concepts seemed, even to my young mind, to be *contradictory*. If I were *immortal*, then why would I need to be resurrected?

I found that men had various ideas to attempt to reconcile this paradox. Some taught that at death the righteous go off immediately to their reward in limbo, paradise or heaven, but the wicked go instantly to hell, where these immortal souls would burn forever and ever.

Notice how firmly this same idea of an "immortal soul" was fixed in the mind of Benjamin Franklin. In his autobiography, Franklin tells that he once considered starting his own "sect," to be called "The Society of the Free and Easy." He said his "intended creed" for this new

religion was to contain what he believed to be "the essentials of every known religion." Notice how his list of "essentials" included a belief in the immortality of the soul.

"That there is one God, who made all things. That he governs the world by his providence. . . . That the *soul is immortal*. And that God will certainly reward virtue and punish vice, either here or hereafter."

To the best of my memory, I was taught as a child that at death you go immediately to your *reward* (usually in heaven) or punishment (usually to hell fire) and remain there until the final Judgment Day. On this day the souls of the righteous in heaven and those in hell were supposed to be *reunited* with their resurrected bodies — where they would then share the joys (or pains) of eternity — depending upon whether they were saved or lost.

Let's face it. A lot of contradictory ideas regarding what happens after death have been promulgated. There is much confusion on this important question — and "God is not the author of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33).

Where did these unscriptural, confused ideas about what *man* is and his ultimate *destiny* really originate? When I began studying the Bible diligently, I found it did not contradict itself. Rather, I found the same consistent teaching regarding what man is — and what is his destiny — in both the Old and New Testaments.

Egyptian Belief in a Resurrection

Before we go to the Bible, let us briefly see what some of the *ancients* taught on this subject.

A few years ago, I visited the empty tombs of some of the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings, near Luxor, Egypt. I was surprised to see that Egyptian hieroglyphics on the walls of the Pharaohs' tombs depicted a *rising up* (or resurrection) to life after death.

But how could those ancient

Egyptians, steeped in paganism and cut off from the truth of Almighty God, have known the truth about the resurrection? This puzzled me.

King Tut (Tutankhamen) was buried in a most elaborate tomb. His remains were later removed and placed in the Cairo Museum, along with many articles and artifacts (chairs, table, bed, etc.), where they have since been viewed by millions.

But why did these Pharaohs make such elaborate burial preparations, including having their dead bodies mummified? The simple answer is that they believed in an *afterlife*, when they would open their eyes in a resurrection. Then they would be able to enjoy all of these material objects (including, in some instances, food) at the very instant of their resurrection.

But where did the ancient, pagan Egyptians learn this truth? The Bible or history does not reveal this clearly. Noah knew about the resurrection. So did his sons Shem, Japheth and *Ham* — and the Egyptians descended from Mizraim, the son of Ham. So you can see why the Egyptians were not ignorant of this truth.

But we also must remember that the patriarchs Abraham (who believed in the resurrection — see Heb. 11:19, 35), Jacob, and Joseph (Pharaoh's Prime Minister), had spent many years in Egypt. Since the patriarchs understood that God would resurrect the dead, it is possible that even they may have communicated this truth to the Egyptians.

Immortality and the Greeks

Notice what the famous historian Edward Gibbon, in his *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has to say about the development of the idea of man's immortal soul:

"The writings of Cicero represent in the most lively colours the ignorance, the errors, and the uncertainty of the ancient philosophers with regard to the *immortality of the soul* . . . the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of *Plato* deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted, not only the future

immortality, but the past eternity of the human soul . . ." (The Modern Library Series, New York, Random House, I, 15, 2, pp. 398-399).

Then Gibbon shows how the belief in an immortal soul came to be looked upon as "truth." "The important truth of the immortality of the soul was inculcated with more diligence as well as success in India, in Assyria, in Egypt, and in Gaul . . . It is incumbent on us to adore the mysterious dispensations of Providence, when we discover that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is omitted in the law of Moses . . ." (*ibid.*, pp. 400-401).

How did this belief affect the Jewish people? Gibbon says that the Sadducees "rejected the immortality of the soul as an opinion that received no countenance from the divine book" (*ibid.*, p. 402). He then adds that "the immortality of the soul became the prevailing sentiment of the synagogue under the reign of the Asmonaean princes and pontiffs.

"Their [the Jews'] zeal, however, added nothing to its evidence, or even probability; and it was still necessary that the doctrine of life and immortality, which had been dictated by nature, approved by reason, and received by superstition, should obtain the sanction of divine truth from the [so-called] authority and example of Christ" (*ibid.*).

But Christ, by teaching and example, never gave credence to the spurious doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

But what about the *Greeks*? They and other ancient peoples did *not* believe in a resurrection. They believed man had an immortal soul within him, and when he died this soul went off to some place of afterlife. It was this Hellenistic idea of an immortal soul which later influenced the beliefs of some of the Jewish people, and many professing Christians.

But, remember, this idea of man being immortal, or having an immortal soul, did not come from God or His Word. It came directly from

the *pagans*. For proof of this, look up this subject in any good encyclopedia. For example, check the article "Eschatology" in any of the later editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Do Souls Die?

What does the Bible teach about man? What happens to him at death? Is man an immortal soul?

We are told, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a *living soul*" (Gen. 2:7).

Man was created a "living soul" (Hebrew, *nephesh*), but it does *not* say that man was created an *immortal* soul. Rather, it goes on to show that man was *mortal* — that he would "die" (Gen. 2:17).

This word *nephesh* (translated as "soul") is also used throughout the Hebrew Scriptures to refer to the lower creatures God had created.

Can the soul die? "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20).

In many instances the Bible speaks of souls being killed, of them dying and perishing.

When the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament passages where the word *nephesh* ("soul") was used, they used the Greek equivalent, *psuche*, meaning "a living being," identical in meaning to the Hebrew word *nephesh*.

Notice what Jesus said regarding the soul (*psuche*): "Fear him [God] which is able to destroy both *soul* and body in hell [Gehenna, the lake of fire]" (Matt. 10:28).

Mortal Man

Job, quoting Eliphaz, wrote: "Shall *mortal man* be more just than God?" (Job 4:17.) And in Deuteronomy we are told that it was possible for a man to "smite him [his neighbor] *mortally* that he die" (Deut. 19:11). "Mortal" means that which can die.

In the New Testament Paul taught that a Christian should not let sin rule in his "*mortal body*"

(Rom. 6:12). He also spoke of a Christian's "mortal body" being quickened or made alive (Rom. 8:11).

At the resurrection "this *mortal* must put on *immortality*" (I Cor. 15:53, 54). Paul spoke of Christians' bodies as "our *mortal* flesh" (II Cor. 4:11). But he added that the time is coming (in the future) when our "mortality" will be "swallowed up of [eternal] *life*" (II Cor. 5:4).

Paul was also inspired to pen a promise of immortality: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing *seek for* glory and honour and *immortality*, [they will be granted] eternal life" (Rom. 2:7).

Did you notice that man must *seek*, as a gift from God, *immortality*. Why? Only God has immortality to give: "Who only [referring to the King of kings — verse 15] hath *immortality*" (I Tim. 6:16). "Now unto the King eternal, *immortal*, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever" (I Tim. 1:17).

Eternal life or future immortality was nowhere offered to ancient Israel or to the Gentile nations during the Old Testament period. But God's grace, His free gift of *eternal life*, "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought *life* and *immortality* to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10).

Is Man Conscious in Death?

If man is mortal, not immortal, then what happens to him at death? Does his soul immediately waft off to heaven, hell or someplace where he is *conscious*; or does man go to the grave to "sleep" until the time of the resurrection?

David was inspired to write: "His [man's] breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day *his thoughts perish*" (Ps. 146:4). This scripture reveals that man ceases to *think* at the time of his death.

David's son Solomon revealed that "there is no *work*, nor *device*, nor *knowledge*, nor *wisdom*, in the

grave [*sheol*], whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10).

This is the clear teaching of your Bible from Genesis to Revelation. *Man is mortal*. He will die. In death he is as one who is "asleep," awaiting the resurrection. There is absolutely no mental or physical activity in the grave! (Ps. 6:5; 115:17.)

Numerous resurrections (back to a *physical* life) are recorded in the Bible, but there is not one word about the dead having had any knowledge of what occurred during the interval when they were dead.

Lazarus had been dead "four days" (John 11:17), but was raised from the dead by Jesus Christ. And he had no knowledge or consciousness during that period of time — rather he was as one in a deep sleep — in a state of *unconsciousness*. Christ said: "Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*; but I go, that I may awake him out of *sleep*" (verse 11).

Also, in our time, there have been numerous examples of people actually brought back to life through heart massage and electrical or drug stimulation — after their hearts had stopped for some time — yet no such person ever reported having any consciousness during the time when he was technically "dead."

Does *science* have the answers to explain what man is, what happens at death, what man's ultimate destiny is to be, or how man can reach that destiny? No, for only God can reveal the answers to these vital questions; and He has made known this truth only in the Bible.

What Is Man's Hope?

Man has no other hope held out to him — other than the hope of the resurrection. According to the Bible, this is man's only hope.

In the next installment, we shall examine the scriptures pertaining to the resurrection in the Old Testament, and we shall see the biblical proof that the resurrection, as shocking as it may seem, is Old Testament theology as well as new. Don't miss reading the next article in this three-part series. □

DISCOVER YOUR BIBLE

THE book called "The Holy Bible" is the most maligned, criticized, and misused book ever compiled. "You can prove *anything* by the Bible," is a commonly held belief. No volume in history has ever been subjected to so much scrutiny as this Book of books. Is the Bible really of any relevance in the 20th century? Should you bother to read and study it? Can it be relied upon as an accurate guide for living? These questions cry out for answers in an age when seemingly nothing is sacred.

What Is the Bible?

Is the Bible merely a collection of Hebrew and Greek religious literature? Is there more to the Bible than simple human wisdom and folklore? Is there anything truly supernatural about this ancient Book?

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness . . ." explained the Apostle Paul to the Evangelist Timothy (II Tim. 3:16).

The words of the Bible are inspired by God — they are "God-breathed." The Bible is the word of God in print. You might say it is the "Maker's Instruction Book." It is the manual by which the human creation is to be operated.

God's written Word explains why the Creator created human beings. It instructs us how to live. It gives instructions on how to handle emer-

by Brian Knowles

gencies and breakdowns — both physically and spiritually speaking. The Bible explains how any person may realize his *maximum potential* as a human being — how he may achieve "self-actualization."

Nor is the Bible an ordinary book. It is unique in that it contains *revealed* knowledge. It includes information man could not normally obtain by conventional investigation.

The motto of Ambassador College sums up the real purpose of the Bible: *The Word of God is the Foundation of Knowledge*. It is the basis by which all other knowledge and philosophy may be evaluated. It is the standard, the only really reliable point of reference. While the Bible does not contain all scientific and technical knowledge, it does contain the philosophical basis for correctly placing such information in its right perspective.

The Maker's Instruction Manual

helps crack open the understanding of history. It sheds light on the real significance of the human chronicle. Neither history nor science can be correctly understood without the revealed basis of biblical light. Yet the Bible is neither a science textbook or a comprehensive history text.

Human behavior cannot be correctly interpreted apart from the Bible. Why do we see evil? What is sin? What is good? What is normal and what is deviant? Only the Word of God can supply the true answers to these important questions.

And what lies ahead for mankind? Will we survive the present direction the human race is taking? Will there be a brighter day tomorrow — or oblivion? The Bible reveals the answers to these and other crucial questions with which humanity is faced.

The Bible — a Deadly Weapon!

While the Word of God does use the term "two-edged sword" in self-description, some unscrupulous men have used it as a *club* over the heads of gullible "believers." Dishonest men, claiming to represent God, have twisted scriptures to their own ends and advantage. They have capitalized on the ignorance of the masses of biblical illiterates. Peter spoke of such individuals:

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things [new heavens and a new earth] be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, with-

out spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they *that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*" (II Peter 3:14-16).

Notice, it is those who are *unlearned* and *unstable* who twist scriptures! The word "unlearned" is translated from the Greek *amatheis* which refers to someone who is rude in knowledge and *uninstructed*. Such people are uneducated in what the Bible really says. They are unstable in the faith of Jesus Christ — lacking a solid relationship with God.

Secular education is not the criterion. Many highly educated men — scholars of considerable note — have not truly understood the Bible, even after decades of study. Whole commentaries have been written without basic understanding. Many have been prevented from understanding because they have not been willing to be *corrected* by Scripture (II Tim. 3:16). "... A good understanding have all they that *do* his commandments" (Ps. 111:10). Those who read and don't do, rarely understand!

The Sadducees' Problem

This appears to have been the problem with a group of religious leaders in Christ's day known as the Sadducees. The Sadducees were men very learned in the *forms* of contemporary religion. Yet they lacked understanding with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. They were reasoning with Jesus about the mechanical difficulties of such an event. The account is quite revealing:

"Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection. . . ." They then asked Jesus whose wife a woman would be if she had been married to seven succes-

sive brothers, all of whom were deceased. Jesus was quick to isolate their problem: "Do ye not therefore err, *because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?*" (Mark 12:18-24.)

And as Matthew's account puts it: "Ye do err, *not knowing the scriptures*" (Matt. 22:29).

While the Sadducees were highly educated by contemporary standards, they were actually unlearned in the Scriptures. By the same token,

The Book Nobody Knows!

More than seven million Bibles were sold last year. Forty different publishing companies print this Book and the total number of hundreds of millions of copies printed and distributed is impossible to estimate. It has now been translated into 1400 different languages.

The Bible consistently is every year's best seller by a very wide margin, yet it is little read. It is the most-printed, most-purchased, most freely distributed, and certainly least-understood book known to man! You need to know this Book; to know it you have to read and study it.

But how? What are the best methods? To answer these questions, we have published two booklets explaining what you need to know. Request *Read the Book and How to Study the Bible*. Mailing addresses are on the inside front cover.

many of today's theologians and scholars are actually biblical illiterates!

The Prophet Isaiah offers an interesting commentary on the question of scholarship:

"And the vision of all this is become unto you as the words of a writing that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying: 'Read this, I pray thee'; and he saith: 'I cannot, for it is sealed'; and the writing delivered to him

that is not learned" (Isa. 29:11-12, Jewish Society Publication).

The real problem is the fact that men pay lip service to God's way, but are not really willing to simply obey Him! Verse 13 points this out:

"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and *their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.*"

Jesus Christ later quoted this very scripture to show the Scribes and the Pharisees their real problem: All the human rhetoric, tradition and ceremony in the world is no substitute for the pure truth of God's Word! Only a knowledge of, and obedience to, the Bible will provide the real base needed for true conversion and spirituality.

The world of theology is in a sad state. There are as many theories as there are scholars to propound them! Few things are considered axiomatic in the world of biblical scholarship. Priests, ministers, rabbis and theologians of all stripes have served up a tableful of theological inconsistencies.

"But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink. . . *they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.* For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" (Isa. 28:7-8).

Yes, the heady wine of humanly originated tradition and theology has rendered its adherents ill. The sheer intellectual vanity of modern scholarship has indeed created a great spiritual sickness in this age. When theologians — who claim to be the custodians of theological truth — can seriously consider and propound the idea that God is *dead*, you know that all is not well in the world of theological scholarship!

Who May Understand?

To whom will God reveal the simple truth of His Word? Can the

“unlearned” average person come to understand the deep spiritual truths of the Bible? Is it possible? Or is advanced scholarship necessary?

Paul said to the Church of God in Corinth: “I fear, lest by any means . . . your minds should be corrupted from the *simplicity* that is in Christ” (II Cor. 11:3).

Granted, there are some things that are more difficult to understand in the Bible. Not everything is childishly simple. But the basics are. Those fundamental principles in which every Christian should be well-grounded are not really that difficult to grasp — with the help of God’s Spirit.

It is necessary to first come to understand the simpler principles of the Bible. The more advanced “meat” of the Word follows later.

Isaiah answers the question asked earlier:

“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isa. 28:9-10).

We may learn several things from this important scripture.

God reveals truth to those who are humble as a child — to those who *tremble* at His Word. This is explained in Isaiah 66:2: “. . . But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth at my word.*”

Jesus said only those who had the humility of a small child would ever enter into the Kingdom of God! And this is the attitude one must have toward God and His Word before one can progress spiritually.

Once an attitude of respect for the Bible is developed, then one must learn step by step — from simple to complex — the fundamentals of the Maker’s Instruction Book. All the scriptures on a subject must be compared and considered together. No scripture is of any private interpretation (II Pet. 1:20).

How God Revealed Truth

The Bible has been a *developmental* process over the centuries. God did not give the whole story in a single package at the outset. He has revealed truth on a number of subjects more or less piecemeal over the millennia. Human experience has provided a rich chronicle of case histories. The *basic law* of God has been in force since creation week,

ten down for the purpose of instructing us whose lot has been cast in the closing hours of the world” (I Cor. 10:11, Moffatt translation).

Again, speaking of the Old Testament record, Paul said: “*All such words were written of old for our instruction*, that by remaining steadfast and drawing encouragement from the scriptures we may cherish hope” (Rom. 15:4, Moffatt).

God has laid bare the lives of

“All such words were written of old for our instruction, that by remaining steadfast and drawing encouragement from the scriptures we may cherish hope”

— Rom. 15:4, Moffatt

but God has progressively explained its *application* as new situations have arisen.

Much of the Bible is a record of what has happened when God’s great law of love has been violated — both individually and nationally. The entire Bible really rotates around the two great principles of the Decalogue — love toward God and love toward neighbor. God intends that we should learn from the record contained in the Bible.

The Lessons of Biblical History

If there’s one thing we may learn from history, it’s the fact that we haven’t learned from history! Humanity today seems to continue in the same path it has for millennia. We make the same mistakes with the same results. Yet, if man would only learn from history, we would not have to repeat it!

Speaking of the recorded biblical events, the Apostle Paul stated: “It all happened to them *by way of warning* for others, and *it was writ-*

those with whom He has worked over the centuries so that those who read and study their Bibles might learn and avoid the mistakes made in the past. The Bible is the most meaningful assemblage of case histories of human behavior ever recorded! No wonder Paul called the Scriptures “living oracles”!

Your Best Insurance Against Error

A thorough knowledge of your Bible is the best insurance you have against being led astray into doctrinal error. The strident voices of those who claim to represent God are being raised everywhere. How can you know who does and who does not? Simply by getting your nose into the Maker’s Instruction Book! Read it. Study it. Drink deeply of its teaching and examples. Become familiar with it. Pray and ask God to help you understand His Word.

If you do so, you will be able to say along with David: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105). □

WHICH TRANSLATIONS

SHOULD YOU USE?

by Lester L. Grabbe

There are dozens of translations and paraphrased versions on the market, with more being produced continually. Which ones have merit? Which are less valuable? This article gives principles in choosing and using a translation.

FOR centuries the word "Bible" in English has been practically synonymous with the King James Version of 1611. As one lady naively commented, "If the King James Version was good enough for Jesus and the apostles, it's good enough for me."

Of course, most people are aware the Bible was originally written and inspired in Greek and Hebrew. Unless you read these languages fluently, you have to depend upon translations.

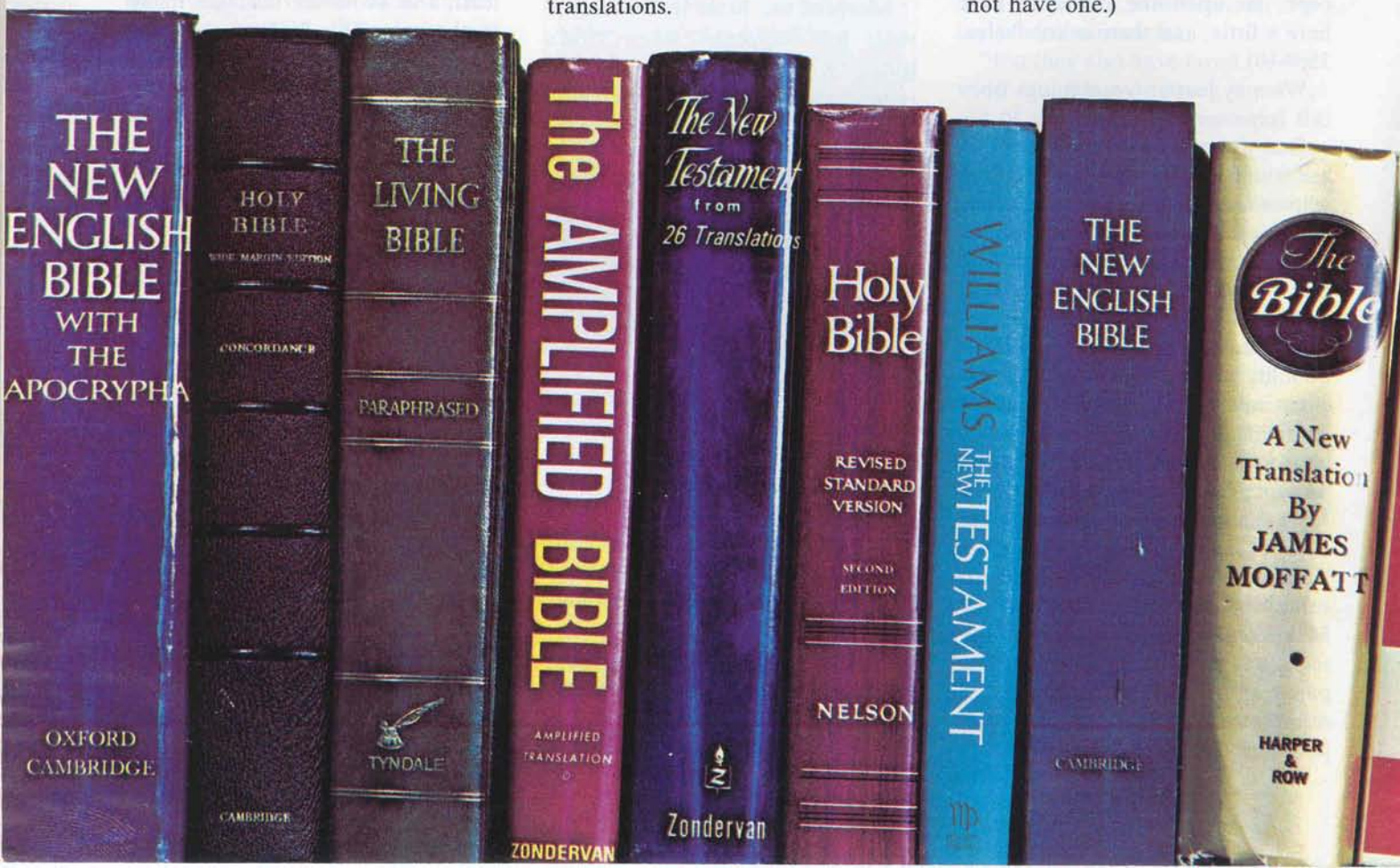
Yet the fact is *there are no perfect or inspired translations.*

How can you find a sound translation or know when a translation is in error? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to give a little background on the original text of the Bible.

Old Testament

The Old Testament was inspired mostly in the Hebrew language, with portions of Daniel and Ezra in Aramaic. The painstaking accuracy with which the Jewish community copied and proofread each official manuscript through the centuries is nothing short of amazing. The general reliability of the Masoretic text has recently been confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls.

We have already discussed the importance of using the Masoretic text as the basis for a translation of the Old Testament in the article "The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls." To save space here, we suggest you read or review that article. (Write for a free reprint if you do not have one.)



New Testament

Our knowledge of the New Testament text comes from approximately 5,000 Greek manuscripts, most of which are of the so-called Byzantine text type and differ very little among themselves. The King James Version was based on this type of text. The earliest of these Byzantine manuscripts goes back only to about the 7th century. (Most Hebrew Masoretic text manuscripts are even later in date.) But a few older Greek New Testament manuscripts and papyri, now available, have a somewhat different type text, which scholars generally follow.

Thus modern translations sometimes read a little differently than the King James. Yet we have to realize that the actual differences generally involve only words or phrases which do not change significantly the message of the passage. As one scholar put it, no major Christian doctrine depends on a particular textual reading. God has seen to it that doctrine is gained from a knowledge of the Bible as a whole rather than through an understanding of one verse alone.

Also, many of the Byzantine readings which were thought to have arisen long after the apostles have now been shown to be as early as any other portion of the New Testament. In the final analysis, only two sections of any length have been called into question by variations in the non-Byzantine text type. These are Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11.

While the ending of Mark is not found in some of the oldest non-Byzantine manuscripts, it is found in some very old copies. It is also quoted in whole or in part as early as the 2nd century A.D. Scholars have noted that it differs slightly in language from the rest of the book. Some have suggested it was written by Peter himself, who, according to tradition, was Mark's master for a long time.

The story of the woman taken in adultery is not found in any of the early non-Byzantine manuscripts. But even those who do not believe it was originally part of the book of John agree "the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity."

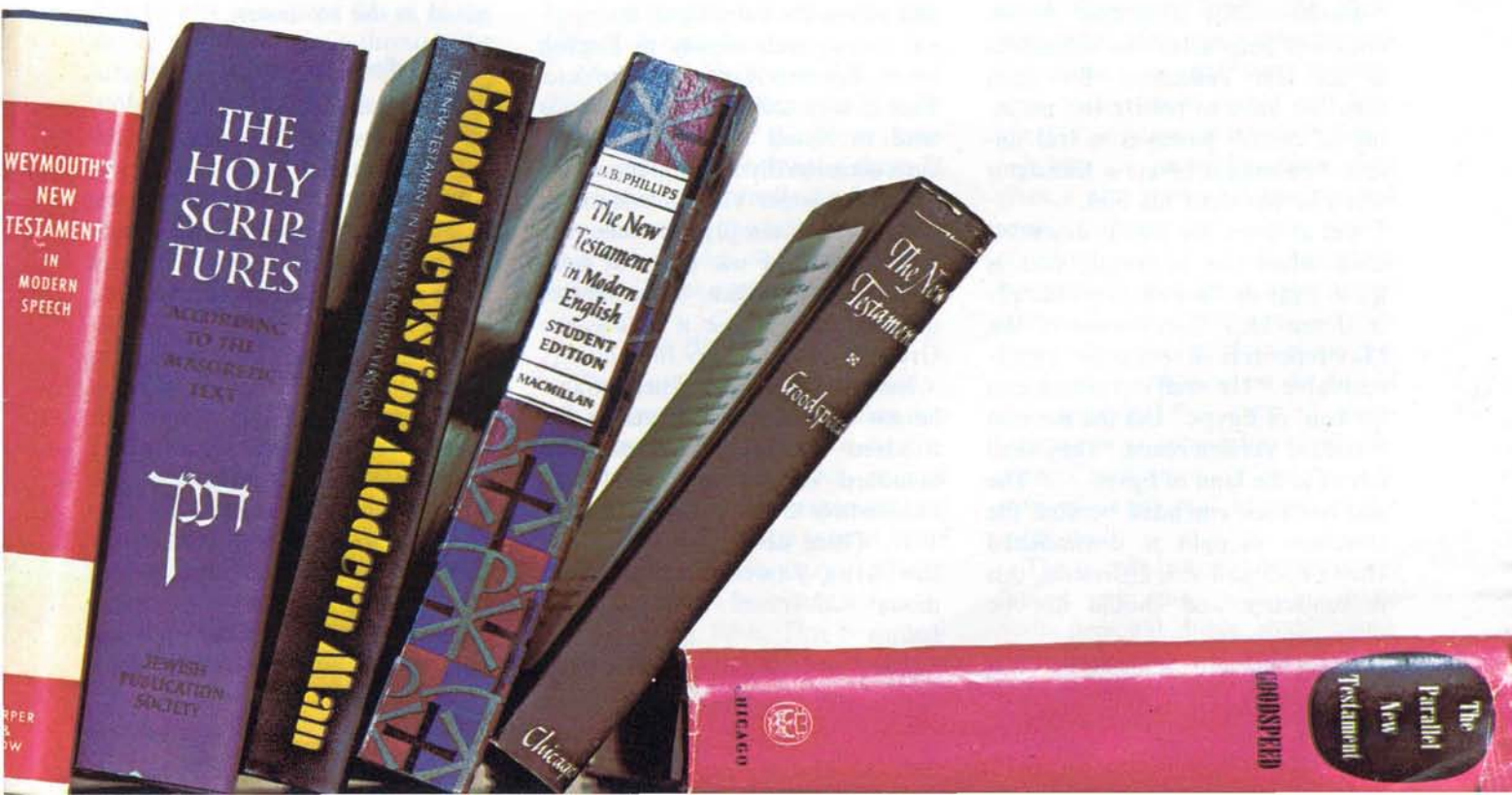
Almost all modern translations

include both these sections either in the text or in the footnotes. Furthermore, modern translations correctly omit certain passages (such as the "trinitarian" statement in I John 5:7-8) which the King James Version includes. The sense of any particular passage is generally the same.

Problems of Ancient Languages

From the fall of Rome to the Renaissance, only a few knew ancient Greek or Hebrew. Not until the 15th century did a revival of the study of these languages occur. Almost fifty of the best Greek and Hebrew scholars in England translated the King James Version. But since that time, by the diligent study of these languages by many scholars (both Christian and Jewish), knowledge and understanding has taken great strides forward.

Since 1890 new discoveries of papyri and other linguistic evidence for the Greek of New Testament times have completely revolutionized our knowledge. Today, vocabulary, grammar and idiom of



New Testament Greek are very well understood. The meaning of certain idioms is still debated. But these are relatively few and far between.

Old Testament Hebrew, on the other hand, still presents difficulties in both idiom and vocabulary. The Dead Sea Scrolls and other discoveries, plus continued work by Semitic scholars in many lands, have helped elucidate the language of the Hebrew Bible. But our knowledge of biblical Hebrew is not on a par with our biblical Greek. So two translations of the Old Testament may differ widely in their rendering of a particular passage.

Solving the Difficulties

Translators may do several things if present-day knowledge of Hebrew does not elucidate a particular passage. Attempt to find a similar word or expression in another Semitic language such as Arabic (this has been done a great deal in *The New English Bible*). Follow an ancient translation such as the Septuagint, Targums, or Vulgate. Or resort to textual emendation on the assumption that the text has been corrupted during centuries of copying by hand. Of course, each method has its drawback and may not derive the original meaning.

Further study and new discoveries will help solve the difficulties in the Old Testament. But until then, we have to realize the meaning of certain passages is still unsure. We cannot blame a translator when he has done his best.

But at times the text is emended even when the Masoretic text is quite clear on its own. An example is Hosea 11:5. Every word of the Masoretic text is perfectly understandable: "He shall not return into the land of Egypt." But the Revised Standard Version reads, "They shall return to the land of Egypt. . . ." The text has been emended because the translator thought it contradicted Hosea 8:13 and 9:3. Of course, this is subjective and should not be done.

Many modern translations will

give a footnote if the translator has followed an ancient translation or has emended the text. But not always. If a modern translation gives a smooth and clear reading where the King James sounds awkward, be aware that the translator may not have followed the Masoretic text in that particular case. He may even have amended the Hebrew text arbitrarily. You would want to check other translations and even commentaries which might tell you what has been done.

We are now ready to look at different versions and the principles used by the translators in producing them.

Two Basic Types of Translation

Translations can be broken down into two broad categories according to the technique used by the translator. These are the more literal translations and the more free renderings. At least one translation does not really fall in either category but is in between in a mediating position.

The *more literal* translation is best represented by the King James Version. It attempts to follow the Greek or Hebrew text very closely, even word for word if possible. This is fine where the wording of the original corresponds closely to English idiom. But that is often not the case. That is why such literal translations tend to sound awkward and are even occasionally incomprehensible. The King James Version sometimes sounds odd simply because the English of 1611 was different from 20th century English, but quite frequently also because it follows the Greek or Hebrew very literally.

Included among the literal translations are such translations as the Revised Version, the American Standard Version, and the Jewish Publication Society translation of 1917. These are heavily based on the King James Version even though advertised as new translations.

The *freer* method of translating is

that used by most recent versions. Here the attempt is made to render sense for sense rather than word for word. The translator first tries to understand the text. Then he does his best to get this sense across to the reader in idiomatic English. He may have to paraphrase and even add words or phrases not actually in the original. He may render weights and measures by those in current use (such as inches or pounds) instead of the Greek or Hebrew terms (as *homer* or *denarion*).

Examples of the more free versions are the Phillips', Williams', and Today's English version of the New Testament, or the Moffatt version of the whole Bible. *The New English Bible* and the *New American Bible* are more conservative than some of the free translations. But they still tend to fall in the free-rendering category.

The Revised Standard Version, however, is a mediating translation, avoiding both extremes. It is in modern and idiomatic English without using slang. Yet it attempts to be fairly literal while avoiding awkwardness. It is one of the most neutral translations available today. The major objection is its occasional textual emendation. But this is relatively infrequent and is usually noted in the footnotes.

Each Has Its Place

Some prefer the King James Version. Others find its language difficult and prefer something more modern. Actually, both the literal and the free translations have their place and use. Most people can learn more by using both types and comparing them.

As one expert on translations noted, the literal translation takes you back to the thought world of the original. You find yourself wrestling with ancient measurements and coinage (cubits, shekels, etc.). You see the bare straightforwardness of Hebrew narrative and the beauty of Hebrew poetry. You realize why Paul's writing contains "some things hard to be understood" when you

see his complex sentences rendered literally into English.

On the other hand, the free translation tries to bring the Bible world to the present and give it to you already interpreted into modern concepts. Greek *denaria* become dollars or pounds. A *bath* measurement is rendered into gallons. This means one can learn the more technical expressions with less effort. Yet one has to depend on the translator's judgment. If the translator misunderstood the original, then the reader may believe an error.

Generally, a one-man translation will tend to be more extreme and subjective than one done by a committee. A committee translation will usually be more moderate and cautious because many different people have criticized the proposed text. The one-man translation is like Quite Contrary Mary: "When it is good, it is very, very good, but when it is bad, it is awful." A single translator may have more individual flair and bring out certain passages in a superb way. But he is also more likely to make errors and give a biased rendering.

The judicious Bible student will make use of both free and literal translations, both one-man efforts and committee productions. That way he can obtain the flavor of the world of biblical times through the literal version while checking his understanding through the free translations of expert scholars. He can also benefit from the individual insight of single translators, yet avoid their pitfalls by comparing their renderings with those done by groups who put their heads together.

Representative Translations

We have already discussed some translations, such as the King James, Revised Standard Version, and *The New English Bible*. Here are some others:

New American Bible. This is a new Catholic translation in modern English, a scholarly translation and based on the original Greek and

Hebrew texts. Admittedly, Catholic bias shines through in a few passages. In the Old Testament the ancient versions or textual emendation has often been resorted to without any footnote to say so.

Moffatt translation. This was one of the first translations into modern English. It is often helpful. But Moffatt has frequently made subjective reshufflings of the text.

Today's English Version, popularly known as *Good News for Modern Man*. This is an idiomatic, very free but quite uninspiring translation. Only the New Testament has been done, but the Old Testament is being worked on.

Phillips' translation of the New Testament. This is a very free translation. Phillips often adds phrases and whole sentences to present his understanding of the text. He is usually very clear and seems to capture the flavor of the original Greek. But sometimes he wrongly interprets (as in I Corinthians 11:30 where he has "spiritually asleep" though the context plainly shows it is really "dead" as most commentators realize).

Jewish Publication Society translation. Although this is made from the Masoretic text, it often follows the King James very closely. A new translation in modern English is being prepared, but only the Pentateuch is complete.

The New Testament from 26 Translations. This draws on 26 modern translations of the New Testament. Only two or three of these 26 translations are usually cited for any one verse. But the editors have attempted to pick the most diverse renderings for each passage.

Two Non-Translations

The Amplified Bible. The glowing advertisements for this version are exaggerated and inaccurate. As professional translators have pointed out, it is really a paraphrase and commentary. It can be helpful in the same way a commentary is. But it cannot claim to be a translation.

The Living Bible. This is a paraphrase made by a layman from the

Revised Version. It can be good where the author has understood the text. He frequently condenses lengthy Old Testament verses and gives only the "core." This can be useful in getting an overview of a section or a whole book. But realize your chances of being misled are greater with a nonprofessional's understanding of an English translation than with a translation by professional scholars. Further information about *The Living Bible* can be found in our free booklet *How to Study the Bible* (see pages 24 and 25).

Putting It All Together

Each person should have a good study Bible. Many people prefer the King James because of familiarity and the fact that it tries to be as faithful to the original as possible. For others, however, who might prefer a more modern translation, the Revised Standard Version would probably be the best choice.

A moderate or fairly literal translation would probably be best as one's basic Bible. One can then supplement his Bible study from other translations, many of which may be obtained in inexpensive paperback editions. A change of translation may bring new light on a passage which familiarity has made hackneyed. But after using different free translations, one will want to come back to the more stable and less-interpretative text of his study Bible.

Where a particular translation gives a new twist to a passage and seems to bring out a new understanding, one should carefully compare the passage in other translations. If no others bear out this new understanding, chances are it is a subjective judgment on the part of the translator. So compare translations. Also especially check the context and compare one passage with other relevant sections in the Bible itself.

The proper use of different translations and study aids can make your personal Bible study much more interesting and profitable. □



UPDATE

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last month's "Update" brought our new readers current on developments in Ambassador College and its Extension Programs. This article will bring you up to date on the Church that sponsors those activities, the Worldwide Church of God.

What Is The Worldwide Church of God?

This is the true story of a unique Church that has found the solution for the world's ills, and puts it into a living application that is producing a harvest of peace, happiness and abundant well-being worldwide.

TO PUT it mildly, the visitor was astonished. Suddenly he was experiencing something he would never have believed to exist.

He was the professor of Comparative Religions at one of the world's great universities, visiting a church convention in southwestern Canada. Seven thousand were assembled. Immediately he was impressed by an atmosphere refreshingly different. Had these people been odd or fanatical, it would have been no new experience. He had attended meetings of religious and church groups all over the world. He was familiar with those who were stiff, formal — and unhappy. With those who *appeared* happy temporarily during a service. And with those who generated an emotional excitement or fervor in meetings, and even those who were odd, weird or fanatical. But this was a new and different experience.

To one of the ministers accompanying him he exclaimed: "I have never seen so many so universally and *genuinely* happy. This is *real*. These people are stable and solid citizens, sincere and unpretentious, just naturally radiating an inner happiness. Life seems to have purpose and meaning. You couldn't really describe it in words — one has to *experience* the difference."

WHY Unique

These people are members of the Worldwide Church of God. This Church is unique in practicing Christianity as A WAY OF LIFE as well as a faith — even as it did originally in the days of the first-century apostles.

Its members are motivated with purpose, inspired by knowing the transcendent human potential. They know the true values. They have found the way that makes life truly meaningful, rewarding, abundant!

Ask the world's average church member how much biblical teaching has to do with his everyday life — his business, his social life, his home life, his entertainment and recreational life. He will probably reply: "Why, nothing, I suppose."

But the Church of God, from A.D. 31 to now, has *lived by* God's revealed way of life, as well as by the faith of Jesus Christ. It is a happy Church.

And in that it is indeed *unique!*

Importance of the Name

This Church has always recognized the importance of the name given the Church. And it has been always kept in that name. Twelve times in the New Testament the name of God's own Church is called just that — "the Church of God." Christ is revealed to be the living Head of that Church. And in this

connection it is in one place only spoken of as the "Churches of Christ." But it is composed of the begotten children of God, who collectively as a Church are named after their Father. In some New Testament instances, a descriptive adjective is added to the name, as the Church of God at Corinth, or the Churches of God in Judea. And today, it is called the Worldwide Church of God.

A Worldwide Function

But when Jesus Christ said "I will build my Church," it was for a purpose that is more than merely preserving members in the way that produces happiness and successful living for themselves.

It has a serious and worldwide function to perform. It is a mission of love — of outgoing concern for humanity worldwide. Its commission is to proclaim to the world the good news of the Kingdom (government) of God — not to convert the world, but merely as "a witness." That government has been taken from the earth. It is to be restored (Acts 3:19-21). God governs — as do all governments (or kingdoms) — by laws. Primary of God's laws is the spiritual law — the way of life that causes — produces — every good result.

For carrying out that commission, the Church is called, in the New Testament, the "Body of Christ."

Few understand why. Jesus had come in human flesh, among other purposes, to start the Work of God. He said that *of Himself* He could do nothing. It was the power of the Holy Spirit of God *in Him* that empowered the Work.

He called and chose His disciples, who became the original apostles. He taught and trained them to become, with Him and the prophets, the foundation of the Church. He gave His life for the Church — to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world — for all who will repent and accept His shed blood in full payment. God raised Him from the dead, that by His life we might



"I have never seen so many so universally and genuinely happy. This is real. These people are stable and solid citizens, sincere and unpretentious, just naturally radiating an inner happiness. Life seems to have purpose and meaning. You couldn't really describe it in words — one has to experience the difference."

Ambassador College Photos



receive eternal life as God's free gift by grace.

But, after His resurrection, and just before He was taken up to God's throne of the universe in heaven, Jesus "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father" — that is, receiving within them the same Holy Spirit that had empowered Him. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you," He said (Acts 1:4-8).

Powerful Work Today

The Spirit which had started God's Work in Jesus' single human body would now carry it on in the *collective* body of the Church.

That Work — that commission — was dual:

1) "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And, for this present time in which we now live: "... This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached [and published — Mark 13:10] in all the world as a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end [of this age] come" (Matt. 24:14).

And, 2) Feed the flock — that is, spiritually feed the Church members from our Maker's Instruction Book, on the *way of life*, and for *their* part in carrying on God's Work.

The first great commission becomes a far more complex and sizable operation today than it was in the first century. The world's population has multiplied many times over. We live in a different, far more mechanical and complex world.

The Church of God was not, in the first century, a world power either religiously or politically. It is not today. At times it has undergone violent persecution. It is not, today, a multimillion-member Church.

Yet today it carries on in great power worldwide the Work, by the dynamic educational program through its associated Ambassador College. Through this program — as a public service — it is reaching by

radio, television, and large-space advertising in many mass-circulation magazines and newspapers, 150,000,000 people with the inspired message of the WAY OF LIFE that is the CAUSE of all GOOD — of peace, happiness, prosperity, abundant well-being — truly the good life.

The faith and way of life of the Church is precisely the same today as it was in the first century. It is the true faith "once delivered to the saints." That never changes. But today the Church lives and functions in a vastly different and highly complex and mechanized world. Accordingly, modern conditions necessitate different procedures, and modern methods of organization and operation.

Early Church History

Jesus Christ had personally taught and trained His disciples to become His original apostles and leaders. Then on the day of "Pentecost" 31 A.D., they were infused with dynamic power by the very Spirit of God.

Thus the Church of God started out imbued with vitality and strength. On that very day of Pentecost three thousand were added to the Church. A day or two later their number became 5,000 (Acts 4:4). Miracles were performed by the apostles, and soon that 5,000 membership was multiplied (Acts 6:1).

A little later, however, there was a great persecution against the Church at Jerusalem, and most were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). Then entered the false leader, Simon the magician (Acts 8:9-14). Jesus had warned the Church would be severely persecuted (John 15:20), and would be hated by the world in general (John 15:18-19) and He had spoken of it as the "little flock" (Luke 12:32) — not a great world power.

By 70 A.D. the real *Work* of God of proclaiming the good news of the coming worldwide Kingdom of God, had lost its momentum, due to the Roman invasion and Roman persecution. That worldwide Work

of God had ebbed through the centuries to scarcely a trickle.

It had been given a JOB to do — proclaim the message to the world in POWER. And *it had not been getting the job done!*

That vital power of God's Spirit that had worked dynamically in Christ and in the first century apostles, had not been working in the Church. That Work, by the early twentieth century, had become virtually dead (Rev. 3:1).

By 1927 in the United States, members continued to assemble regularly in their local congregations scattered over the country. The local congregations were small, in most cases not more than 35 to 50. There was at that time a limited evangelistic effort, though mostly ineffective. But now God's time had come for His last warning message to go to the whole world.

In 1930 the Oregon members, in order to revitalize the Work of God, incorporated under the name, "Oregon Conference of the Church of God."

New Leadership Drafted

Meanwhile, since 1927, following the conversion of Herbert W. Armstrong, Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong had been meeting with these Oregon brethren. But until the summer of 1928 he had refused to speak before them because he felt the ministry was a profession no man ought to choose himself. Finally he was virtually drafted into doing so.

Realizing that he had had the training and unusual experience in the business world, the education, the know-how, the vision, the initiative and experience in utilizing modern methods necessary to get the Work of God going out in a modern complex world, they looked more and more to Mr. Armstrong for leadership. And finally it became evident to all that the call to the ministry was genuinely from God, and not a self-chosen one. In June, 1931, Mr. Armstrong was ordained by this Oregon Conference, and entered the Work of God full time.

A New Era — New Life

It was under his leadership that a new era of the Church of God was entered, revitalizing the Church, injecting into it new life and vigor by the Spirit of God to get Christ's gospel — His educational message — going out with power to the whole world.

Much more than human experience and know-how was required.

Once again God was sending forth and infusing into His Church His Spirit of power.

The time had come for the final message of God for this present world to go with great impact. The time had come for God's Work to prepare the way for the soon-coming wonderful world tomorrow! The time when by act of God His government will be restored on earth. It will be a world of peace, of happiness, joy in abundance and plenty, under the government worldwide of the Great God through the living Jesus Christ!

In the summer and autumn of 1933, Mr. Armstrong gave a series of lectures in and around Eugene, Oregon, on the way of life that produces peace, true success, and real happiness. The response was spontaneous and beyond expectation. An invitation followed to speak on radio station KORE, then Eugene's only radio outlet. Frank Hill, owner, suggested a weekly half-hour program to give this missing dimension in education exposure to a wider audience. He, himself, contributed substantially to its cost.

Phenomenal Growth

God now began opening doors for a Spirit-empowered Work to leap forth (Rev. 3:7-8). The Work from this point grew in power and scope at the rate of 30% per year over the next 35 years.

The first week in 1934 *The World Tomorrow* program went on the air. It met with an immediate response, considering the small power and limited coverage of the station. It was then of the very smallest wat-

tage for commercial broadcasting — 100 watts. Gradually the program went on more and more stations. By 1942 the program had gained national coverage in the United States, and by 1945 it became a daily program.

Today it purchases the largest wattage of any radio program, worldwide — more than 50 million watts of power weekly reaching an estimated 100 million listeners, besides many additional millions reached by other media.

On February 1, 1934, *The Plain Truth* magazine made its most humble bow. That Volume I, Number 1 had a circulation of approximately 250 copies. *The Plain Truth* was offered radio listeners gratis, but subscriptions were entered only on personal request. It has never been the policy to put a price on the magazine, nor to request financial support in its columns or on the air.

Today *The Plain Truth* is one of the finest quality magazines in the world, 40 pages of solid reading — no advertising, full color, with circulation more than three million copies worldwide — published simultaneously at Pasadena, California; Radlett, England and North Sydney, Australia.

Why a College?

As the Church and its work expanded, the need of a college became imperative. There were a number of reasons for this.

The Church of God had never been a proselyting church. Jesus Christ set the example. He *never* urged people to "get saved," or "be converted." When the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria asked Him to give her of God's Spirit, which He had referred to as "living water," He made no effort to convert her.

He did proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, saying "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:1, 15). He chose His disciples, and simply said, "Follow me." They followed unquestioningly. He made no emotional appeals for converts. He made no

pleading "altar calls" accompanied by sentimental hymns. Nor did the apostles. The Church of God follows the example they set.

Its Commission

Instead, its commission is first to proclaim the good news of the coming Kingdom of God — *not* to convert the world, but merely "as a witness" to the world.

This actually is an educational message of the way of life to be lived in the Kingdom of God — the way that leads to success, to peace, happiness, to the full, enjoyable abundant life. It involves the knowledge of the purpose of human life on this planet — the real meaning of life — the knowledge of the true values in a world pursuing the false — the knowledge of what man is, why he is, and the way to his transcendent potential.

That is not a sentimental, emotional message *about* Christ as a person — it is *not* a message of pleading with people to "give their hearts to the Lord," but an educational message showing people what they need to turn from, and the way that will cause the results they really want — here and now, as well as the gift of eternal life.

The second commission is to feed those who do become converted — and the word means *changed* to a different attitude and way made possible by receiving God's Spirit — to feed them the spiritual food of practical common-sense Christian living by God's way of life.

Ambassador College Founded

Therefore the Church of God found the establishment of an educational institution of higher learning imperative. It was needed to provide an educated ministry. It was needed to educate people for the worldwide Work of proclaiming this good news worldwide — by radio, by television, in print.

Jesus *chose* His apostles. They did not choose Him. They did not choose the ministry as a profession

— as one chooses medicine, law, or architecture. They were specially called by Him.

He rose from the dead, and He lives in mighty power today. Since it is not His way for men to choose the ministry for themselves, Ambassador College could not be a seminary, or a church or Bible school, but had to be a liberal arts college. It was expected that perhaps one in 40 students might be called to the ministry. Actually it has been closer to one in ten.

Pasadena, California was chosen as the locale for the college. Ambassador College swung open its doors to students October 8, 1947. It was separately incorporated in 1951.

Since the first commission of the Church is actually an educational — not an evangelistic — one, this entire operation became the activity of Ambassador College. All broadcasting, publishing, and the extension program worldwide, is the activity of the College. Therefore Ambassador College has remained Church associated, though organized and operated independently of the Church. It is largely Church financed and therefore enjoys a unique financial stability and prestige in financial circles.

The Church of God has always been a tithe-paying church. It knows God has promised, scripturally, to prosper the tithe-payer. This practice has caused members to be more careful in budgeting personal finances. These members have prospered financially and, consequently, so has the Church.

Today both Worldwide Church of God and Ambassador College stand in an enviable financial position of stability and strength. This is well known and highly respected by many major banks in such financial centers as New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, London, Geneva.

Nonproselyting, Nonpolitical, Nonmilitant

As stated above, the Church of God from A.D. 31 has been non-

proselyting, entirely noncompetitive, in accordance with biblical principles. In no sense is it militant, nor has it ever participated in any agitating movement to bring about any objectives by action. It participates in no groups or mass action, political or otherwise. The Church of God, in all its history, has had only an attitude of love for all races and peoples, regardless of color, creed, or religion.

Always its teaching has been submission to whatever authority is over one — whether human government, or the authority of God.

The Worldwide Church of God, while not “activist” or militant, does nevertheless believe in and offers active, daily application of *solutions* to the many human problems.

Through its continual teaching over radio, television, and in its magazines and special booklets, it has profound impact upon society in many ways.

Millions of Lives Changed

Millions have read literature which changed their personal lives in many constructive, useful ways. The television, radio broadcasts, and booklets about pollution, famine, the population explosion, and the space race, deal with the big, worldwide issues. And TV and radio programs, and booklets about marijuana, smoking, dating, marriage, motherhood, managing personal finances and the laws of success deal with daily practical, personal information that literally *changes lives*.

More than a million have received the booklet concerning crime, the *causes* of it, and how, without resorting to joining pressure groups or becoming activists, to protect themselves, their children and their property from criminals.

Millions have experienced profound changes in their marital lives through broadcasts and reading the instructional booklets and magazine articles they have received. From New Zealand to Africa, and from the Swiss Alps to

Puget Sound, the tens of thousands write of the deep and far-reaching changes effected in their homes and families through better understanding of the God-revealed *ways* of right, clean, wholesome living.

Only a tiny percentage of those whose lives have been enriched, helped, made more complete through this Work ever become bona fide members of the Church.

In that sense, the members of the Worldwide Church of God are so genuinely concerned toward others, and with the problems of the world at large that they give of their own substance to aid in this worldwide effort to apply the solutions to the problems suffered in common by all mankind.

The Church members *do* apply those solutions to themselves! Where the Church owns property, operates machinery, drives automobiles, works with the soil, or manages income, it enforces the real *cause* of the right result on itself — it does *not* seek to enforce those same causes upon others. Rather, by living the way that produces the right benefits, it seeks to set the *example* for others to follow.

Not only are members of the Worldwide Church of God, then, having a hand in effecting far-reaching and important changes in millions of lives, they are being an example in their communities. The *millions* are also being benefited in countless ways — as a positive and forceful message of how to live reaches them through the work of this Church and its associated educational institution.

The divine commission to the Worldwide Church of God is to proclaim the coming world of peace under the soon-coming divine Messiah. It is merely in the role of a reporter, reporting events of history as advance news reports, reported as acts of God, not of this Church.

It is changing lives into happier and better citizens everywhere!

And *that* is the Worldwide Church of God! □

WASHINGTON, D. C., 1973. Squirring before a Select Senate subcommittee, dozens of men of unimpeachable loyalty to President Nixon are found guilty of “zeal in a righteous cause” following the break-in and cover-up of the Democratic headquarters at Watergate. Multiple other high-level appointive officials compromised ethics in favor of loyalty to their boss.

* * * * *

Ft. Benning, Georgia, 1969. Lt. William Calley claimed he was “just following orders” after his company wiped out over 100 defenseless women, children, and elderly citizens of My Lai, South Vietnam. Those under Lt. Calley also claimed they “just followed orders,” putting obedience to authority over their personal standards of morality.

* * * * *

Washington, D. C., 1953. Senator Joseph McCarthy cross-examined hundreds of prominent Americans for their alleged sympathies with Communism. The careers of the witnesses were effectively terminated, as McCarthy’s “zeal in a righteous cause” ruined many ethical men.

* * * * *

Nuremburg, Germany, 1946. A dozen leading Nazi officials were sentenced to death or imprisonment for “just following orders,” while hundreds of other “loyal” Nazi leaders escaped to exile or to be captured later (such as Adolf Eichmann). Their unanimous reply: “We *had* to obey orders – you have not seen the Führer in his anger! We *must* obey him.”

* * * * *

Salem, Massachusetts, 1692. Nineteen “witches” were hanged and one was pressed to death. However, over 100 alleged “witches” saved their skin by signing a confession and proclaiming their loyalty to the church.

“I’M JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS”

by Gary Alexander



London, 1520. Utopian philosopher Sir Thomas More was executed for putting personal ethics before the throne of England.

Athens, 399 B. C. Greek teacher Socrates was executed for putting his loyalty to ethics before his loyalty to Greece.

Jerusalem, 31 A.D. Jesus Christ was crucified for putting God before man's government.

* * * * *

Similar examples could be listed indefinitely, but the one common denominator in all these conflicts is the eternal war between freedom and authority, between God and Mammon, or between loyalty and ethics. "Loyalty" here means an unswerving devotion to a man, an organization, or a cause. "Ethics," in its proper Christian definition, means loyalty to God, His laws and His morality.

The Apostle Peter put this conflict in bold relief when he appeared before the council in Jerusalem. The high priest, the captain of the Temple, and the chief priests continually arrested Peter and his fellow apostles for insubordination, saying: "Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this [Jesus'] name? and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28).

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN" (verse 29). Ah! There's the rub. Peter and the high priest were two different religious leaders who each believed in a different God. One of them, however, happened to be in *power* enough to inflict his own interpretation upon the other. It would be easy to compromise, but Peter courageously put God before man.

[Author's note: Of course, everyone should respect constituted governmental authority *as Peter himself did* (I Pet. 2:13-17). Many times it is

not in conflict with God's law. Write for our free article entitled "The Christian Attitude — Respect Government Authority."]

After countless hundreds of such moral conflicts — from Adam to Watergate — you would think mankind might learn the lesson that it doesn't pay to be so "sincere" in the *wrong* cause. There is always a day of reckoning. For some, that day of reckoning is the hot seat of a Senate investigating committee. For true Christians "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God . . ." (I Pet. 4:17). For others, there is this:

The White Throne Judgment

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12). This time is called the White Throne Judgment (verse 11); it is a time when every human being who has ever lived will be resurrected to life. Over a certain period of time, each man will have a chance to answer for his actions, repent before God and live a new way of life. Contrary to some pagan "Christian" traditions, this has nothing to do with going to heaven or hell, but is rather a "first chance" for billions of people who never heard and understood Christ's message.

In that day of judgment, there will be no controversy about who said what, at which meeting, or what day, to whom, where, why, and how. God will judiciously use the "tapes" of what everyone has said: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12:36).

This by no means pictures God as some "hanging judge" in heaven, waiting for the slightest slip of the tongue so He can damn a man for all time. God will forgive any and

all sins upon repentance. But these scriptures are telling *His* followers, who *know better*, that they dare not make a practice of breaking His laws in secret. If they do, God reserves the right to "play back the tapes" and ask for an accounting.

The lesson for you and me is simple: Obey God's standard of behavior, follow God's ethical and moral principles as revealed in the Bible. Then, and only then, we need fear no "Watergate" witch hunt, either on earth before a just judge, or at the resurrection before a just God.

This assurance does not necessarily mean that Christians will live a serene and tranquil life between now and the year 2000. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). And, "... We must through *much tribulation* enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). This does not refer to religious arguments and antagonistic literature alone. Jesus Christ foretold the time when professing Christians would kill true Christians. "Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth *God* service" (John 16:2). In other words, righteous men will be slain for being "disloyal" to their church or nation.

Daniel was nearly put to death for merely continuing in prayer toward God (Dan. 6). Jeremiah was accused of treason (Jer. 38:4), imprisoned in a slime pit, and nearly executed. God's prophets have always suffered persecution and privation for not being "loyal" to a nation's or church's corrupt leadership.

"In the long run we are all dead," quipped economist John M. Keynes. But in a much longer run we will *all live again!* It is our moral standing at that "point in time" (as Watergate witnesses say) that will determine our eternal fate. Is your loyalty directed toward God and the Bible? Or will you stand accused of being loyal to the wrong cause? □

NOAH'S FLOOD

Is it Believable?

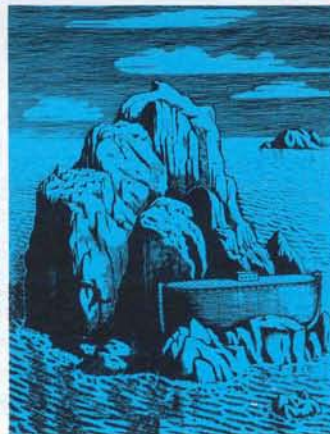
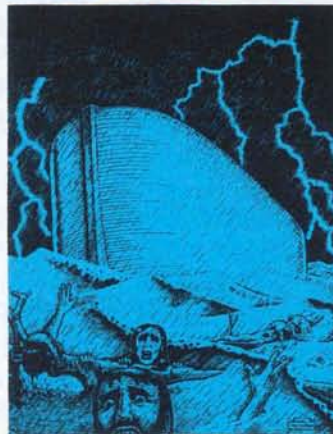
DURING the past few hundred years, the credibility of the Bible has come under serious question.

Many have found it difficult to believe in a book which speaks of Jonah and the "whale"; an extra-long day in the time of Joshua; Christ walking on water; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego surviving the fiery furnace; Adam and Eve; the Israelites crossing the Red Sea; and a host of similar accounts written in a positive, it-actually-did-happen fashion.

Perhaps the long biblical account of Noah's Flood in Genesis has evoked more questions than any other. Is it unreasonable to believe in the Flood? In the Ark? Have modern scientific findings truly made the scriptural account out of date?

While the many ramifications of the Flood cannot be discussed in a short article, this article will examine the *main* objections to the biblical Flood and the Ark. We will see that the Bible is consistent with other fields of knowledge. Scripture is reasonable!

Let's examine the various major



questions voiced about Genesis 6-9 and see how recent data actually verifies this ancient record.

Was the Flood Local?

It has now become popular among many to think of the Flood as merely a limited regional event. During the past century, the once commonly accepted universality of the Flood met with great opposition. One by one leading scientists and theologians sided with evolutionary and uniformitarian concepts. Soon no place was found for a worldwide deluge. Surely, it was reasoned, if the Flood is a reality, it was only a local Mesopotamian event.

It is not my purpose to present a comprehensive biblical exegesis on the *universality* of the Flood.

However, to assume anything else is clearly contrary to the weight of biblical revelation and reason.

The need for a sea-going Ark is a compelling reason to believe in the Flood's intercontinental effects. Why command Noah to build an Ark when he could have simply migrated to a non-flooded region? Neither would it make sense to take

by Robert E. Gentet

Is the Flood merely a Hebrew myth? Does the biblical record of the Noachian Deluge and the Ark make sense in the light of modern, scientific findings?

animal representatives of all kinds aboard the Ark if only a limited area of the earth were to be inundated (Gen. 6:19-20).

The specific reason for the Flood was to destroy all air-breathing land life — especially man himself (Gen. 6:17). Archaeology demonstrates that man had migrated around the world. Anything less than a universal destruction would not have accomplished God's primary purpose of the Flood.

So it is logical to believe that the Flood was of universal scope when both Scripture and reason are considered.

Where Do You Get Enough Water?

But what, then, of the origin of the Flood waters? Is there enough water on the earth to entirely cover it?

If one observes a globe carefully, he might come to the conclusion that "earth" is an inapt name. For instead of being mainly *terra firma*, its surface is over 71 percent water. We live on a watery planet.

In addition, bear in mind the oceans average 12,450 feet in depth, while the average surface height of the land is only 2,600 feet. The proportion is clearly overwhelmingly in favor of the ocean and not the land.

We are not told in the Bible exactly *how* God flooded the earth. Remember the Flood was not a natural event. It was brought on *supernaturally* by God, though He used natural agents.

What are the natural facilities God could have used in accomplishing His purpose? Here are some of the possibilities: 1) Elevate the ocean basins and thus force water onto the land, 2) lower the continents as units, or 3) add water to the oceans from underground basins (see *Scientific American*, May 1966, article, "Water Under the Sahara.") God undoubtedly used a combination of factors to bring about His will.

In the same way, when the Flood waters receded, they would have

drained back into the place God made for them — the ocean basins and underground reservoirs.

What About "All Those Animals"?

Did the Ark have sufficient capacity to carry representatives of all the land animals?

Consider the stated size of the Ark. "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits" (Gen. 6:15).

Historical records for the exact length of the cubit in modern terms are vague. Our research places it at around 22.5 inches. If valid, this would mean the Ark was 563 feet long, 94 feet wide, and 56 feet high. Its three-million cubic-foot volume would have had a displacement in water weight of 66,000 tons. This is the same capacity as 1000 American railroad freight cars. That's ocean-liner size!

But if the cubit were equivalent to 18 inches, there would still have been plenty of room in its 450-foot length, 75-foot breadth, and 45-foot height hulk. This would still have given it a 500 freight car, 1.5 million cubit feet, carrying capacity.

It was not until the 19th century that larger vessels were constructed.

It shows the existence of skilled knowledge and ability in that ancient world not again demonstrated until recent times. Archaeologists are confirming this generally unexpected level of knowledge as they find more and more evidence of advanced skills among early humans. (See such books as *Mysteries from Forgotten Worlds* by Charles Berlitz, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1972.)

How much room did Noah need for "all those animals"? Some misunderstand, thinking that the Ark had to house representatives of every *variety* of animals. One pair of every *KIND* of unclean (inedible) and seven pairs of each clean *KIND* (edible) were taken aboard. Each "kind" of creature represented a number of varieties. For example, over 100 breeds of dogs have now

been developed. They are all of the same Genesis "kind." Only one pair of the dog kind needed to be on the Ark.

God originally put within each "kind" of creature a fantastic genetic capability. As time passed, more and more varieties appeared, but these variations of the same "kind" of creature did not all have to be aboard the Ark bodily. They were there genetically within the pair (or seven pairs, as the case may be) taken on the Ark.

It isn't necessary to consider sea life. It survived in the Flood waters. There were also many other simple forms of aquatic life that were not harmed by water.

Consider that some 60 percent of the animal kingdom live in the sea, and 28 percent of the animal kingdom are insects. The remaining 12 percent average the size of a rhesus monkey.

If insects had to be taken on the Ark (and this is a moot question), with every pair of known modern species of insect given 16 cubic inches of space, only 21 freight cars of space would be required. (Counting Genesis kinds only, the required space is far less.)

Accurate estimates of the number of mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian species on earth today is about 18,000. (Again, recognizing that only kinds, not necessarily species, were included, there would have been far fewer actual animals aboard the ark.) Most animals are unclean, and there were a pair of each unclean animal. But let's be liberal and say 40,000 rhesus-monkey-size animals were on the Ark.

How much space would be required to house them? A letter about animal housing was sent to the London Zoo. Their answer was: "Most animals can be maintained in very close confinement indeed for long periods and remain perfectly healthy. A rhesus monkey, say, can be maintained indefinitely in a cage about 2 ft., 6 inches cubed" (15 cubic feet).

If the cubit were 22.5 inches long,

40,000 cages, each large enough for a rhesus monkey, would have only taken up 20 percent of the Ark's three-million cubic-foot carrying capacity.

So it becomes plain that the interior of the Ark was totally adequate for the animals, the food supply, and the humans aboard it during the Flood.

How Did the Animals Get Where They Are Today?

Each isolated land mass or continent has animals or birds not found elsewhere. Australia has its kangaroo, koala bear, duckbilled platypus, and Tasmanian devil. North America boasts the beaver, rattlesnake, raccoon, turkey and opossum. South America offers the llama, capybara, and sloth. Asia has its peafowl and panda bear. Africa has the giraffe, hippopotamus and zebra. Certain island groups also have kinds of animals not found elsewhere. How did all these animals become segregated after leaving the Ark?

Consider that God — not Noah — originally brought the animals to the Ark (Gen. 6:20). It would not have been a difficult matter for Him to see to it that they also redistributed themselves after the Flood. God is the Originator of animal migration. It was His will that the animals — as well as mankind — replenish and repopulate limited geographical realms after the Flood (Gen. 9:1; 10:5; 11:8-9). It should be no surprise to see both men and animals even today basically segregated around the world. This principle ought to seem basic. All forms of life exist in the specific land areas where they can best flourish.

Neither are the major land masses of the earth as isolated as one might suppose. They have been even less isolated in the past. Witness the existing land bridge between Asia and Africa — the Sinai Peninsula — and Central America between the North and South American continents. The Bering Straits between North America and Asia are quite shallow. Thousands

of square miles are covered by water less than 150 feet deep. Large areas of present ocean between South-eastern Asia, the East Indies, and Australia are less than 600 feet deep. This illustrates that such present-day isolated communities are not impossibly separated from each other by great expanses of deep ocean. This factor may play a part in animal migration after the Flood.

Also, as men travel and migrate, they traditionally take with them familiar plants and animals. Some go with them accidentally. Many animals have spread to new areas in this manner — the rabbit to Australia, the English sparrow and European corn borer to the Americas, etc.

Recent discoveries are showing that much sea traffic existed in the ancient world. The Bible itself shows that Solomon's ships plied the seas and brought back precious items and animals to the Middle East from great distances (I Kings 9:26-28; 10:22; II Chron. 9:10). It is logical to conclude that animals were shipped between other areas as well.

It has also been demonstrated that animals have reached isolated islands on floating masses of vegetation or on storm and flood debris. This has been pointed out by such authors as Rachel Carson in her now classic work *The Sea Around Us*. Whenever an island emerges from the sea, it soon becomes the home of various sorts of animals and plants.

Where Is the Flood in Geology?

Prior to the nineteenth century it was commonly believed the Flood was responsible for practically all geologic phenomena. Whenever a fossil was found, the finder would immediately think of Noah's Flood. But soon cracks in the idea developed. If Noah's Flood was truly responsible for most or all of the earth's fossils, then why isn't the fossil record thoroughly mixed up?

Why do certain layers only contain certain fossils? Why, for example, aren't dinosaur remains ever found mixed with tigers, lions and other forms of modern mammal life? Mammal remains are almost entirely missing from the world of the "terrible lizards."

This enigma multiplies when one considers that the stratigraphic record can only be understood to represent a passage of time greater than the year of Noah's Flood. The bulk of the geologic record represents a sequence of events which cannot be fitted into the short time span of the Flood itself.

For this reason, there was often a difference of opinion among theologians and nineteenth-century Bible-believing scientists as to where the evidence of the Flood is to be found in the rocks. Estimates have ranged from the entire geologic column to a thin clay layer at the site of ancient Ur! (Sir Leonard Woolley, *Excavations at Ur*, London, Ernest Bonn, Ltd., 1954.)

A proper understanding must begin with a knowledge of both the Bible and the earth's silent, yet revealing, fossil record.

The avowed purpose of God in the Flood was to destroy both man and beast from the face of the earth. This is clearly the reason God sent a flood of waters. *It was a time of great extinction.* This is the first vital clue.

But we also need to remember that the Flood was a relatively recent event. Biblical chronology would place it about 43 centuries ago. Therefore we should expect to find the evidence for the Flood towards the top of the earth's layered sequence.

The third clue involves man himself and his world. We live in a world of mammals, birds, and flowering plants.

It should be a world quite similar to the pre-Flood world. The Ark, remember, housed representatives of all kinds of air-breathing land life forms. What we find around us today should fundamentally be the

same type of life Adam and his pre-Flood descendants saw around them. It would be logical to expect certain varieties to become extinct in the Flood, but their *kind* and *type* should still be with us today.

In summary, we could expect to find geological evidence of the Flood by: 1) noting a time of *extinction* in the fossil record, 2) looking toward the *top* of the geologic sequence of rocks, and 3) looking for an extinction of animal types which are *familiar* to us today.

What evidence is, there, then, in the geological column which would lend weight to the worldwide catastrophe precipitated by Noah's Flood?

Extinction Mystery

Dr. George Miller, former supervisor of the famous Los Angeles La Brea Tar Pits, had this to say about the "sticky" problem of extinction.

"We have had two eras of mass vertebrate extinction in the world's existence: that of the dinosaurs . . . and that of the large mammals at the end of the Pleistocene or Ice Age. . . . When that period was over, mammoths, mastadons and saber-toothed cats were extinct — all over the globe.

"It is a mystery. The saber-toothed cats, for instance, were very successful animals. They . . . died out completely. Why? Catastrophe? Plague? Earthquakes? A change in environment or climate? We do not know.

"We do not know, either, the answer to the mysteries within the mysteries. For example: horses went through their own evolution only in the Western Hemisphere — so completely that it takes an expert to tell the bones of the last ancient horses from those of modern ones. They spread throughout the world — reaching the other continents, we think, across the land bridge in which is now the Bering Strait. Camels followed almost the same pattern. Yet . . . both horses and camels became extinct in the Western Hemisphere. Horses remained

wiped off the face of the Americas until the Spaniards reintroduced them a mere 500 years ago. Again, why?" (Holliday, Kate, *West* magazine, July 30, 1972, "By Tar Preserved," pp. 11, 14.)

This revealing quote gives some fundamental facts of paleontology — points we will do well to consider.

Note there have been two times of mass vertebrate extinction in the entire history of the earth. The first was the extinction of the dinosaurs (and it could also be added, flying reptiles and marine reptiles). The second and more recent vertebrate extinction was that of mammals (commonly giant size compared with those living today).

The mammalian extinction is especially interesting. It is recent. Mammals are the dominant vertebrates of today. And, as might be suspected, their selective disappearance after a period of successful life is a mystery to science.

End of Giants

Take, for example, North America. At the end of the Ice Age, hunters in North America were killing the imperial mammoth in the west and the mastodon in parts of the northeast. Further north, the woolly mammoth lived carefree along the fringes of the glaciers. North America was an elephant's paradise.

But these giant, now extinct, forms of elephants were not alone. In that day of giants, we find beavers as big as bears, giant armadillos, giant ground sloths weighing as much as present-day elephants, bison with fantastic six-foot horn spans, the great saber-toothed cats and giant jaguars. These, along with horses and camels, vanished. Why? The land was well suited for them. The Ice Age was over. Yet about 70 percent of all native North American mammals with an adult body weight of over 100 pounds became extinct in a time of plenty.

About a hundred years ago, scientists began to see the magnitude of the extinction problem. Alfred R. Wallace, who developed the idea of

biological evolution simultaneously with Charles Darwin, was struck by the abrupt, strange and recent decimation of mammal life.

In 1876, Wallace noted: "We live in a zoologically impoverished world, from which all the hugest, and fiercest, and strangest forms have recently disappeared . . . yet it is surely a marvelous fact, and one that has hardly been sufficiently dwelt upon, this sudden dying out of so many large Mammalia, not in one place only but over half the land surface of the globe" (Alfred Russel Wallace, *Geographical Distribution of Animals*, New York: Hafner, 1962, Vol. 1, p. 150).

Now after 100 years, scientists know the effect was worldwide. A global disaster struck the earth after the Ice Age that hit the animal kingdom very hard. South America lost nearly all its large animals. Europe and Asia suffered losses as well. The day of giant mammals had come to an end.

One writer wisely noted: "The dinosaurs and the saber-toothed cats did not die out because they had somehow failed. They apparently died out because of some powerful and unusual forces entirely beyond their control" (*Science Digest*, "The Great Dinosaur Disaster," Daniel Cohen, March 1969, p. 52).

"Powerful and unusual" forces? Yes, indeed! And in the case of the recent mammal extinction, the agency appears obvious — the Noahian Flood! (The earlier dinosaur extinction has its place in time before the creation of man.)

Those readers who wish more information about the Flood are invited to write for our reprint article entitled "Worldwide Mammal Massacre."

We have seen how the scriptural record presents a viable solution to a long-standing scientific mystery. Although many details are yet to be clearly understood, the Christian can remain confident that the findings of science continue to support the words of Scripture. □

The King Who Tried to Forget

MANASSEH'S father was righteous and prosperous King Hezekiah. In his boyhood he revelled in the luxurious appointments of a young prince.

He had everything a boy could ever hope for: royalty, comforts, security, and a father who obeyed God and was richly blessed for it. But what was most important to young crown prince Manasseh was that someday he would rule the Kingdom of Judah.

That day was not far off, because Hezekiah died when his son was only twelve years of age. Now the young king had a full chance to "sow his wild oats" with the total resources of the kingdom as his long, 55-year reign began.

Manasseh Forgets God

The very name "Manasseh" means *making to forget* — and Manasseh very quickly forgot whatever good his father had taught him. The first thing the new king did was to discard God's laws. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian, mentions that Manasseh "departed from the

Does the most wicked king who ever ruled the land of Judah still have a chance to enter the Kingdom of God? Or was his so-called "change of heart" merely a "death-bed" repentance — too little, too late?

by C. Roy Hunter

conduct of his father, and fell into a course of life quite contrary thereto, and showed himself in his manners most wicked in all respects, and omitted no sort of impiety . . ." (*Antiquities*, X, 3,1).

But one trait he remembered from his father. When Hezekiah sought God, he did it with *all his heart* (II Chron. 31:21). What Manasseh did was also done *wholeheartedly*, and this included *sinning*.

"And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the chil-

dren of Israel" (II Kings 21:2). He was as wicked as King Ahab of Israel had been some years earlier (verse 3). Manasseh actually had a *contempt* for our great Creator, and he proved it by his actions.

To begin with, he rebuilt the "high places" that Hezekiah had destroyed — altars for pagan worship placed in conspicuous locations. He also made altars for Baal, and he built altars for "all the host of heaven" (sun, moon, and star worship) inside the House of God. He even put a graven image in the Temple itself (verses 4, 5). But as if all this wasn't enough, he sacrificed his own flesh-and-blood son in the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna) as an offering to a pagan god! Furthermore, he dealt with evil spirits — rank demonism — and he practiced witchcraft and enchantments (verse 6).

Manasseh also lived by astrology, as do many today who check their horoscopes in the daily newspapers. But this was only one of the many grievous sins God was holding against him.

When a Leader Goes Wrong

The new king didn't stop by polluting just his own life. He set about to cram his new pagan religion down the throats of his subjects. He led the whole nation astray. "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do *worse than the heathen*, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel" (II Chron. 33:9).

It became extremely dangerous for anyone to worship God. Judah's wicked ruler simply would not tolerate any warnings from God's servants, because he wasn't about to change his way of life. "He barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflown with blood" (*Antiquities*, X,3,1).

Tradition has it, according to Clarke's Commentary, that Isaiah the prophet was put to death by Manasseh, sawn asunder by a wooden saw. (See Hebrews 11:37.)

And the Bible vividly states that Manasseh had shed innocent blood until "he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (II Kings 21:16).

God Gives Warning First

But even though Isaiah was executed for his loyalty to his country, God still spoke through other prophets. There was Hosea, Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk — and others.

The warning was plain. God said He would wipe Jerusalem as a dish, turning it upside down (II Kings 22:13); and He would send the inhabitants of Judah into captivity (verses 14-15). He said that He would bring such evil upon His people for their sins that "whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle" (verse 12).

The message was equally plain — REPENT. But neither the king nor his people would listen. Instead, Manasseh felt that anyone who dared to show the faults of their king or his religion was disloyal — so he had them executed.

God in His great mercy gave plenty of time for repentance — but to no avail. Not only did the king live a sinful life as a "know-it-all" teen-ager who thought his way of ruling was better than his father's way, but he continued from bad to worse throughout all his twenties — and on into his early thirties.

By this time the roots of paganism were so deeply planted throughout the land of Judah that God knew there was only one way to totally uproot them — by uprooting the people themselves.

Now, finally, God was *ready for action*.

For a starter, He brought armies from the king of Assyria, which (according to Josephus) laid waste the country. They caught Manasseh and took him captive, binding him with chains and hooks to take him away to Babylon. It looked like the Jewish king was done for.

But maybe even God changed His plans . . .

Manasseh Obtains Mercy!

Some historians believe that Manasseh started praying first to the heathen gods for release from his enemies — and, this having failed, decided to go to the real God as a last resort.

Whether or not he talked to false gods first is not mentioned in the biblical account. But one thing is *certain*. The Bible does not exaggerate when stating that Manasseh "*humbled himself GREATLY* before the God of his fathers" (II Chron. 33:12).

Suddenly the wretchedness of his whole life stared him in the face — his stinking sins in full, painful and unforgettable view. Not only did he realize that he was at the mercy of the Babylonian king, in danger of death, but he also had weighing on his conscience the fact that *he himself* had been responsible for thousands of his own people dying merciless deaths. (Compare the account in Josephus.) He was about to reap what he had sown.

Now, put yourself in Manasseh's shoes for a minute. Suppose you knew that God had added *fifteen years* to your father's life after he prayed? Undoubtedly Hezekiah told his own son *firsthand* how the great God had supernaturally caused the sun to retreat ten degrees — simply to show Hezekiah that his life would be spared.

If you knew you had been a wicked tyrant, having killed countless righteous men, what thoughts would race through *your* mind? Wouldn't you ask for another chance? And, realizing that you were not worthy of that second chance, wouldn't you promise God that things would be *different*?

The Bible doesn't record Manasseh's prayer; but whatever he said was effective. It got results. Our great and merciful God forgave even wicked King Manasseh and *restored him to his kingdom!* Yet this man had sinned habitually year after year — despite God's warnings — for well over two decades!

If you had been God, would you have been willing to forgive? Further, would you have even been willing to put this man back into office? Think about it.

But Was Manasseh's Repentance Real?

Jesus Christ said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). By looking at the fruits in Manasseh's life, we can find out whether or not he meant business.

To begin with, the reinstated Jewish king was apparently only in his early or mid-thirties when he was carried off to Babylon. But he lived to be 67 years old. This means that, while he had ruled in tyranny for a little more than 20 years, he was given over *30 years* to reign righteously!

Upon reading the account in II Chronicles 33:13, you can find that God "heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. *Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.*" He not only *knew* the Lord was God, but he

did something about it! Read verses 15 and 16:

“And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and *commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel.*”

Read between the lines. It took *guts and character* to publicly admit he needed to change his life! He had to swallow a lot of pride to command his people to serve God after he had spent years telling them just the opposite. God still caused the Jewish people to go into Babylonian captivity for turning to paganism, but it did not happen during Manasseh's life — this occurred a couple of generations later, when Judah had another king who would *not* repent.

Josephus' account goes into more detail about Manasseh's later life: “So Manasseh was released by the king of Babylon, and escaped the danger he was in; and when he had come to Jerusalem, he endeavoured, if it was possible, *to cast out of his memory* those his former sins against God, of which he now **REPENTED**, and to apply himself to a very religious life. He sanctified the temple, and purged the city, and for the remainder of his days he was intent on nothing but to return his thanks to God for his deliverance . . .” (*Antiquities*, X,3,2, emphasis ours).

Manasseh didn't just pray, he changed his whole way of living!

Josephus goes on to show that “he offered the legal sacrifices as Moses commanded; and when he had re-established what concerned the divine worship, *as it ought to be*, he took care of the security of Jerusalem.”

The biblical account in II Chronicles mentions the building of the wall — the security of Jerusalem — in the verse *preceding* the ones

about Manasseh taking away the “strange gods”; but the account in the Bible does not necessarily say *which* came first. But if the account in Josephus is correct, Manasseh wanted to get right with his God before worrying about the security of the country — apparently trusting God to protect Jerusalem while he was busy destroying the evil that brought on the punishment.

Josephus continues his account by saying, “He did not only repair the old walls with great diligence, but added another wall to the former. He also built very lofty towers, and the garrisoned places before the city he strengthened, not only in other respects, but with provisions of all sorts that they wanted . . .” WHO wanted? His subjects! Apparently Manasseh had finally learned to listen to the people under him.

But was his repentance *lasting*?

Read on: “. . . And, indeed, when he had *changed* his former course, he so led his life for the time to come, that from the time of his return to piety towards God, he was deemed a *happy man*, and a *pattern for imitation.*”

Truly an inspiring example of change for a man who had made such a mess of his life.

A Message for All Who Serve God

In his youth, King Manasseh tried to forget God. In his maturity, he tried to forget the sins of his youth.

Do you suppose Christ had Manasseh in mind when He said, “He who is forgiven much *loves much*”?

Yet God didn't expect penance from Manasseh, but He *did* expect him to *change*. And Manasseh, rather than living in sorrow the rest of his life because of his wicked youth, was deemed a happy man! He couldn't have been happy if he wasn't forgiven.

It takes a lot of love to forgive — and God loved even wicked King Manasseh. Would *you* have been willing to forgive King Manasseh? Are you even willing to forgive your

brother unto “seventy times seven”? (Matt. 18:21-22.) If not, God will not forgive *your* sins (Matt. 6:14-15), and we ALL do sin — now — whether we believe it or not!

Notice I John 1:8 — “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

But, on the other hand, “If we *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (verse 9).

God always blesses *anyone* who confesses and turns from sin. Manasseh's repentance is one of the most profound in all the Bible, because it shows that our God is so filled with compassion that He will honor the sincere repentance of anyone, no matter how unregenerate and rotten his past deeds.

Surely no king of Israel or Judah ever provoked God's wrath more with his blatant idolatry. Only Ahab could begin to rival Manasseh in wickedness (II Kings 21:3). Yet our God is so brimful of mercy that He also honored even Ahab's humility, though in Ahab's case he never really repented (I Kings 21:29).

God will forgive any person who makes a full surrender to Him without any reservations — no matter how terrible or how many have been his sins. *God will forgive them all!* (Matt. 12:31.) “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. *As far as the east is from the west*, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him” (Ps. 103:11-13).

God made sure that His Word contained examples of the real repentance of grievous sinners. So no one should ever say, “My sins are so bad that God couldn't possibly forgive me.”

And no matter how you may feel about your personal sins, that same merciful God stands ready *to forgive you* upon genuine repentance (Ps. 86:5). □

FOR ME Christmas was one of the most joyous times of the year. Well do I remember, as I grew up in New York and Chicago, the cut pine trees in the public squares, and the colored orbs and bulbs with which they were hung. I remember how the ringing of bells and carols filled the air, and how the streets and boulevards were carpeted with newly fallen layers of clean white snow. Oh, the excitement of anticipating a visit from St. Nick!

But strangely enough, not till age eleven or twelve did I begin to grasp that the central figure of Christmas was not supposed to be Santa Claus; instead, this merry holiday was supposed to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

The reason for this was simple. My family was not devout. I had

Santa Claus, reindeer, decorated trees and candy canes. What have these to do with Christ? Is Christmas Christian? And should it be observed?

received no religious instruction or training of any kind during my formative years. Consequently, when it came to God and religion, I just couldn't have cared less. As Christmas rolled around, Christ and salvation were the last things to enter my mind. I simply thought of Santa Claus, reindeer, colored lights, gifts, and my stocking full of "goodies."

What about you? Did you think of Christ in Christmas — or of Santa Claus, candy canes, and *getting?*

Years later as a young man enter-

ing my twenties, a marvelous thing happened. The great creator God opened my mind and began to work with me. He caused me to begin to understand some basic truths and principles. He made me realize I needed a Saviour, who I learned was Jesus Christ — whose birthday we supposedly celebrate at Christmas time.

But somehow the whole thing still seemed so vague and nebulous. Since God's Word, the Bible, admonished me to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21), and since I knew very little about God and salvation, I set out to learn more about Jesus Christ — and to cement the connection I supposed existed between Christ and Christmas.

Was I ever in for a shock!

by E. Michael Heiss



Not in the Bible

To begin with, I found that the word "Christmas" is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. Furthermore, there is no biblical evidence that any of the original apostles ever observed what we know as Christmas. In fact, historians and biblical scholars have clearly demonstrated that Christmas was *never* observed by the early New Testament Church.

What's more, we observe the wrong day. Jesus was born nowhere near December 25th. This is best illustrated by a well-known Christmas carol, *The First Noel*. The words, you probably remember, go like this: "The first Noel, the angel did say, was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay. In fields where they lay keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep."

The song is beautiful, but the words do not make sense and are contradictory. What shepherd in his right mind is going to keep his sheep out in the open on a freezing "winter's night"?

True enough, the New Testament says there were "... shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). But it is a historical fact that shepherds in Judaea brought in their flocks from the fields when autumn commenced (September-October), and sent them back at the beginning of spring (March-April). There is no way Christ could have been born on December 25th. (Write for our free article "When Was Christ Born?" for a more detailed explanation.)

How Many Wise Men?

How many times have you gazed upon "nativity scenes" depicting Jesus as a babe in a manger with Mary and Joseph nearby and the three wise men presenting their gifts?

Were you led to think there were three wise men? And were you led to think that they presented their gifts to Jesus while he lay in a manger?

I was — but I was wrong.

The Bible does *not* tell us how many wise men came to Jesus. It says only that they presented Christ with three kinds of gifts — gold, frankincense, and myrrh. See Matthew 2:1-11.

there is anything biblically correct about the Christmas story. In fact, you may well question whether there is any connection at all between Christ and Christmas, and whether observance of Christmas even honors Christ.

"For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers, that it move not"

Jeremiah 10:3,4

Three types of gifts are not proof that there were three wise men. Accounts preserved in the Near East state there were twelve wise men who were accompanied by a retinue of as many as one thousand persons. It does seem likely there were more than three in their party, because I doubt very much that *all Jerusalem* would be troubled because three strangers came asking questions (Matt. 2:3).

The Wrong Setting

Furthermore, these wise men did not present their gifts to Christ while he lay in a manger. To be sure, Jesus was laid in a manger shortly after being born (Luke 2:7). But by the time the wise men arrived on the scene, he was in a house (Matt. 2:11). By this time Jesus was already several weeks or months old. The event here described is not what you could consider a typical birthday party.

So not only do we have no biblical evidence for our Christmas observance, but we've got the wrong day, possibly the wrong number of wise men, and certainly the wrong setting for their visit.

Outside of Christ's being laid in a manger, you may begin to wonder if

Why Gifts for Christ?

Most people seem to like the custom of giving and receiving gifts at Christmas time. Gift giving is supposedly based on what the wise men did. True enough, the wise men brought gifts; but they gave their gifts to Christ — *not to each other*.

And understand, they did not present their gifts to Jesus because it was His birthday. The wise men brought gifts to Christ because He was a king. Remember what they asked upon arriving in Jerusalem? "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star [angel — Rev. 1:20] in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matt. 2:2).

It was the universal custom to present a gift to a king when being ushered into his presence for the first time. The same holds true for today. If for some reason you are granted an audience with a king, president or prime minister — the head of a "sovereign" state — it is still customary to present a gift of some sort in honor of that leader's office.

That's exactly what the wise men did. They gave Jesus gifts because He was born to be a king — destined to rule over all twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 2:6). Other prophecies reveal

He is destined to rule over far more than Israel. He is described as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). All power in heaven and earth has been given to Him (Matt. 28:18). No wonder these dignitaries from the East came bearing such costly gifts as gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Christmas Doesn't Honor Christ

Jesus said absolutely nothing about celebrating His birthday. So why do it? Especially on a day which is nowhere near His birthdate — with decorations and customs totally foreign to Him, and giving gifts to each other rather than to Christ.

Look at it this way. Suppose a group of your close friends decide to celebrate your birthday without saying a word to you or taking into consideration any of your thoughts or desires. They go about it by choosing a date which is not your birthday and a location where you won't be. They arrive at the appointed time and place and proceed to enjoy themselves thoroughly — singing, feasting and presenting each other with gifts in your name. And all the while they are in reality totally ignoring you — not giving you so much as a single gift.

Yet these "friends" of yours claim they are celebrating *your* birthday — that they are doing all this in *your* honor. But are they? How would you feel about it?

Well, I wonder what Christ thinks about Christmas. After all, it's supposed to be His birthday. We say we are doing it in His honor. Yet we observe it on a day which is not His birthday, and we give Him very few gifts — if any. Are we really doing all this in Christ's honor? Have we ever taken the time to ask whether we *should* observe Christmas?

If not, it's time we did!

No Connection

It is time we faced the simple fact that there is *no* link between Christ and *our* Christmas with its Santa Claus, reindeer, decorated pine

trees, candy canes, wreaths, etc. — that it just doesn't honor Christ. If you can find any such link or valid connection, it's more than I can do. You may try — and if you find it, I would appreciate hearing from you — I really would. But I can tell you right now that it's a lost cause. I know, because I tried — and I failed. And it's no use trying to "put Christ back in Christmas" — because He was never in it in the first place.

Certainly our Christmas symbols do honor someone, but that someone is not Jesus of Nazareth. You'd be amazed to find out who it is. If you would like to understand the historical origins of Christmas and whose birthday it honors, then write for our free booklet *The Plain Truth About Christmas*. As its title indicates, it will make the matter plain to you, and you will be as shocked and astonished as I was.

God's Holy Days

One final thought about Christmas. It overshadows and obscures what the Bible calls the "feasts of the Eternal." Yes, God does have festivals which He calls *His* feasts — days which are holy to Him. But Christmas isn't one of them.

Do you know what these Holy Days are? Can you name them? Probably not. You may never even have heard of them. Yet you can find them listed in your Bible in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus.

Jesus kept these days. So did Peter, James, John, Paul, and all the original apostles. In fact, the entire early New Testament Church observed these "feasts of the Eternal." Shouldn't you?

If you would like to honor Jesus Christ by observing the feast days He observed, then write for our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* It will make plain to you the meaning of these festivals, and why God places such importance upon them. These feasts of God actually picture God's plan for all mankind. This booklet explains that plan step by step. Don't hesitate — write for your free copy today. □

How your Good News subscription has been paid

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Continued from page 3)

Now He is only *warning* this world, by sending it a powerful WITNESS of the promised intention of God Almighty and Jesus Christ of Nazareth, His Son, to *intervene* in human affairs — but He is not begging, pleading, nagging at human-kind to BELIEVE Him.

I hope I have made this clear. *Your* belief or *my* belief does not change or alter the purpose or the plan of God.

Even the Disciples Did Not Believe Jesus

Even Jesus' own closest companions, His own disciples, didn't believe Him much of the time. They didn't really believe He would be resurrected from the dead. In the Garden of Gethsemane — on the night just before He was crucified — they so doubted Him that "... they all forsook him, and fled" (Mark 14:50).

Later, even after they had all seen and recognized Jesus (John 20:19-29), Peter said, "I go a fishing," obviously meaning he was returning to his former occupation as much as to say, "What's the use? It was a good thing while it lasted, but now that they've killed Him, what's the use going on any further?"

Several of the disciples followed Peter back up to Northern Palestine and the Sea of Galilee, to his fishing business (John 21:3).

Likewise, others scattered to their separate ways — fully expecting to pick up the reins of their former lives. Jesus had to *prove* by many infallible proofs, even personally making them HANDLE Him, as in Thomas' case, before He could MAKE them believe He had even been resurrected!

Then they KNEW! The disciples became *believable* after that; preaching in real *power*, and with real FAITH, and backed up by fantastic MIRACLES, *because they believed!* No, not just "believed" in the way YOU might believe — not just "believed" in the way people are accustomed to that word in "Christian" parlance — they didn't just

"believe" the way millions claim to "believe" in God for feeling, for blessings, or "believe" on His Word today.

They KNEW! They *knew* and knew that they knew Jesus Christ of Nazareth was alive — that He had walked out of that tomb, and that He was the glorified Son of God who was going to return to this earth just as He had said!

But all during that 3½ years' experience prior to their real conversion and begettal with the Holy Spirit, those disciples "believed on" Jesus. But deep down inside, they just didn't BELIEVE HIM!

Do You Just Believe "On Jesus"?

Today — it's no different. Millions of professing Christians may "believe on" Jesus; they believe He WAS the Christ; believe He was the Son of God; even believe in His shed blood for remission of their personal sins — but those same millions DO NOT BELIEVE WHAT HE SAID; don't believe HIM!

What about you? If you "believe on" Jesus — believe He is your Saviour, and the only name given under heaven whereby men must be saved, do you also *believe what He said?*

One prophecy of Christ simply towers above them all. The *surest* prophecy involves no dates, no special understanding of Greek or Hebrew, no inside knowledge of biblical types or symbolism, requires no knowledge of vague or obscure verses in Zechariah, Joel or Malachi. It requires no knowledge of Babylonian or Egyptian chronology, or time-cycles, or numerical meanings or the interpretations of "times and seasons." You don't need to memorize dates for the Creation, the Exodus, the Flood of Noah, memorize the ages of patriarchs, or know the dates of the fall of Babylon, or the rule of Artaxerxes. You need only BELIEVE Jesus Christ! You need only *understand what He said — and believe it!* You need to KNOW it is true!

Jesus made one specific promise over and over again. When He was taken up to heaven, that same promise was repeated to His disciples even by angels, as the very first message ever to come down out of heaven after Jesus was taken up.

That message was: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men [angels] stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come* in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

Jesus said over and over again He would come back to this earth. He told His disciples, "For the Son of man shall COME in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). He said, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, *when he shall come* in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

Jesus said to His disciples then, and He says to all of us today, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord *when he cometh* shall find watching. . . . And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the *Son of man cometh* at an hour [or time] when ye think not" (Luke 12:37, 39-40).

There are millions upon millions of professing, churchgoing "Christian" people who have a deep affection and sentiment toward "Jesus Christ."

Those millions no doubt feel they have a direct relationship with Jesus — they may have signs over their dining room tables or in their kitchens which say "God bless our

home," or "Jesus is the silent guest at every meal in this home," and they may have pictures in their Bibles, and even various religious pictures or articles in their homes.

And those same millions just do not believe much of what Jesus Christ of Nazareth said!

Today, there seems to be a strong revival of "fundamentalist Christianity" with a resurgence of belief in the second coming of Christ on the part of many evangelists, together with large numbers of the "Jesus people," and literally dozens of other sects and churches.

While this may appear to be very good on its surface — it makes one wonder if those same people really understand that the second coming of Jesus Christ is with "fury poured out" and is at the culmination of the Day of the Lord — that great day of gloominess, "a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel 2:2), and that God's Word thunders a warning to all when it says, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! . . . the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light" (Amos 5:18).

What Is Needed!

While a converted Christian can earnestly desire the second coming of Jesus Christ to once and for all solve this world's problems, and bring the world peace, as well as save that individual by putting him into God's Kingdom — a converted Christian will also know that the glorified Jesus Christ is going to come, followed by "armies" (Rev. 19:14) and that He is coming as a powerful, war-making and conquering KING, not as a sweet and kindly "humble carpenter from Nazareth."

In order to really UNDERSTAND the second coming of Jesus Christ as a pragmatic and practical FACT, you simply MUST allow God's Spirit to wash out of your mind all the cobwebs of past sentimentality and "doctrine" in the sense of accepting and believing in the second coming of Jesus Christ only as a "tenet of faith." You need to look out your

window at the landscape around your own home, the hills and mountains where you live, thinking of the entirety of the country around you, the state, the county, or nation in which you reside — this broad earth with all of its continents and its vast, heaving seas.

Focus your mind on the fact of the earth as being a little pinpoint of light out in the midst of the blackness of the universe, our bright little spaceship upon which all we human beings depend in our narrow ecosphere for our very day-to-day sustenance, and come to KNOW in your mind that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is coming to this earth just as surely as you may have witnessed the return of a space capsule from a lunar landing! You need to UNDERSTAND the second coming of Jesus Christ as a practical fact of future world history, just around the corner from you, as a great EVENT, and not just as a biblical "argument" or something you "believe," as you believe some moral dogma, political slogan or historical fact.

You need to capture a personal vision of what the second coming of Jesus Christ will really be LIKE — just as surely as Jesus in His transfiguration gave His own disciples a foretaste of what He would be like and who would be there during His millennial reign.

The Reality of Jesus' Second Coming

Jesus continually tried to get His disciples' minds to focus on the *reality* of His second coming as a pragmatic FACT of future history. He said, "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory!" (Luke 21:27).

When Jesus was on trial for His life, knowing that He would have to endure a brutal and wretched beating, coupled with having spikes driven through his hands and feet into an upright pale, having Himself "raised up" as the prophecies implied, naked, bleeding, before men — and then to die with the thrust of a huge

Roman spear into His side, He said, looking levelly into the eyes of the High Priest, ". . . Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

Not only did Jesus know He would inspire those words to be preserved for you and for me to read today, but I'm sure He also wanted the impact of those words to burn deeply into the consciousness of that super-critical priest, searing, like a hot knife into his vitals, so that at some future day when he is resurrected and beholds that very same personage, only this time with His eyes blazing as the sun, he too will fall to his knees in complete and total repentance and say, "Behold, my King and my God."

Jesus did a great deal of His own personal "witnessing," but it was not like the kind of "witnessing" you see prated about today — such as a nagging, wheedling "Won't you please believe?" or "Do you know what the Lord has done for me?" or "Smile, Jesus loves you!"

There is not a single writer of the New Testament who does not allude to or directly talk about the second coming of Jesus Christ. (See the many New Testament scriptures on page 2.) The Apostle Paul referred to it again and again, and his entire fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians deals with the second coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection. He wrote to the Church at Thessalonica, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord . . . for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God . . ." (I Thess. 4:15-16).

And also he used that great event as a SURE PROPHECY — even as if it were something to be used as in a vow or "oath," though Jesus commands that we swear no oath. The Apostle Paul said, "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (II Thess. 2:1), just as someone might earnestly urge someone by some great fact or event which is as

immovable as the Rock of Gibraltar!

Paul told Timothy, "I give thee charge in the sight of God . . . that you keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the *appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Tim. 6:13-14).

Later, when Paul knew his own martyrdom was impending, he wrote to Timothy, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand . . . henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but all them also that *love his appearing*" (II Tim. 4:6, 8).

The Book of Revelation

The Apostle John, that disciple "whom Jesus loved," wrote of the second coming of Jesus Christ continually. He said, ". . . But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). The closing idea — the next to last verse — of the entirety of the New Testament summarizes the most vital impact of all the New Testament by saying, "He [Jesus] which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

The book of Revelation, inspired to be written of John on the Island of Patmos, is a book which gives such shocking and mind-boggling pictures of the last plagues and the effects upon land, crops, cattle, fish in the sea, mankind, and our entire ecosphere or biosphere, that it seems there could be hardly any human beings surviving at the culmination of all these events.

The book of Revelation does not give any "sentimentality" to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Rather, it shows the arrival of Jesus Christ at the last moment of such hugely destructive plagues — many of them brought about directly by man himself, and others as a result of the divine wrath and intervention of God, that one wonders

in reading of those shocking biblical symbolisms, whether there could be a man, woman, or child left alive.

It is only through Jesus' own promise that "for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:22), that you can know that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is going to cut short the awful global conflict which could spell cosmocide.

Old Testament Prophecies

Christ's second coming is virtually the whole **THEME** of the New Testament, and, in practical fact, is a main part of all of the Old Testament prophecies, including whole chapters in the book of Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and others in Hosea, Amos, and the whole book of Zephaniah, as well as much of Zechariah and Malachi. (See page 2 for detailed biblical quotes.)

Factually, the obvious impact of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the arrival of a conquering **KING TO RULE** is the reason why the Jewish leadership of Jesus' day completely misunderstood, in their carnal vanity, the prophecies concerning "Emmanuel," and that concerning "a virgin shall conceive," and those concerning Jesus' earthly ministry and messiahship.

They so firmly expected a great conquering King that they overlooked the obvious prophecies concerning God sending His Son to this earth to qualify for its future world rulership — but appearing the first time to "magnify the Law and make it honorable," as well as to die for the sins of the world which, after all, was the workmanship of His own hands (see John 1).

A Warning and a Witness

The purpose of this article is not to "nag" you into "believing" the strongest and surest prophecy in all the Bible! It is, rather, to *warn* you that the second coming of Jesus Christ is a soon-to-be-accomplished *fact of history* — to be the proper **WITNESS** to you, as Jesus said in

Matthew 24:14, and to let you do whatever you will with this knowledge.

It is the commission of Jesus Christ's servants on this earth today to "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their sins"! There can be no mistaking the absolute and incontrovertible **FACT** of the soon coming intervention of Almighty God by sending Jesus Christ to this earth.

It is not our job to use persuasive psychology, repetition, pleadings or beggings, or any "gimmicks" of man to get more and more people to "believe" that great fact of future history. It is, rather, our commission to "preach this Gospel of the Kingdom of God," that Jesus is the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary, that He lived a righteous and perfect life as an example for us, died to shed His blood for our own past guilt, was resurrected and ascended to the right hand of God the Father, where He awaits the "time of restoration of all things" — and after we preach this Gospel of the Kingdom of God, "THEN shall the end come."

Remember, understanding the fact of Jesus' future arrival on this earth (and the countdown has no doubt already begun in heaven!) does not depend upon the clever interpretation of some "lost" or obscure portion of Holy Writ, scholarly knowledge of other languages, or the use of various "signs and symbols."

It was the entire message of the early New Testament apostles, and the very reason they died. It is the entire message of God's true Church today, and the very reason we live — and may yet still die.

Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth — the real earth upon which you walk, eat, sleep and breathe.

Are you going to **DO** anything about your own life now — or will you claim, even after reading an article such as this, when you look into the face of Jesus Christ of Nazareth in future years, "But I didn't know — no one ever told me"? □

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WHAT IS A REAL CHRISTIAN?

Perhaps you've heard many definitions. But what is the biblical definition? Is a person a Christian if he professes a personal belief in Jesus Christ? Is that enough?

And what are the very basic down-to-earth *fundamentals* of Christianity — the very heart, the root and core of the teachings of Christ? What makes a person a real Christian?

Is Christianity a way of life? Must an individual change his basic way of living to become a Christian? Is repentance necessary? Or is Christianity just a matter of "swearing off" smoking or some other unchristian habit?

And what about water baptism? Is this biblical ceremony a pre-condition to real Christianity? Does it matter which mode or method is used? Are sprinkling and pouring just as valid as total immersion in water?

All these questions and many more are answered in this booklet written by Garner Ted Armstrong — he answers

in depth, *What Is a Real Christian?* Write for your free copy.

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