

GN

The Good News

CROWD APATHY-
EPITAPH FOR
THE
END TIME

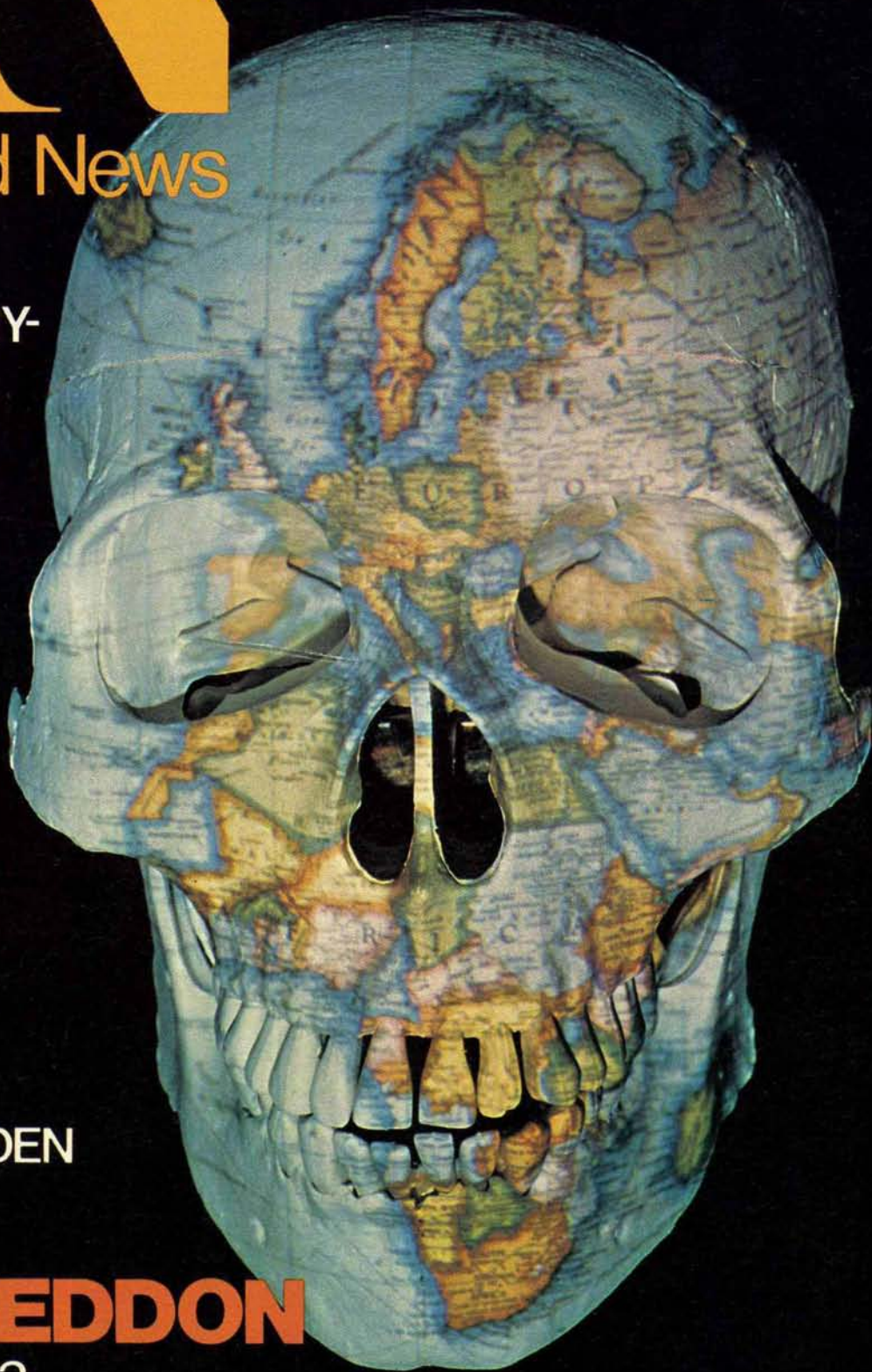
"GIVE
US
THIS DAY..."

WHAT IS SIN?

TOMORROW'S
WORLD-
A GLOBAL
GARDEN OF EDEN

ARMAGEDDON

In Your Lifetime?



GN

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Vol. XXIV No. 7

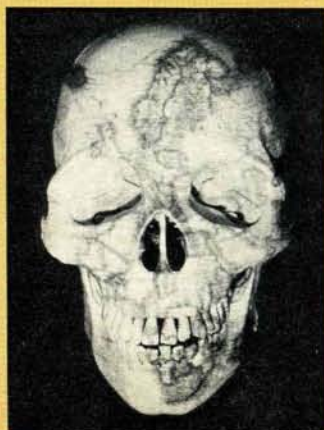
July 1975

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Almost everyone has heard the term "Armageddon," but few understand what it really is. The article beginning on page 8 explains the meaning — and what it portends for a planet faced with the ominous threat of its own destruction.

Warren Watson — GN

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Garner Ted Armstrong

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United States: Benjamin Chapman; International Editions: Leslie McCullough

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Part One

"GIVE US THIS DAY..."

by Garner Ted Armstrong

Among other things, the Bible, believe it or not, is a book about money! Almost from one end to the other — from the account of Abraham's tithing and the spoiling of the kings (Gen. 14) right on down to the very last book which describes gold, silver and precious jewelry in the New Jerusalem — the Bible is filled with accounts, analogies, stories and lessons about money. Jesus Christ constantly used talents, pounds and pennies as spiritual analogies in His parables to get across vital lessons in Christian doctrine or living. But the biblical perspective of money and wealth is a balanced perspective. The Bible plainly tells us that riches, wealth and money are not intrinsically evil; it's the wrong use of such wealth and the wrong attitude toward it that is the problem. Never before in our history have we witnessed such an unbridled lust for money. Never before in our history have we been so driven by a virtual lust for savings and monetary security. Never before have we needed more to understand and practice the biblical principles concerning monetary wealth. Never before have we needed to pray more: "Give us this day our daily bread."

UPI



IN OUR materialistic, modern Western societies, money is what seems to make the world go around. But did you ever look up the word "money" in a dictionary? It actually comes from an old French word *monnaie*. Basically, it is something that is generally accepted as a medium of exchange or as a means of payment. It actually goes back to the word "mint," which means to stamp or coin or impress — or simply to make something into that which we know as a means of payment or a medium of exchange.

So money is what you make it. It has been almost everything from a piece of clothing to sand on the seashore, or even millstones on the island of Yap.

In the United States (and many other countries), money is represented by the dollar — originally *taler*, an old German term. Any dollar-conscious American traveling in South America suddenly finds himself dealing in bolivars (named after Simon Bolivar, liberator of South America), escudos, cruzeiros, pesetas, pesos, etc. — depending on which particular Latin country he happens to be passing through. Every country around the globe, it seems, has to have a different name for its particular medium of exchange — marks, francs, pounds, balasars (ever heard of that one?), lira, rubles, yen, ad infinitum.

A Universal Preoccupation

But whatever you call money and wherever you go, one thing is for sure: people everywhere are preoccupied with it to the point of almost making it into a kind of universal mystique. You have probably dreamed about finding money, or being the recipient of a fantastically large check, or winning some sort of a quiz-show prize. People are universally preoccupied with money — not so much because of its beauty (there is really nothing very beautiful about a crumpled-up, old, ancient one-dollar bill — or even a one-hundred-dollar bill), but what money represents. It is the things

money can buy that people are concerned with, and the power and prestige that all too often money seems to be able to buy in this turned-upside-down society of ours.

You have heard all of the old clichés that have become attached to money. One is: "Well, if money is going to make me miserable, at least I'd prefer to be miserable in style." Such almost universally applicable statements show that all of mankind, as a whole, has an innate desire for money which frequently reflects itself in apprehension, worry and concern. This universal lust and desire for money almost amounts to a strange mystique with spiritual overtones rattling around in our minds whenever we think about it.

A Warning to the Rich

The book of James contains perhaps the most volatile chapter in all the Bible about riches. The fifth chapter includes a very serious, sober condemnation and warning to all the rich and the would-be rich — not a judgment against being rich of itself, but a severe admonition about the wrong use of wealth.

James says: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire" (verses 1-3).

Technically speaking, gold and silver simply do not rust. So James is writing in a spiritual vein about the corruption of wealth even beyond the grave — and what it does to any man or woman who would set their hearts on it for strictly selfish uses or purposes.

Wealthy people do not always understand what the apostle Paul knew down to the depths of his being: "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (I Tim. 6:7). The old saying that "you can't take it with you" certainly squares with the Scriptures. But it hasn't stopped

people from trying. Some of the greatest monuments on earth are a direct consequence of the desire of famous and wealthy people to take their wealth with them. The elaborate devices used to seal Pharaohs in their tombs were employed not so much to protect the bodies of these ancient Egyptian rulers, but to secure and safeguard all the material wealth they hoped to take with them beyond the River Styx (the life beyond the grave).

James continues: "... Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (5:3). Does this scripture even remotely imply or infer that there is something intrinsically and inherently wrong with being rich? The answer is an unqualified "no," especially when you put this verse together and in concert with all of the other scriptures on the subject.

Did you know, for instance, that your heavenly Father is a multi-billionaire? God Almighty owns everything — the entirety of the universe and all of the continents and the oceans. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (Hag. 2:8).

So is there something wrong with gold *per se*? No, gold is just a lifeless metal ranging all the way from very, very light yellow (actually "white gold") down to a deep, dark orange. Gold is the most malleable metal extant on the face of the earth. One ounce can be stretched into a thin wire that will conduct electricity for twenty-five miles — a wire far thinner than a strand of human hair.

From time immemorial, because of its scarcity and because of its beauty, gold has been very much in demand. But did you know that all the gold that has ever been discovered could be packed away in the hold of just one sea tanker? Maybe in this perspective we can all begin to understand how much gold has really been found in the history of the world.

Gold, of and by itself, is worth absolutely nothing — with the exception of fillings in teeth, jewelry and as a conductor of electricity.

Neither is money — whether in the form of dollars, pounds, escudos, lira, francs, pesos, etc. Mediums of exchange are worth only what value people place upon or attach to them. It's strictly a confidence game — and when people lose confidence in the government backing the money, then that particular means of payment is virtually valueless.

The Wrong Use of Wealth

God's Word does not condemn wealth as such. But the apostle James clarifies what is condemned concerning riches in the Bible. Verse 4: "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." These rich men were doing something that was totally unjustifiable in God's sight. They were abusing the responsibilities that wealth automatically thrusts on those that would possess it. The basic commandment against stealing (Ex. 20:15) was being flagrantly broken. Workers were either being totally rooked out of their wages, or the wages were so pitifully low as to make it virtually impossible to keep a body together.

Continue with verses 5 and 6: "Ye have lived in pleasure [at the expense of your laborers] on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just [the righteous, Psalm 119:172]; and he doth not resist you." So it's not simply riches that are being condemned; it's the false and unethical methods of obtaining them and their outrageous, shocking, unashamed abuses.

Wealth and riches, garnered by the blessings and prosperity emanating from God Himself, are right and good. There are many, many scriptures corroborating this biblical truism. "... Whatsoever he [the righteous man] doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). "And the Eternal was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous

man..." (Gen. 39:2). "... No good thing will he [God] withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children [grandchildren]" (Prov. 13:22). "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health," God says through the apostle John (III John 2). Jesus Himself said: "... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

And, of course, our multibillionaire heavenly Father dwells among solid gold, silver and precious stones. Even the feet of our living Saviour, Jesus Christ, are like burnished gold and bronze, pictured with a brilliant face that shines like the sun in its strength (Rev. 1:13-17).

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered..."
(James 5:1-3).

So, once again, it's a matter of the proper attitude toward wealth and riches. As David warned: "... If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Psalm 62:10).

Continuing in the fifth chapter of James: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient..." (verses 7-8). James is teaching people who are miserable, poor and afflicted (*not* being paid a fair wage) to wait upon God for vengeance. "... Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Eternal" (Rom. 12:19). Those that have come by their wealth by nefarious and illegal means, along with those who have kept back honest wages

from others, are going to have to reap exactly what they have sown.

But James is not the only New Testament figure to comment extensively on the subject of riches and money. You would be absolutely amazed at how many times Jesus Christ used wages, talents, pounds, "the mammon of unrighteousness," and money in His parables about the Kingdom of God. Why? Because people's minds from time immemorial have been hung up on money! One disciple in particular really had his mind focused on money. He happened to be the treasurer (the one with the money bag) for Jesus Christ and the other eleven disciples. His name was Judas Iscariot.

Judas didn't like the way Jesus conducted the Work of God; he didn't like the way Christ spent money; he didn't care for the way Jesus allowed money to be spent on Himself (i.e., the account of the woman with the alabaster box of precious ointment).

Finally Judas, who incidentally was a thief, conspired to betray Jesus for a fairly large sum of money — 30 pieces of silver.

Lazarus and the Rich Man

The most famous of all so-called biblical "attacks" against rich men is found in the sixteenth chapter of Luke. Jesus said: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his [the rich man's] gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores" (verses 19-21). And you're probably familiar with the rest of the story of how the beggar and the rich man both died and how that this account is *not* an example of an eternal, ever-burning hellfire. (If not, write for our free booklet *Is There a Real Hell Fire?* — part II of which explains the entire story of Lazarus and the rich man.)

For my purpose in this article, the point I want to bring out is compacted into verse 25: "But Abraham said [to the rich man], Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Why should that be so? Because the rich man never lifted a finger to give even the tiniest percentage of his wealth to Lazarus. He wouldn't even give a pittance or crumb from his table to this terribly destitute and hopelessly diseased beggar. He had no mercy! There was Lazarus sitting by his door every day. Apparently he never even paid any attention to him.

No condemnation here about the man being rich; the riches were not what was wrong with him. It was the rich man's absolute determination not to part with a penny of his wealth even in the stark face of abject human misery. The rich man was condemned because he did not discharge his duty to Lazarus; he plainly abused the wealth God had allowed him to have.

The Rich Young Man

The same overall biblical principle is brought out in a different setting in Matthew the nineteenth chapter. "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he [Jesus] said unto him . . . if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (verses 16-17). Verses 18 and 19 show that Jesus was talking about the Ten Commandments. "The young man saith unto him [Jesus], All these things [points, tenets] have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" (Verse 20.)

Then Jesus Christ said a very strange thing: "... If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (verse 21).

Is this a command from Jesus Christ to everybody in this world with an income over \$10,000 a year

to sell their homes, hock their wedding rings, give up all their possessions including their automobiles, appliances and furniture, generally wipe themselves out financially to the point of bankruptcy, and then come and follow Him? (Where would you go to follow Him? How will you eat? Where will you sleep? What will you live on?)

No, of course not. The very plain scriptural meaning, especially in context with other verses on the subject, is that Jesus was offering this young man a special discipleship — the opportunity to become a future apostle — a position as a minister and a servant of His in the early New Testament Church.

But the young man just didn't have the vision to see how "treasure in heaven" was going to help him all

Wealthy people do not always understand what the apostle Paul knew down to the depths of his being: "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6:7).

that much. "But when the young man heard that saying [about giving up his material goods for treasure in heaven], he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (verse 22).

Then Jesus explained the lesson to His disciples: "... Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (verses 23-24).

People have rationalized that this means the narrow aperture in some fabled Middle-Eastern city where camels were constantly entering — the architects being so stupid that they made it impossible for the camels to squeeze through unless their

packs were removed — drawing the obvious spiritual analogy that you have to get rid of your riches in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is unlikely, however, that anyone would build a city gate so low or narrow when he knew that hundreds of camels would have to enter it every single day.

No, Jesus Christ is talking about something that is physically and humanly *impossible!* And the disciples understood what Jesus meant. "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, *With men this is impossible*; but with God all things are possible" (verses 25-26).

The Rewards Now and Later

Then the account continues on in the same thought. "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Verse 27.) Peter was saying sort of in the vernacular: "We're not like that rich young man. We forsook all. We had businesses. I had my fishing fleet with my nets and my boats. And here we are pretty far up in age. We shucked all of our investments to follow you. What's going to be our reward?"

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [the resurrection] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (verse 28). Quite a reward, isn't it?

Each was guaranteed, upon qualification, a fantastic, fabulous position of rulership in the Kingdom of God — possessing untold wealth and prestige.

But what about the here and now? Jesus continued: "And *every one* [this is not just speaking of the disciples] that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall re-

ceive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (verse 29).

Mark makes it a little plainer. "But he shall receive an hundredfold *now in this time*..." (Mark 10:30). And in Luke's account: "Who shall not receive manifold more *in this present time*..." (Luke 18:30).

All true Christians, who have really repented of their sins, given up what God required of them and followed God's ways by overcoming and improving themselves, have eventually been blessed *materially* as well as *spiritually*.

The Parable of the Laborers

The account in Matthew continues in the same monetary vein: "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matt. 19:30). What did Jesus mean by this enigmatic statement tacked onto the end of His promise of material and spiritual rewards for every true Christian?

He begins to explain in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (next chapter). "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour [9:00 a.m.], and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth [12:00 noon] and ninth hour [3:00 p.m.], and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour [5:00 p.m. — just before quitting time] he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and *whatsoever is right*, that shall ye receive.

"So when even [evening] was come, the lord of the vineyard saith

unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour [nearly at quitting time], they received every man *a penny*. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

"But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? . . . Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine

In such arduous economic straits, it's pretty hard to maintain, in our day-to-day existences, the right attitude toward money and material possessions. But Jesus absolutely requires it of every true Christian!

own?" (Matthew 20:1-13, 15.)

That question would be answered in the negative in the United States of America. Our society would be 100 percent on the side of the people who complained about their wages.

Was the Householder Unfair?

But think about that parable for a minute. It supports a true free-enterprise system in which a man has a right to govern his own private property. The householder had said: "Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me [in a contract] for a penny? . . . Is it not lawful for me to do what I will *with mine own*? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Verses 13, 15.)

Way late in the day the householder had found some stragglers

who didn't have jobs. He was very generous to give them such a good wage for so little work. So why should those who had received exactly what they had contracted for be angry at a boss who was so generous?

Because we are heavily influenced by the so-called "fairness standards" of this society, we have difficulty accepting this parable spoken by Jesus Christ of Nazareth, our Lord and Saviour and soon-coming King. But such is the way Christ's mind works! "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9). We can't seem to understand the way Jesus Christ would handle money because we're so attuned to the hue and cry of this society in all of its various national guises.

But the spiritual analogy intended by this parable comes through loud and clear. Notice verse 16 which caps off the parable. "So the last shall be first, and the first last. . . ." Jesus doesn't want someone in the first century coming to Him and saying: "But Lord, why did you call me then? Why did I have to live, work, struggle, travel and finally be martyred? Why couldn't I have had it easy like those last few who repented at the eleventh hour in the last moments of the Great Tribulation? How can they be in your Kingdom? They put in so little time."

"Give Us This Day . . ."

What does Jesus Christ tell us even in the Sermon on the Mount? In the simplest and most straightforward teaching of Jesus found in Matthew chapters 5-7, as well as in the sample Lord's prayer, He stresses again and again that we are to ask for our "daily bread" — consuming the goods of the earth *as we have necessity* and *not* taking "anxious thought" or "undue thought" about tomorrow. The Bible admo-

nishes: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!"

Notice Christ's instruction specifically: "Give us *this day* our *daily bread*" (Matt. 6:11). What is the meaning and principle behind this, one of the most famous petitions in all of the Bible? This scripture certainly doesn't advise you to lay up for a "rest-of-your-life" emergency. Yes, it's good to salt some cash away for a rainy day — but not for a rainy three years or a rainy decade.

Some people have made their all-consuming desire for security into a virtual god! It practically absorbs all their thoughts and energies. They are absolutely driven by a desire to put away for an emergency.

I get a big kick out of some of these TV quiz shows. Some of them should really be labeled "unbridled lust." One particular program shows people in these glass cages with dollar bills being blown about in circulating air. And there they are trying their level best to grasp onto a few bills out of the air — it's the craziest thing you ever saw. Quite a demonstration of human nature!

Another program pictures a money tree with bills pinned on it in the shape of a Christmas tree. Do you know that the contestants become almost mentally incapacitated with lust so obvious that it's embarrassing? People gibber; they can't remember their own names; their eyes bulge out — you would almost expect steam to be coming out of their ears; they're gasping; they're jumping up and down. The lust, the jealousy, the greed and the vanity you see exposed in these people's eyes is nothing short of incredible!

Jesus, in all these biblical instructions and examples, is trying to create in us an attitude and approach toward monetary wealth that I'm afraid we all fall very short of. The Western world has plunged into some very formidable economic straits and difficulties. Unemployment in the United States is 8.9 percent and rising. Many large corporations are cutting loose or closing down an innumerable num-

ber of peripheral, unprofitable operations — causing more and more unemployment. In such arduous economic straits, it's pretty hard to maintain, in our day-to-day existences, the right attitude toward money and material possessions. But Jesus absolutely requires it of every true Christian!

Increasingly people are letting their minds focus too much on the subject of monetary wealth and security. There is one very poignant biblical example that continually warns us of the end result of letting lust for money begin to virtually rule our minds.

Ananias and Sapphira

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession [which *they owned outright*], and kept back [withheld surreptitiously] part of the price, his wife also being privy to it [a willing accomplice], and brought a certain part [while *posturing that it was all*], and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not *thine own*? [this was *not* Communism] and after it was sold, was it not in *thine own power*? [no one was forcing him to give it to the Church] why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:1-4).

And then follows the account of the sudden death of Ananias and his wife Sapphira (verses 5-10).

Many others were selling their property and giving the proceeds to the apostles openly and aboveboard (Acts 4:34-37). But Ananias and Sapphira were caught up in this posture of pretense. They were posing in front of the congregation as great givers — while privately holding back a portion of the selling price. Their carefully concealed (they thought) covetousness literally killed them!

There is a very important and vital lesson in this account — even

over and above a sober warning against lying and lust for material possessions. Once you decide privately and deliberately in your own mind — just between you and God — to give something (usually money in today's society) to Him, *it is no longer yours!*

Should We Not Ask?

This great Work of God does not operate out of some secluded, protected glass cage with an invisible shield freeing it from all of the ups and downs of this society. God just does not conduct His Work in such a fashion. (He never has!) He is using a body of fallible human instruments (subject to the monetary pushes and pulls of this world) to do His vitally important work of preaching and publishing the gospel around this globe of ours.

God's Work *is affected* by the economic downturns of this sinning society. Continually we have to pore over and figure out more inexpensive ways and methods of getting the job done (see my special letter in the Update section of the June issue).

But God wants His people to give — even to sacrifice — in order to get this great Work *done!* So I'm not afraid to ask God's people to give of their financial means in order that we might give this world a solid warning and witness before its sins come crashing in on it — and it is forever too late! I'll explain further in the next article of this two-part series titled — "God Loves a Cheerful Giver." □

(To be continued)

RECOMMENDED READING

Are you having trouble balancing your books? Running into more past bills than dollar bills? Then how about some free assistance! Our helpful brochure entitled, *Managing Your Personal Finances* pinpoints common mistakes in handling money and shows how you can be better prepared to cope with some of the financial problems that are trademarks of the twentieth century — including inflation. Write for your free copy. Mailing addresses are on the inside front cover.

Q&A

Question: "I would like to thank you for sending me the booklet 'Where Is God's True Church Today?' Of special note is a paragraph on page 29: 'Can one who does not know of the true organized Body doing God's Work, and therefore is outside of it, be a member of the true Church which Christ built? The answer is yes — for it is possible for one to have truly repented, believed, and received God's Spirit — and be following that Spirit as far as he sees and understands — who does not know of the organized Work Christ is using today. But surely God's Spirit in him would lead one, in due time, into his part in the organized Body the living Christ is directing.' I have not been able to find a single scriptural reference for such a declaration."

Donald K.,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Answer: Our Editor-in-Chief has said, from time to time, that there could conceivably be truly converted Christians outside of the Worldwide Church of God. God knows them that are His and certainly has the prerogative of calling anyone He wishes, wherever they may be! (John 6:44, 65.)

Perhaps the matter may be clarified somewhat by putting it this way: The Church of God is the *spiritual Body of Christ*. It is composed of those human individuals who have been granted the Holy Spirit: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized [immersed] into one body . . ." (I Cor. 12:13). What makes a person a member of the true Church is the receipt of the Holy Spirit which comes *from God* — not from any human organization.

Organization is what the Church

has — not necessarily what it *is*. Therefore, it is possible for a member to exist outside of the main organization of the Church and still be a part of the spiritual Body of Christ! We do have biblical examples of those who worked miracles, or received the Holy Spirit, apart from proximity or association with Christ Himself or with the early Church. One such instance that will illustrate this principle is found in Mark 9:38-40: "John said to him, 'Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, *because he was not following us*'" (RSV).

Here was someone performing powerful miracles in the name of Jesus, yet he was not associated with Christ or with the disciples! Naturally, the disciples were "uptight" about it.

And what was Jesus' reply? "But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us'" (RSV).

Could those who trust in Christ, apart from the main Body, speak evil of Him and of His Church if they were exposed to it? Would they not logically be attracted to it and want to become a part of it?

Acts the tenth chapter provides us with an example of a man who was heard by God apart from association with the original apostles. He sought God's blessing in his life and God heard his prayers. "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius [a Gentile], a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (verses 1, 2).

This man was in the Roman

army. He was certainly not a follower of the apostles; in fact, we have no evidence that he even knew of them. Yet he prayed to God and God heard. In a vision, an angel of God said to him: ". . . Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" (verse 4).

As a result of this man's prayers and exemplary way of life, God used him to set an important spiritual precedent in that day and age. After Peter was sent to Cornelius and his household, God poured His Holy Spirit out on these devout people *without* the laying on of hands: "While Peter yet spake these words, *the Holy Ghost* [Spirit] *fell* on all them which heard the word" (verse 44).

This manifestation of the Holy Spirit was similar to that of Acts 2. Cornelius had been drawn to the Church as a result of his faithfulness in prayers and almsgiving! He became the first Gentile (along with his household) to be made a part of the spiritual Body of Christ (Rom. 8:9, 14; Col. 1:18).

There are many modern instances where people have sought truth in their own Bibles, have prayed and sought to serve God, and were eventually led to the Church as a result. Sometimes it is by deliberate searching for an organization that represents God's way of life, and on other occasions it is purely "coincidental."

We receive numerous questions about various aspects of the Church. Many are answered in our free booklets *Where Is God's True Church Today?*, *Seven Proofs of God's True Church* and *This Is the Worldwide Church of God*. Write for your personal copies. Mailing addresses are listed on the inside front cover. □

In popular usage the chilling words "battle of Armageddon" convey a grisly apocalyptic scenario of end-time military mayhem. Yet the term "Armageddon" is mentioned only once in the entire Bible. What is the truth about these terrifying words?

The skeptic claims: "The apostle John was merely a drug-driven, first-century hallucinator!"

"How could anyone in his right mind have written such a mind-boggling scenario of confusing and frightening symbolism?" he continues.

Can you answer?

Where *did* John get his prophetic ideas? Was he merely an elderly mystic whose mind was finally beginning to snap after years of persecution and opposition? Was he an apostolic drug addict recording the visions of some narcotic "high"? Or was he a rational, converted, Spirit-led Christian minister who was

privileged to look into the terrifying future of the human race on beyond his own time?

The Source of the Apocalypse

The book of Revelation — the Apocalypse — the last book in the Christian Bible, begins: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [the Father] gave unto him..." God the Father is said to be the original source of the vision of the book of Revelation. The overall message was delivered to Jesus Christ, who "sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1).

What John recorded — in the last decade of the first century (according to traditional reckoning) — was "the word of God" (verse 2) and the "testimony of Jesus Christ" Himself.

John, the "disciple Jesus loved," was projected ahead *in vision* to the time called "the Lord's day" (verse 10). *The Lord's Day* (or "the Day of the Lord") is the time when God will step in to take a hand in the affairs of this world in a climactic and decisive manner. It is a gen-

eral time period at the end of man's age described in numerous Bible prophecies (cf. Zeph. 1:14-18; Isa. 13:9; Joel 1:15; Jer. 46:10; Luke 21:34).

John was given messages concerning "things which are" and "things which shall be hereafter [the Day of the Lord]" (Rev. 1:19). The prophecy concerning Armageddon falls into the latter category.

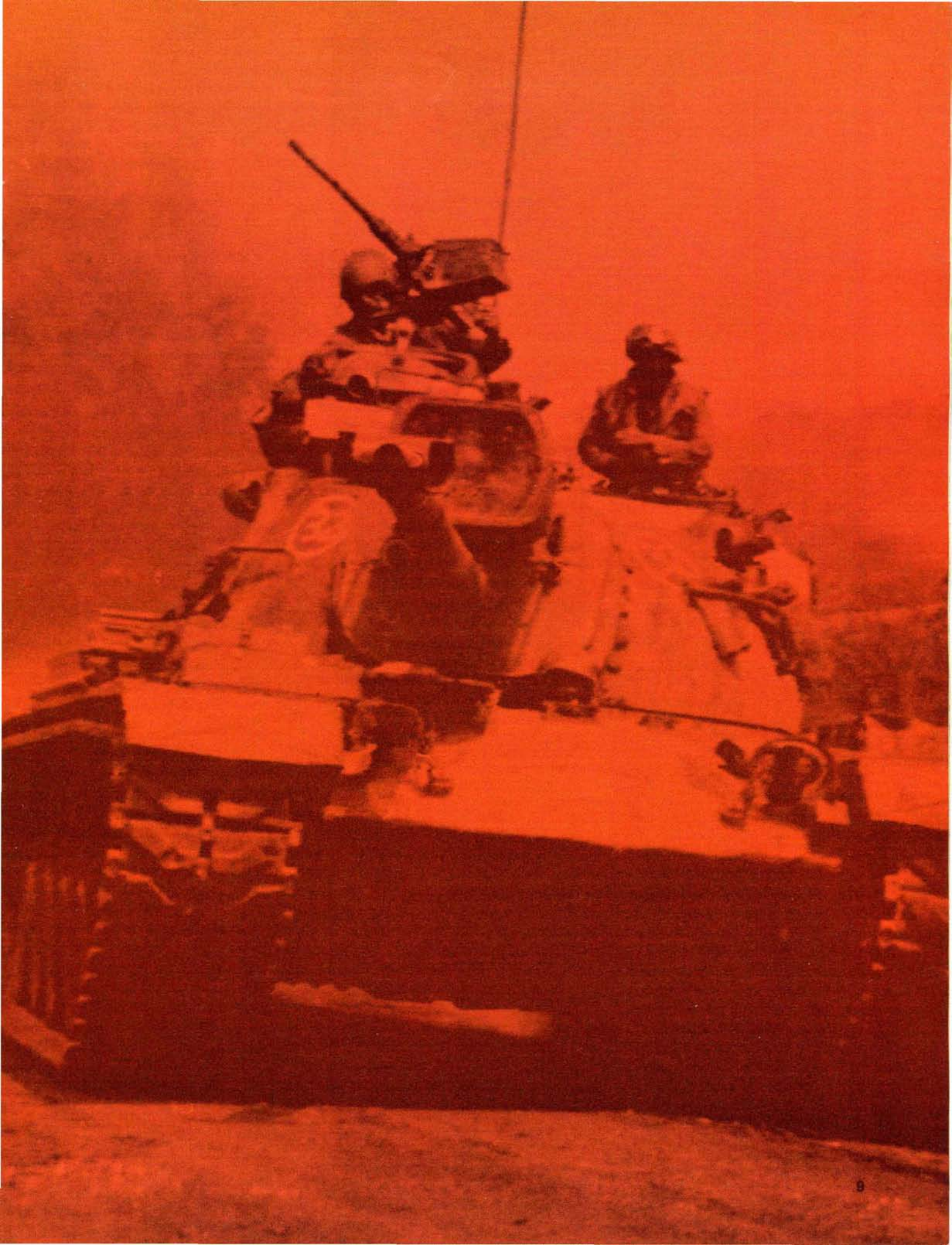
Much, if not most, of what John saw in vision was conveyed in *symbolism*. John recorded his descriptions in the most graphic terms he was capable of using. (Our free booklets *Key to the Book of Revelation* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last* will greatly assist you in sorting out the story flow of Revelation and will help explain the sometimes difficult symbolism. Write for your free copies.)

Seven Last Plagues

The "Armageddon" subject is dealt with in Revelation 16, where John describes the pouring out of *seven last plagues*. These "plagues" represent God's wrath (verse 1), poured out shortly before the tri-

ARMAGEDDON IN YOUR LIFETIME?

by Brian Knowles





James Lea — GN

umphant return of the living Jesus Christ who will descend to take over the kingdoms of this earth (Rev. 15:4; 19:6; Zech. 14; Dan. 7:14). The plagues follow the opening of the last seven seals (Rev. 15:1, 8; 16:1).

The first bowl (vial) is poured out upon all those who are subservient to the great false Church-State System of the end time — the “beast” and the “image of the beast” (Rev. 16:2). Foul, painful sores are the lot of those who would adhere to this wicked and evil system.

The second plague affects the “sea.” This plague is similar to one of the plagues suffered by the Egyptians in the days just prior to the Exodus under Moses (Ex. 7-10). The water is to be turned to undrinkable, unusable blood! (Rev. 16:3.) The rotting remains of dead sea life will line the shores and cover the beaches as God’s fearsome wrath is poured out on a rebellious and unyielding mankind.

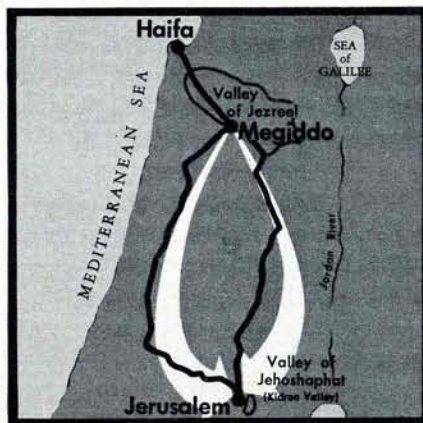
The third plague is like the second. Rivers and springs of fresh bubbling water are transformed to crimson torrents of real blood! This ironically fitting punishment will suit the crime. This world’s religious and political leaders have long been responsible for the martyrdom of multiple thousands of God’s true servants. Now the vengeance of God will be complete (cf. Rom. 2:1-9; Rev. 16:4-7).

The fourth plague is even more terrifying than the preceding punishments. The normally life-giving heat of the sun will somehow be intensified to an unbearable degree and men will be scorched by its fiery radiance! (Rev. 16:8.) Yet, in spite of the incredible severity of these punishments, men will still stubbornly refuse to repent before God! It is the hardening of heart of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh all over again.

In spite of the cumulative pain of hunger, thirst, intense heat and the nauseating presence of the all-permeating odor of death and decay, man’s rebellion will necessitate yet



GN Photo



GN Art

BIBLE PROPHECY reveals that just before God establishes His rule on earth, armies will gather in the valley of Jezreel (top photo) adjoining Megiddo. They will then converge on Jerusalem (at Kidron Valley, below) to fight Jesus Christ who is coming to enforce peace on a war-torn world.



GN Photo

another frightening manifestation of God's wrath — total darkness!

The effect of this utter blackness will be devastating. Terror and confusion will reign supreme in the kingdom of the "beast." "... Men gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds" (verses 10-11, RSV).

It seems that this end-time generation of humankind will be so intrinsically wicked that even the most severe and terrifying punishments, administered directly by the very angels of God, will be insufficient to bring about general repentance! How similar to the terminal time just before the great Flood of Noah's day when "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5, RSV).

Jesus Himself likened the end-time human condition to that of Noah's day: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37).

The Crucial Sixth Plague

Now, after five nightmarish plagues have been administered, the scene changes. At this crucial juncture the sinister forces of spiritual wickedness — Satan and his demonic followers — are unleashed to wreak hideous havoc with the inhabitants of planet earth. (Is it significant that a plague of darkness precedes the unleashing of the forces of darkness?)

First the great river Euphrates, which flows some 2235 miles from Turkey to the Persian Gulf, will be dried up (Rev. 16:12). This powerful intervention in the ecosystem of the East will be performed by God's angel. But it is only a prelude, a setting of the stage for what is to come: "And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs; for they are

demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (verses 13-14, RSV).

The dragon, of course, is Satan the devil (Rev. 12:9). The beast is the great end-time military leader who will be influenced by the devil. And the false prophet, who works hand in glove with the military leader, is a religious leader who will have universal influence and appeal because of his satanic charisma and power. This unholy trinity, in league with a second "mini-trinity" of unclean spirits, will influence the world's political and military leaders to mobilize their forces for a final climactic battle called — what? — "the battle of that great day of God Almighty"! These "kings of the

"It is no accident that the very name Megiddo has come to symbolize war in our own language, the Armageddon of Revelation 16:15, for this little corridor, the 'Plain' par excellence of modern Israel, is the cockpit of Palestine."

east" (verse 12) will then march westward to the nation of modern Israel where they will gather at a site named "Armageddon."

"And they [the demons] assembled them [the armies] at the place which is called in Hebrew *Armageddon*" (verse 16, RSV). As John states, *Armageddon* is actually a Hebrew name. It is *Har-Megiddo*, which simply means "the hill (or mountain) of Megiddo." This is the site of ancient Megiddo which is located about twenty air miles southeast of the modern port of Haifa.

A Brief History of Megiddo

Today this location has an Arabic name: *Tel el Mutesellim*. It is regarded as one of the most important archaeological sites in Palestine.

Anciently, Megiddo was one of

the royal cities of the Canaanites. The city was not fully occupied by Israelites until the time of King Solomon (I Kings 4:7, 12). Solomon fortified the city (I Kings 9:15). Megiddo, and the valley of Megiddo (which was part of the larger Plain of Esdraelon), became an important and strategic site. Megiddo was the most important fortress city which guarded the strategic passes of the Mount Carmel area. The other cities were Joakneam and Taanach. Megiddo, in the middle, was flanked by the other two fortresses (each about five miles apart).

Megiddo was the site of the death of King Amaziah of Judah. Later, King Josiah was killed near the fortress in his unfortunate and unnecessary battle with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt (cf. II Kings 9:27; 23:29; II Chron. 35:22).

For Israel, Megiddo and the Plain of Esdraelon became the battleground of the centuries. Time after time the blood of battle was shed there. Over and over again this thirteen-acre mound was refortified. Its thirteen-foot thick walls were doubled in thickness to make it a virtually impenetrable fortress. Four-fifths of the attacks launched against Megiddo were unsuccessful. Yet some were, helping to add to the successive building or rebuilding levels on the site. Down through the ages these have raised the mound some 75 feet above the original rock upon which it was built!

Extensive archaeological work has been done at Megiddo. Today the site (*Tel el Mutesellim*) is nothing more than an unoccupied, silent mound of historic rubble. Occasional tourists and archaeologists traverse its rocky face, but it is not a major military site at this time.

But Megiddo is a symbol.

It is a symbol of war and human conflict. It looks over the Plain of Esdraelon and the Valley of Jezreel and stood at one of the great crossroads of the ancient world. "It is no accident that the very name Megiddo has come to symbolize war in

our own language, the Armageddon of Revelation 16:15, for this little corridor, the 'Plain' *par excellence* of modern Israel, is the cockpit of Palestine" (Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, p. 151).

The cockpit of Palestine! What an apt description of this important strategic location. If we are to take the prophecy of Revelation 16 literally, Megiddo and the Plain of Esdraelon will become the rallying point for the greatest concentration of military might ever assembled!

Political and military leaders from the world to the east of the river Euphrates will be supernaturally induced to direct their armies to march on modern Israel. But who will compose this conglomeration of military might?

"The Kings of the East"

Which nations lie to the east of the great Euphrates valley? To the northeast lies the Soviet Union with its vast armies and prodigious military strength. South and east of Russia, in China, wait even more millions of infantry in constant military preparedness. Separated from China by the Himalayas lies teeming India with starving millions and a turbulent political scene. Smaller, less militarily significant nations — Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan — provide buffer zones between these nations.

These "kings of the east" will lead their armies to tiny Megiddo. With this symbol of war as their rallying point, these armies will then be confronted with yet another great military establishment — the combined might of a United Europe!

The final resurrection of the fourth "beast" of the book of Daniel has been identified by the majority of conservative Bible scholars as the Roman Empire. Rome followed three earlier empires — Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece — in world dominance. The last beast of Daniel was to have ten successive resurrections or revivals. The final revival, that of the *modern* Roman Empire — a union of church and state — is

now in the making! (The scholarly identification of the fourth beast of Daniel will be covered in future issues of *The Good News*.)

Prophecy indicates that this final manifestation of the nations originally dominated by ancient Rome will unite in a political, military and religious alliance of incredible power. A vast and mighty army will be formed which will find its way into the Middle East — perhaps on the pretext of protecting Israel from the threat of Communist domination. And oil will undoubtedly play a major role in any such maneuver.

The army of the "beast" will confront the armies of the "east." The ensuing titanic, unequaled violence would threaten "all flesh" with utter extinction but for the surprise intervention of a third party from outside! Long heralded, yes, but One whom few expected would come!

Enter Jesus Christ

You will notice the battle is not called "the battle of Armageddon" — it is called "the battle of that great day of *God Almighty*"! (Rev. 16:14.) The Last Great Battle will involve the armies of the Lord of Armies (Hosts) Himself! And it will center near the environs of modern Jerusalem.

The climactic final battle is described in intimate detail in the book of Zechariah: "Behold, a day of the Lord is coming . . . For I will gather *all the nations* against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken. . . . Then the Lord will go forth and *fight against those nations* as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east . . ." (Zech. 14:1-4, RSV).

The two superpower armies will suddenly be confronted with an invader from space, a common enemy, the returning Jesus Christ! They will unitedly turn to face him in battle, motivated by the god of this world — Satan the devil (II Cor. 4:4).

Writing prophetically, David was

inspired to describe this final confrontation between man and his God: "Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us'" (Ps. 2:1-3, RSV). This is exactly what the leaders of officially godless communism would say! Let us break the yoke of religion, the opiate of the people, by destroying their God! The leaders of the great false religious system, those who actually worship Satan the devil and follow his way, will also look upon Christ as an enemy. They will combine their forces into the greatest conglomeration of military might, with the most modern, powerful and sophisticated weaponry in history, in one last attempt to defeat the King of kings and Lord of lords — Jesus Christ. But they will fail miserably!

"He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill'" (verses 4-6, RSV).

Terror is indeed the word! Zechariah describes the mind-bending, frightening manifestation of the wrath and might of God in fighting against those who oppose Him: "And the Lord will send a plague on all the people who fought Jerusalem. They will become like walking corpses, their flesh rotting away; their eyes will shrivel in their sockets, and their tongues will decay in their mouths.

"They will be seized with terror, panic stricken from the Lord . . ." (Zechariah 14:12-13, *The Living Bible*).

This is the battle of the Great Day of God Almighty described by John in Revelation. This is the terror that will begin at Armageddon and have its culmination at Jerusalem. And it could happen in your lifetime and mine! □

Christians are supposed to be people who are on good speaking terms with God. They have a direct phone line to heaven that always gets through. They make prayer the cornerstone of their lives. They may be identified by the callouses on their knees.

So much for the ideal. In real life, that's not the way it is for most of us. Many nominal Christians never pray at all — unless it's on their deathbed. Many others who do pray consider it an exercise in futility. They find it a boring and laborious experience; they never seem to get through — to get answers.

Why is prayer so little tried? Does God have an unlisted number that only a select few are privy to? Is He on a leave of absence? Why is it so rarely rewarding? There are any number of reasons. In this article we will focus on some of the most common causes of frustration — the failure to understand what prayer is and what it is *not*.

What Prayer Is

Prayer is a heart-to-heart talk with God. It is a *conversation* between a son or daughter and their Father. It is a hotline to heaven in bad times; a means of fellowship between man and his Creator in good times. It is meaningful and useful. It helps. It works.

So why doesn't it work for you? Why can't you get in touch with God when you need Him?

One reason could be that you are merely paying lip service to God instead of really praying to Him. One of the most common problems is that many people go through the motions of prayer without really saying anything. They believe they must commune with God by formulas, rituals and stilted language instead of talking to Him in simple, direct conversation.

If some people would talk to their friends here on earth in the same way they talk to their Father in heaven, they might see why they never get answers — why prayer seems so meaningless.

DOES GOD HAVE AN UNLISTED NUMBER



by D. Paul Graunke

What Prayer Is Not

Take an everyday illustration: If you're eating and want someone across the table to pass the bread, you simply say: "Please pass the bread," or words to that effect.

But suppose you were to ask a friend to pass the bread in the exact same way many "religious" people ask their heavenly Father for daily bread. Imagine carrying on *all* person-to-person conversation in the same pattern or style they (and possibly you) use in prayer. What would it sound like? What would be the results?

Some would ask for bread and carry on a conversation "by the book." That is, they wouldn't ask in their own words. Instead they would parrot a standard formula memorized from youth. Their whole conversation might consist of nothing but "My dear friend, who art across the table, how do you do? ... Please pass the bread. Thank you." The same words might be spoken day after day with a special "stained-glass" voice and a vocabulary loaded with King James English.

Others would ask over and over again, believing that it's not only what you say, but how many times you say it that gets the bread passed. Quantity, not quality. They would repeat "Please pass the bread" — 3, 7, 12 or more times with all the fervency and frequency of a xerox machine.

Some would be given to emotional outbursts and physical demonstrations. Every time they wanted bread they would sing songs, speak in unknown tongues, fall backwards in their chair, and roll on the floor.

The possibilities are endless. People would be lighting candles, burning incense, ringing bells, donning sackcloth, ad infinitum — all in the sincere belief that these things are necessary to get a piece of bread.

From the Heart

Obviously, the whole spectacle is absurd. People don't talk that way — at least not normally. Yet some

have the concept that the "normal" way to talk to God demands that you shift your voice box and vocabulary into a different gear. You must rely on formulas and rituals to be heard and answered.

But God never intended prayer to be that way at all. He wants us to pray to Him from the heart — not from memory or out of a book. "Pour out your heart before him," exhorted David (Ps. 62:8, RSV used throughout unless otherwise noted). God is weary with "people [who] draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, *while their hearts are far from me*, and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote [that is, by repetition, or memory]" (Isa. 29:13).

Here are some suggestions for cutting out the ritual and rhetoric and getting down to plain talk with God.

Keep it simple and direct.

Christ specifically taught against the use of fulsome phrasing, of "windbag worship" in prayer. "And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matt. 6:7-8).

So that His disciples would understand, Christ gave them what has since become known as the "Lord's Prayer" (verses 9-13). Actually, it is just as well to call it the Lord's outline. It is a model of simplicity, directness and brevity. It is an unembellished way of telling your heavenly Father what is on your mind.

Beware of the "give me's" and "do me's."

The Lord's outline is also instructive about what to pray. Some people spend most of their prayer requesting God to give them this or do that. But Christ showed we should expand our vision and subject matter beyond ourselves and our own needs. We must learn to

give praise and honor to God, acknowledging His power, His goodness and the blessings He gives us. We should pray for the promotion of His purposes — for the fulfillment of the Church's task of preaching the gospel to the world so that the Kingdom may come (Matt. 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and *then* the end will come").

And remember the needs of others. Recall that Christ said "our daily bread." But do forgive and forget other people's shortcomings just exactly as you want God to forgive and forget yours.

Keep it between you and God.

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.... And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:1, 5-6).

Christ wasn't condemning public prayer per se. There is certainly nothing wrong with invocations and benedictions on certain occasions such as church services. Rather, He was condemning exhibitionists who prayed publicly to show others how "spiritual" they were. Don't be a spiritual exhibitionist. Prayer on most occasions is a private, personal matter between you and God. Keep it that way.

Don't confuse feelings with faith.

Some try to judge the success of their prayers by their emotions. If they feel good after finishing, it means they had enough "faith" and got through to God. But if they don't reach some sort of emotional

peak, they regard their prayer as a failure.

Faith is not an emotion! You can't work it up when it comes time to pray. Faith is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). It is vitally important in conversing with God, but it can't be measured by your emotions. How to use it in prayer is a subject for a future article. For now you can get more information on this vitally important, but frequently misunderstood subject by writing for our free booklet *What Is Faith?*

This is not to say you should never enjoy praying. Or that you should pray without any emotion. You should talk to God intently and fervently — showing Him you mean what you say. And there is nothing wrong with feeling good about prayer; just don't confuse emotions with faith.

But remember, Christians have their off-days too. Most of the time you may feel better for getting things off your mind. But sometimes you may not finish in the best of spirits — particularly during an extremely trying time. But that doesn't mean you didn't get through to God. Don't strive for some emotional "high." Strive to communicate — that's the payoff of prayer.

Make prayer a habit, a top priority in your daily life.

The question often comes up: "How much is enough?" "How many times a day should I pray?" There is no explicit "Thus saith the Lord" statement in the Bible about time quotas.

Actually, to quibble over how often, and how long, completely misses the whole point of prayer. The real question to ask is: Is there ever a time when a Christian shouldn't pray?

"Walking with God" implies talking with Him throughout the day. It means having such a rapport and affinity with God that you can talk to Him at any time of the day or night, in any place, under any circumstances, in any position. You are able to thank Him on the spot

for a blessing, or entreat His help in a few seconds during an emergency without bending a knee or uttering a sound. This is what Paul meant when he told Christians to "Pray constantly" (I Thess. 5:17).

The mainstay of our spiritual lives, though, should be what could be called "heavy" or "working" sessions — the kind spent on your knees in private. These are the most important, and often the most productive. Most of the time, the bulk of your contact with God in any day will be spent this way. How long these sessions last, and how often you have them, will vary with the problems and questions you have to talk over with God.

There are only a few clues in the Bible as to how often or how long men of God prayed.

David entreated God three times a day during a period of unusual stress and trouble (Ps. 55:1-17). Daniel made it a habit of praying on his knees three times a day — especially when it was illegal to do so! (Dan. 6:10.) The prophet Samuel once prayed far into the night when the crisis of King Saul's disobedience came to a climax. Jesus Christ prayed all night before choosing His twelve apostles (Luke 6:12).

Make working sessions of prayer on your knees a regular part of your life. "Steadfastly maintain the habit of prayer" (Rom. 12:12, Phillips translation). And keep in touch with Him throughout the day — if only for a few seconds or minutes here and there. Be wary of the human tendency to pray too little rather than too much.

As in all spiritual matters, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Don't let events or other interests crowd prayer out of your time schedule, or out of your mind. Build your life around God — not God around your life. It will be the best investment in time and effort you will ever make.

Make it a two-way conversation.

It has often been said that the key

to good speaking is good listening. For the Christian that means studying the Bible as well as praying. Find out what God has to say to *you*. Many times people find answers in the pages of the Bible to the problems they have been praying about. For that reason, many like to use their Bibles when they pray — it makes the session a true two-way conversation.

Another benefit is that you can learn how to pray better. You can study how various individuals prayed down through the ages and how God responded. Then there are the Psalms — 150 examples of how to praise and entreat God. They are well worth a special, separate study.

For help in getting acquainted with God and His Word, write for *Read the Book* and *How to Study the Bible*. Don't be in ignorance of the Supreme Being you are talking to.

By no means do these suggestions cover all there is to know about the mechanics and methods of prayer. You may find some more helpful to you than others, and come up with useful ideas of your own. Be flexible. Experiment. Maybe your prime time for prayer is the first thing in the morning. Maybe you are a night owl who is more alert in the evening. Some days you may want to spend more time on your personal problems. Other days you may want to concentrate on the needs of the Church, or the problems of others.

The important thing is to pray — regularly, candidly and fervently. Get on speaking terms with God — and keep the lines of communication open at all times.

Prayer is *not* an exercise in futility. God *will* hear. Peter wrote: "Cast all your anxieties on him [God], for he cares about you" (I Pet. 5:7). Knowing that God is concerned about *you* personally, individually, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). □

If You'd Like to Know More

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

The answer is yes, we do.

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

So if you have spiritual matters to discuss or questions to ask about biblical topics such as repentance, baptism, etc., please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are as follows:

- United States: P.O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91123 (Or simply dial this toll-free number in the *continental* U.S.: 1-800-423-4444. Readers in California, Alaska and Hawaii may call 213-577-5225 collect.)
- United Kingdom, Europe, India, Africa and the West Indies: P.O. Box 111, St. Albans, Herts., England
- Australia: G.P.O. Box 202, Burleigh Heads, Queensland 4220 (Or dial this number: 075-35-4233 — reverse the charges.)
- Canada: P.O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver, B.C.
- South Africa: P.O. Box 1060, Johannesburg 2000 (Or dial this number: 011-216406.)

Other areas of the world should check the inside front cover (staff box) for the address of our office nearest you.

Newsstand Door Opens Wide in Australia

Sydney, Australia:

Circulation of the *Plain Truth* in Australia has taken a giant leap at the very time we thought we would be forced to cut back. By remarkable "coincidences" the door to newsagent distribution has opened just at the time that it appeared financially imperative that we find a solution to huge increases in postal costs. Eighteen months ago, the cost of mailing the *Plain Truth* was 5½ cents per copy.

As this soared to an incredible 17 cents, it became absolutely necessary that we find an alternative method of delivery. But little did we dream that distribution costs could be brought as low as three cents per copy!

All previous attempts to display the *Plain Truth* on newsstands in Australia had proved unsuccessful. We have been able to distribute some 20,000 copies per month via special stands on key Sydney railway stations, but there was no possibility of extending this method to the rest of the country.

Then by "coincidence" Gordon Muir, who was instrumental in the success of the newsstand program in Europe, "happened" to be in Australia visiting relatives. He explained that in Britain, experience had shown it was considerably cheaper to deal with newsagents directly, bypassing established distributors. We had not yet tried this approach in Australia. Each of the six Australian states has its own in-



GN Photo

dependent newsagents' association and we knew that these bodies had a fixed policy against handling free publications.

Nevertheless, we decided to put our case to the local Queensland Newsagents' Association. Gordon Muir and Allan de Jager (Subscriber Services manager in Australia) made a formal proposal to the Association at its next directors' meeting. Not only were we asking them to reverse their policy on free literature, but also to distribute our magazine for a beggarly fee of two cents per copy (compared to 12½ cents for *Time* or *Newsweek*!).

Humanly speaking, the request didn't seem to stand a chance. The initial reaction of most of the directors was one of suspicion and incredulity: "You must be kidding!

NEWSSTAND displays advertise and distribute the *Plain Truth*. Distribution costs are 3 cents a copy, compared with 17 cents by mail.

What's the catch?" After thoroughly questioning Gordon and Allan, the Association members met to discuss our application.

Though it didn't seem possible, the following morning the secretary of the Association informed us, much to our joy, that our unprecedented proposal had been accepted! Some newsagents to this day still phone their Association in disbelief that the *Plain Truth* has really been made an exception to their hitherto inflexible policy on free literature. These dubious newsagents have been encouraged by the Association to take part in the distribution.

Following the approval to approach Queensland newsagents, Gordon Muir quickly established *Plain Truth* distribution through news agencies in Brisbane and other major Queensland towns. Individual newsagents who at first rejected the magazine did a complete somersault.

It is only fitting that Church members, who have loyally supported this Work with their prayers and donations, should have a direct part in the success of this new distribution program. Magazines are now freighted from the Sydney press to central locations in major cities. Church members ("representatives") collect their quotas from these depots and deliver them to assigned news agencies. Feedback is given to the office in Burleigh Heads for accurate bookkeeping and payment of the agents. Not only are Church members thrilled at the opportunity to represent the Work in this way, but their efforts are also producing considerable savings. Apart from the impracticality of having a team of full-time "reps" touring the country, the resulting costs of salaries and traveling and accommodation expenses would be prohibitive. As it is, the total cost of *Plain Truth* distribution stands at a mere three cents per copy — two cents for the newsagent and an average of one cent for freight to the central depots.

Newsagents' associations in other states also reversed their policies. Each state's association has now considered our proposal and given its official endorsement, so that thousands of new readers are now being reached at a cost that was inconceivable only a year ago.

The current newsstand distribution in Australia is 150,000 (whereas

our mailing list has never exceeded 65,000), and we hope to build this up to 300,000 by late 1976 (with Australia's population of 13 million, this would be equivalent to a circulation of five million in the U.S.). The program is a tremendous boost to the Work in Australia. At a time of raging inflation, overall circulation can be *trebled* rather than cut back! Our plan is for the majority of regular subscribers now on file to personally collect their copies from newsagents in their local areas (a small-scale experiment along this line in Tasmania has proved highly successful). The savings on postal costs will exceed \$50,000 per year! The newsstand distribution also has the effect of a built-in renewal system. Those who don't want the *Plain Truth* regularly won't pick it up again, thereby freeing the copy for someone else.

With the opening of this exciting new door, the Work in Australia can now go forward as never before!

— Dennis G. Luker

Campaigns Carry Gospel to the French-Speaking Nations

Lyon, France:

Since its tiny beginning some 15 years ago, the French phase of this Work has steadily grown in scope and impact. *La Pure Verité* (the French edition of the *Plain Truth*) and *Le Monde à Venir* (the *World Tomorrow* radio broadcast in

French) have served over the years as effective media for the dissemination of the gospel. And, within the last 15 months, personal appearance campaigns have added a new thrust to the French Work.

It was in May of 1973 (in Montreal) that Dibar Apartian, director of the French phase of the Work, conducted the first public appearance campaign in the French language. Since that time, he has held campaigns in Paris, Martinique and, most recently, in Lyon, France and Brussels, Belgium.

Despite a siege of inclement weather, the two-day Lyon campaign, attended by 460 people, was a success. At the first meeting, held on a Friday night, Mr. Apartian talked about current world conditions and the inescapable indications that we are indeed living in the end time. The next afternoon, he explained the responsibility and duties of each individual in coping with personal and collective problems.

The following weekend, Mr. Apartian conducted another campaign in Brussels, the headquarters of the European Economic Community, where he spoke before a total of 470 people. Simultaneous translations of his talks were provided in Dutch (one of Belgium's official languages) and English. After each meeting, Mr. Apartian mingled with the audience and answered questions. He noticed that most of the people he conversed with were sincerely interested in learning more about the Bible. More freely than ever before, they were questioning their previous religious backgrounds and convictions, and, like the Bereans of Acts 17, seemed to be in an attitude of wanting to search the Scriptures to find the truth.



Harold van Lerberghe

Mr. Apartian was struck by the feelings of defeatism and discouragement that have taken hold in Europe in the wake of chaotic world conditions, mounting unemployment and business failures. Even the traditional bastion of economic sanity, Switzerland, is being beset by these woes. Many people are fearful and uncertain about the future — as well as the present.

It is interesting to note that the campaign meetings held on Saturday afternoon attracted bigger audiences than those on Friday night. Because of the rocketing increase in urban crime in Europe, some are afraid to go out after dark. In this climate of apprehension and uncertainty, more and more are thirsty for solutions to their problems and are turning to the Bible to find them.

It is not surprising that a large proportion of those who attended the campaigns are regular listeners of *Le Monde à Venir*. In spite of its early morning broadcast time over

Radio Europe No. 1, this medium has brought the compelling gospel message in French to thousands of listeners.

It is for this reason, as well as the expanding circulation of *La Pure Vérité*, that the Work in Western Europe has been gaining in recognition. A journalist from one of Lyon's major papers learned of Mr. Apartian's arrival and interviewed him for about an hour in his hotel room. He was familiar with the Work and asked to receive copies of our publications (some 95 booklets and articles are available in French). Another journalist from the nearby town of Annemasse also wrote an article about the Work for her paper.

As evidenced by the response to the special follow-up Bible studies, the campaigns have had a lasting effect on many lives. Over 60 people have attended the studies in Belgium alone.

Growth in Church membership has recently necessitated the estab-

DIBAR APARTIAN delivers message at Brussels campaign (left) and answers questions from members of the audience (above).

lishment of new local churches in Nimes, France and Lausanne, Switzerland. In addition, Mr. Apartian will be going to the Antilles this month to inaugurate a new church in Guadeloupe. It will be pastored by Gilbert Carbonnel, who also pastors the Fort-de-France, Martinique congregation in the West Indies.

Also, the French-speaking province of Quebec, in Canada, is an area which has experienced particularly rapid growth — this would require a lengthy article in itself to relate.

There can be no doubt that the gospel is reaching the French-speaking nations in a bigger way than ever before. *Le Monde à Venir* now goes out on 175,000 watts of power per week on stations in Europe, Canada and the Antilles. Since its first press run of 4000 copies in

1963, *La Pure Vérité* has grown to a circulation of 112,000 (with subscribers in 150 countries and dependencies). And now, personal appearance campaigns have added a distinct new dimension to the French Work. Preparations are already under way for the next campaign which is scheduled for Lausanne in September.

— Thomas B. Rogers

New Zealand Church Uses Film to Get Across the Message

Auckland, New Zealand:

How do you present the gospel of Christ to a people who seem to be interested in our message, but aren't especially religiously inclined? How do you interest them in a lecture by a local minister when it is Herbert W. Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong they really want to see?

Our solution is to let them see the Armstrongs *on film*.

Last November we planned a series of "film evenings" for our *Plain Truth* subscribers and interested friends. We started out on a trial basis by choosing areas that had under 600 people on the *Plain Truth* list. The small areas were experimental prototypes of a format we hoped could be used to reach larger and more populated areas of New Zealand.

Over the years we had acquired several films from Pasadena which we showed to the Worldwide

Church of God membership during the Feast of Tabernacles. As the *Garner Ted Armstrong* TV program is not carried in this country, these 16mm films represent the only direct way the public can see the Armstrongs. We selected the personal-appearance films of Garner Ted Armstrong ("Is This the End Time?") and Herbert W. Armstrong ("Ambassador for World Peace") to show to our readership. We also compiled a slide show on Ambassador College, the Church in New Zealand, and the archaeological project in Israel.

The ball started rolling in New Plymouth and Palmerston North. The first week we showed the film about the end time. The second week featured Mr. Armstrong's "Ambassador for World Peace" and the slide show. The final week we conducted a Bible study about the Middle East in the light of biblical prophecies.

The results were quite encouraging and took us a little by surprise. About 18 percent of our *Plain Truth* readers in New Plymouth and 16 percent in Palmerston North showed up for the first film. After three weeks, about one quarter of the nonmembers who came to see the first film returned for the Bible lecture. After six weeks, we had a dozen new people attending services in New Plymouth, and seven in Palmerston North.

The first film evenings produced a host of questions: "Are you just a post office box number for an American religious organization?" "Is your staff all American?" "Where does the money come from?" Besides the issue of money and the "American" connection, the next area of real interest was "Do you have a church in my area?" No mat-

ter how many times we mentioned that we have ministers and services in their town or city, some would ask: "Do you really mean *here in this town?*" They seemed very surprised.

In addition to questions, there was also a lively interest in our literature display. Over 270 booklets were taken during the first two weeks.

Encouraged by these results, as well as a subsequent trial run in Whangarei (one hundred miles north of Auckland), we modified our format in carrying the message to the 400 *Plain Truth* readers in Tauranga, south of Auckland. There the films were shown and the Bible lecture conducted in successive evenings instead of over a period of three weeks.

Following the films, we served coffee, tea and cookies and invited questions and reactions. Almost everyone stayed behind afterwards. They conversed freely, asked numerous questions and were generally a very warm group. They also returned for the Bible study on the third night. In fact, more nonmembers showed up for the study than had viewed the films!

The response from interested new people is so much larger than expected, we are going to divide the major cities into large suburban areas and show the films in several locations.

The films will be followed up with Bible studies on the meaning and purpose of life and Bible prophecy. This method of interesting people in the gospel of Christ promises to bear much fruit for the Church in New Zealand.

— Graemme Marshall
Director of the Church
in New Zealand

CROWD APATHY

Epitaph for the End Time

by C. Sherwin McMichael

EVENING rush-hour traffic streamed out of Rochester, New York. On the edge of the business district, cars and trucks, headlights gleaming in the early dusk, waited to swing on to Interstate 490. It was 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 16, 1971. To these motorists, taking a familiar route home, it seemed like any other day.

However, a tragedy was to occur which would emblazon this day in their minds forever. As the cars picked up speed and bore down on the Route 36 interchange, a little girl appeared out of the darkness along the shoulder of the road, nearly naked. It appeared that she was waving as if trying to hail down passing cars.

The horror of this scene is that no one stopped! Two days later, the girl's body was found in a ditch miles away, raped and strangled.

Mesmerized Motorists

Police now theorize the drivers witnessed a momentary break for freedom — a last, desperate plea for help by 10-year-old Carmen Colon, who had been kidnapped from her Rochester home.

Perhaps, by understanding a phenomenon psychologists call "crowd apathy," we can learn a lesson that may save our lives in the face of similar circumstances. The fact that no one stopped to help young Carmen intrigued a social psychologist at the State University at Buffalo, Dr. Victor Harris. He asked, "Why didn't one of the hundreds of motorists who passed the girl stop to help her?"

His research turned up many reasons: "I couldn't believe what I saw," explained one motorist. Another said he thought about going

back to investigate, but changed his mind. "I felt someone behind was in a better position to help," said a third driver.

Dr. Harris reported: "There is a very real question of whether, in fact, people even notice there is an emergency. They may see something going on, but not at a conscious level. Then they read about it in a paper later and say to themselves, 'Oh, that's what I saw happening the other day.'"

National Apathy

There is also a question whether today's society properly assesses national and international events. How about you? Do you understand the times in which you live? Do you recognize where mankind stands in history by the events whirling about us?

What is the significance to our generation of daily headlines sizzling with news about rumors of another war in the Middle East, another possible oil embargo, inflation intermingled with recession, and statements of food shortages?

Two years ago, could anyone have foreseen the condition of the world today? Who expected the resignation of Vice President Agnew, followed by that of President Nixon and a developing world crisis in leadership through the resignation or overthrow of numerous other heads of state? Who, then, expected the price of oil to increase 400 percent? Who would have expected the terrifyingly sudden collapse of Cambodia and South Vietnam?

Worldwide inflation! Food shortage! Terrorist attack! Experienced over a period of time, day by day, headline by headline, these world-shaking, momentous events lose impact. The world has become men-

tally and emotionally numb! It is impossible to respond indefinitely to the clarion call of crime, corruption and the threat of cataclysm.

If, however, the national and international trauma of the past twelve months could be fully experienced in a short period of time, the world would indeed be shocked to see how greatly the prospects of human survival have deteriorated!

Strangely enough, crowd apathy applies to our reaction to the rest of the daily news. No one indulges in too much excitement anymore about global events. It seems we are now able to accept the demise of the human race with casual nonchalance. The uniqueness of our age is reflected in President Giscard d'Estaing's recent comment: "The world is unhappy . . . because it does not know where it is going and because it guesses that, if it knew, it would discover that it was headed for disaster."

We live in unique times — "the end of the age" in biblical terminology. Newsstands abound with secular warnings of impending disaster.

Insensitivity to the Times

However, the Bible prophesies that mankind, in the face of world cataclysm, will be insensitive to the significance of daily events. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, *all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation*" (II Peter 3:3-4).

This is crowd apathy — an inability to recognize peril — at its most dangerous point!

John F. Kennedy said twelve years ago: "We happen to live in the most dangerous times in the history

of the human race. We are destined to live out most, if not all, of our lives in uncertainty and challenge, and peril." Those prophetic words aptly describe the world after Kennedy's tragic death.

Can you avoid being numbed by repetitive shocking headlines and mind-boggling crises in the daily news? Yes — but you must grasp the full weight of the changing world scene in the light of Bible prophecy. Recognize where you stand in history! Life as we have known it is rapidly, permanently disintegrating.

Notice Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24. His disciples asked Him: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Verse 3.) He listed war, famine, disease and natural disasters as definite signs (verses 6, 7). Yet, many scoff that these "signs" do not prove a thing. The reasoning behind this rejection of Christ's prophecy is that these problems are common to all generations, all societies, all ages throughout history.

Is this inability to grasp the significance of events in our age another major incidence of crowd apathy? Are we blinded to the signs of the times like the Pharisees in Jesus' day? He said to them: "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matt. 16:2-3.)

Can we?

New Problems Today?

Some are looking for totally new, unique problems to precipitate the return of Jesus Christ, rather than a

change in the *intensity* and scope of man's ancient dilemmas. But Jesus never prophesied some totally new, monumental threat to mankind. (Of course, modern technology has produced new facets or aspects of the same old problems.)

No, Jesus did not say that we should look for totally new terrors, simply that we would come into an age when man's old enemies would become overwhelming in their increased capacity for destruction.

Jesus said we would suddenly be catapulted into such a time. He describes this in verses 21 and 22 of Matthew 24: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should *no flesh be saved* [alive]. . . ."

Christ's statement puts the prophecy into perspective. In other words, one can know he is living just prior to Jesus' return when man's age-old problems contemptuously defy human solution and directly threaten all nations, races and regions on earth.

In 1969, former Secretary General of the United Nations U Thant warned: "I do not wish to seem over dramatic, but I can only conclude from information that is available to me that the members of the United Nations have, perhaps, ten years left. . . ."

The horribly confusing world scene is not destined to improve. The world and all humanity has entered the end of the age. But there is hope! There is a way of escape. Notice Luke 21:36: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things [disaster conditions mentioned in previous verses] that

shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

What, then, can you do to ensure your future and provide hope for your family? This question has been asked before. Following a moving sermon by the apostle Peter, spokesman representing a crowd of thousands asked, "Men and brethren, *what shall we do?*" (Acts 2:37.)

These people were serious — no longer reluctant to act! They wanted an answer which would guarantee their future. Notice Peter's response: "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins* [transgression of God's law]. . . ."

The Means of Survival

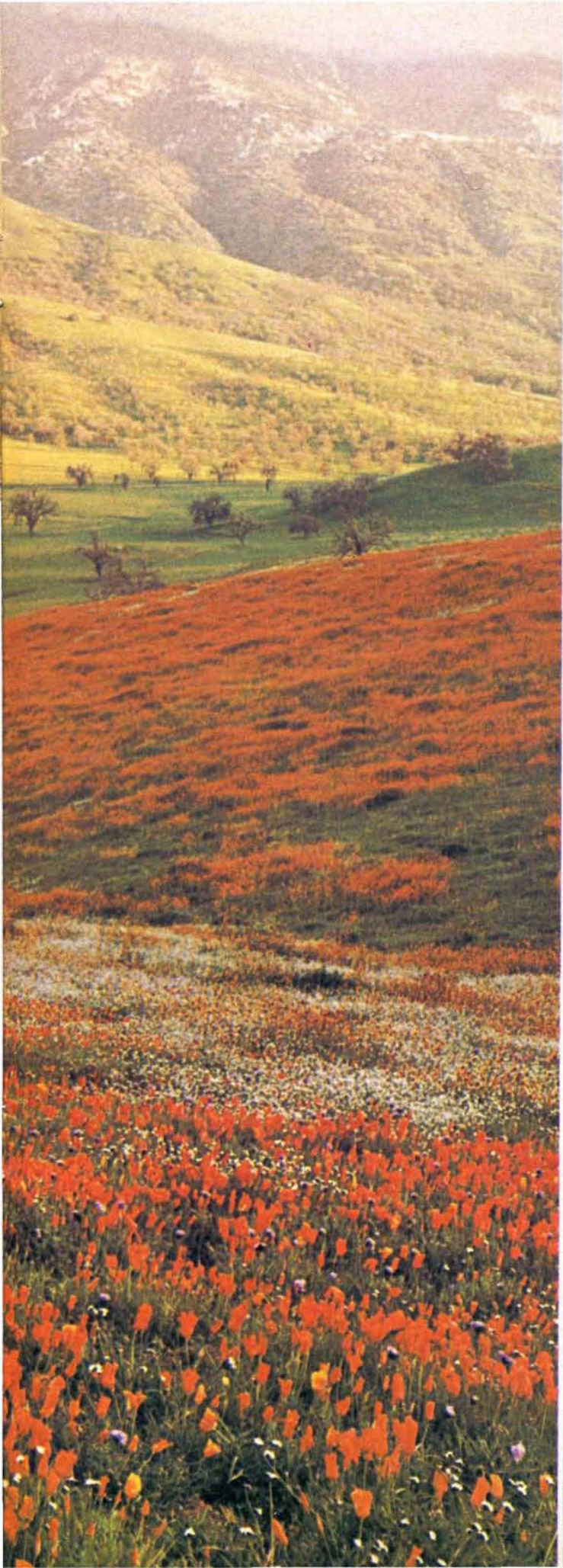
The key to your survival is a recognition of the times in which you live, a willingness to shake off the apathy of generations by *beginning to change* (repent in theological terms) and turning fully to God!

Let the concept of living in the end of the age sink deeply into your mind. Study your Bible; implicitly obey what it says; strive to get in step with your Maker.

If you feel the need of ministerial counsel, please write or call our toll-free number 1-800-423-4444 (call collect 213-577-5225 in California) requesting a private appointment. College-trained, fully ordained ministers have been sent out to pastor congregations around the world; many people have found that their personal ministerial counsel has been of tremendous help.

In these days of universal despair, acting on the knowledge you have is your only hope. As Peter continued: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (verse 40). Now is the time to act — or crowd apathy could cause your death! □





TOMORROW'S WORLD

A Global Garden of Eden

by Richard Rice

I was struck with awe and exhilaration at the breathtaking view before me. Standing on the front porch of our country home and surveying the lush green countryside for miles around, I was moved with inspiration and gratitude. A much needed rain from a rumbling thunderstorm had fallen all night. And now a sparkling new day had dawned.

A crisp morning breeze began to nudge the clouds away, allowing rays of brilliant sunshine to filter through. The air was clean and fresh, and the smell of spring was everywhere. As the sun radiated its warm reflections to the earth, pristine droplets of water glistened on tender plants and tree leaves.

The birds were singing lustily and the farm animals began to stir. As far as the eye could see, all of the creation was new and vibrant with life. A rich carpet of glittering green grass had appeared and healthy crops were sprouting.

Rose buds and flowers began to unfold their petals in emblazoned color. The earth was coming alive!

It is times like this, when we can see God's creative handiwork bursting open with life and beauty, that prophecies depicting the world tomorrow become so clear and meaningful.

Beyond today's threatening clouds of doom and despair, a golden age of peace and prosperity will

Left (from top): Jerry Gentry, GN Photo, Greg Smith, Don Lorton. Right: Jerry Gentry

dawn. The whole earth will become a veritable paradise — a global Garden of Eden — and all mankind will share it together.

The Good Life

Let's momentarily peer into the good life of tomorrow's world, when the scene described above will be duplicated the world over.

"The time will come when there will be such abundance of crops, that the harvest time will scarcely end before the farmer starts again to sow another crop, and the terraces of grapes upon the hills of Israel will drip sweet wine! I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild their ruined cities, and live in them again, and they shall plant vineyards and gardens and eat their crops and drink their wine. I will firmly plant them there upon the land that I have given them; they shall not be pulled up again" (Amos 9:13-15, *The Living Bible*).

"... The wilderness of Lebanon will be a fruitful field again, a lush and fertile forest" (Isa. 29:17, *The Living Bible*). "Even the wilderness and desert will rejoice in those days; the desert will blossom with flowers. Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the Lebanon mountains, as lovely as Mount Carmel's pastures and Sharon's meadows.... Springs will burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground will become a pool, with springs of water in the thirsty land" (Isa. 35:1-2, 6-7, *The Living Bible*).

"They shall come home and sing songs of joy upon the hills of Zion, and shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord — the good crops, the wheat and the wine and the oil, and the healthy flocks and herds. Their life shall be like a watered garden, and all their sorrows shall be gone" (Jer. 31:12, *The Living Bible*).

Did you realize that the purpose of this great Work is to herald the good news of God's prophesied in-

tervention and coming Kingdom?

Think of it! This present-day earth, sick and diseased, filthy and foul, is going to be healed. A fascinating new world is coming.

That's what the *good news* of God's Kingdom is all about!

Millions today, worldwide, are hearing on radio and television this encouraging message of hope proclaimed! But you are among the privileged few to be reading this advanced knowledge and to come in direct contact with the Work that is paving the way.

True Knowledge Encircles the Earth

Describing the utopian effect this priceless knowledge will have on those who hear and *heed* it, Isaiah writes: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven,

RECOMMENDED READING

The Worldwide Church of God publishes a number of informative booklets on the general subject of the World Tomorrow and the Kingdom of God.

The Wonderful World Tomorrow — What It Will Be Like

Today, chaos and the threat of human extinction; tomorrow the world erupts into peace and Utopia grips the earth. We are about to enter a new era in God's master plan for mankind. Here is the most wonderful advance news you ever read!

Just What Do You Mean — the Kingdom of God?

Is the Kingdom of God the Church? Is it something set up in the hearts of men? Is it "going to heaven" or "getting saved"? Or is it a soon-coming World Government that will bring peace to our troubled world?

What Is the True Gospel?

How many different gospels are there? Even in the professing Christian religion of the Western world, we find different sects and denominations preaching a variety of different gospels. But there is only one true gospel! What is that true message that Jesus Christ brought to this earth over 1900 years ago?

Is This the End Time?

Do the present prophesied end-time conditions represent the end of this physical globe as well as the close of this age? Or does our presently plundered planet have a permanent and vital place in the universe? And are these worsening conditions just a horrible prelude to an utopian era of peace and plenty?

Write for your free copies of these booklets. Worldwide mailing addresses are in the staff box on the inside front cover.

and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be lead forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree..." (Isa. 55:10-13).

The time will come that every human being on earth will hear the good news and begin to know the true God. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for *they shall all know me*, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord..." (Jer. 31:34). "... For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

A Righteous Ruler

What really good news! Once the whole human race has been educated in the ways of God, there will be peace and abundance for everyone on earth at last. Christ's rule will bring to the entire earth the welcome, fresh smell of spring. "Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord... for he cometh to judge the earth" (Ps. 96:12, 13).

As David said in his "last words": "The Rock of Israel said to me: 'One shall come who rules righteously, who rules in the fear of God. He shall be as the light of the morning; a cloudless sunrise when the tender grass springs forth upon the earth; as sunshine after rain'" (II Sam. 23:3-4, *The Living Bible*). Are you actively preparing now so you can share in this coming wonderful world of tomorrow? □

WHAT IS SIN?

Most people have an opinion about what sin is. But what does God say it is? The Bible says much about sin you may have been missing.

by Charles V. Dorothy

AH FLOO ovah Chicago, an' bruthern, ah sawr sin!" — wailed the itinerant tent-meeting evangelist. Everywhere this fiery "preachuh" went, he saw "sin." But he never got around to telling his congregations what sin is!

Do You Know?

Are you sure you know what sin is?

Do you realize how broad, how gigantic and ghastly sin is?

Many of you probably do know the main Bible definition of sin — I John 3:4: "Whosoever commits sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (see Charles B. Williams' translation: "sin is *lawlessness*").

But that's not all the Bible says about sin.

Actually the Bible portrays and defines law-breaking in several dozen ways. The subject "sin" becomes so gigantically broad (if you really study God's Word) you will probably be surprised.

And did you know that all sins fall into three kinds — three categories?

Sin Is a Trinity!

Turn to I John 2:15-16. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world [Greek *cosmos* — meaning "society, way of life"], the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world [*cosmos*], the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Do you love your life-style, your way of doing things? If so, God says you love this world. And this world is passing away — disappearing (verse 17). You must forsake your way, or you too will perish.

Now notice that John divides everything "in the world" into three classes or categories (verse 16) — three divisions. One: "the lust of the flesh." This particular lust is that pulling, yearning, down-dragging powerful desire — temptation — to satisfy and please the body. Remember, lust is an *unlawful desire* to satisfy, not just the normal, lawful desire to be comfortable. God wants us to be in good health (III John 2).

Two: "the lust of the eyes." Here is another illegal desire, but this time through the eyes. Our eyes focus on things that do not belong to us. Then we think, "Ah, now that would be nice — wouldn't I like to have — wouldn't I like to lay my hands on that!" Our eyes incite us to lust and covetousness, greed and envy. That is the lust of the eyes.

Three: "the pride of life." John is here speaking of *physical* life. John's original word for "pride" means the puffing, swelling, heady, billowing, superior, proud, exalted feeling which all human beings experience. The pride of life is that warm, "good," elevated self-satisfied feeling we get when someone pats us on the back — when someone tells us we are pretty good.

We have all experienced the "pride of life" somewhere in our lives, haven't we? We thought — deep down inside — we were *right*; but we were wrong. Our "righteousness" — whatever its form, whatever its brand — was just so much ego and pride.

All sins appear to fit generally into one or more of these three categories of I John.

Man's First Sin

Let's see how closely man's first sin fits John's three-way description. Turn to Genesis 3:6. "And when the

woman saw that the tree was [1] good for food, and that it was [2] pleasant to the eyes, and a tree [3] to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat”

Did you catch that? Eve — not satisfied with the food God gave her — saw that the fruit was “good for food.” That is, her flesh, her taste buds, her appetite lusted for that particular food. Eve had an illegal desire to satisfy her body. What is that, but “lust of the flesh”?

Secondly, it was “pleasant to the eyes” — her mind (through the eyes) lusted after something pleasant to the sight. The same as John’s “lust of the eyes”!

Lastly, in her mind she *desired* it to make her *wiser*. She looked for something to exalt, puff up, expand, and swell the self. That is the “pride of life”!

So both Adam and Eve yielded to the triple temptation; they disobeyed God, they sinned. Man’s first sin fit all three of John’s categories for law-breaking.

Too many of us today are like Adam and Eve. The fruit God gave them was not good enough. It is always the *forbidden* fruit that appeals to us. It’s the other fellow’s house, the other fellow’s championship, the other woman’s fur coat, somebody else’s name on the record book, the other fellow’s wife and not our own that appeals. Our eyes, our minds, our bodies deceive us into thinking the grass is always greener on the other side.

Now we know how sin affected our first parents. Let’s go on through the Bible to see how sin affects us today! We must know more about sin in order to root it out.

Sin Is Many-sided

The Bible uses various words for “sin” in the original texts, showing various shades of meaning. God shows us that sin is complex — not as simple as we might think. We will analyze some of these “sin” words to see what special facet of sin God is emphasizing.

Remember one thing before we continue. All these words can be correctly classified as “sin.” Their meanings all overlap to a certain degree and may even be synonyms in some contexts. However, as we go through the different passages where the various words are used, we see various kinds of sin. Let’s notice some of these words in the Old Testament and the contexts in which they occur.

The first and most common word for sin is *khata*. *Khata* means “to miss the mark.” Here’s the point for us: “missing the mark” is not necessarily from the habit of sinning. If you miss the mark in daily Christian living, it isn’t necessarily because you are a practicing sinner. Of course, you *can* fail for that reason too.

We often fail, not because we want to sin, not because we hate God in our conscious mind, but because, even though we are aiming for the mark, we are not able to hit dead center. We miss the mark be-



“God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16, 17).

cause we don’t want to hit it badly enough, because we don’t practice hitting it, and because we don’t have enough of God’s help. We need to realize we are built short of the mark — we are mark-missers, misfits by nature. God knows we will begin by missing, but with His help we can start hitting.

Most of us, at some point, yield to temptation. If you yield to temptation you miss the mark, you *khata*! Notice what David said when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. “Against thee [God], thee only, have I sinned [*khata*], and done this evil in thy sight” (Ps. 51:4). David had allowed himself to drift away from God — the temptation overcame him.

God told Cain that sin (*khata*) would try to pull him down. God’s words to Cain apply to the whole human race: “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well [if you disobey], sin lieth at the door” (Gen. 4:7). The Revised Standard Version makes the last part of this verse clearer, saying in effect: “Sin’s desire will be to pull you down, but you must master it!”

We must resist temptation — we must not yield! We must strive always to hit the mark!

Your Duty and Mine

Jeremiah 51:5 describes a time when the entire land of Israel was filled with sin. The Hebrew word for sin here is *asham*, meaning “incur guilt” (sometimes through ignorance or neglect).

Are you guilty? Do you really produce on your job? Do you produce poor work? You machinists, draftsmen, design engineers, gas station attendants, farmers, bus and truck drivers, elevator operators — workers of all kinds — do you put out sloppy, dowdy, half-done work?

Remember, a Christian strives to do the job better than anybody else. True Christians are not often the great of the world. We may just pump gas. We may just sit and type what the boss dictates. Perhaps we

just answer the phone. We may drive a truck. Possibly we plow the soil. But we must strive to do it *right* — and the *best*!

You may say you don't have as much ability as the next man — you can't do as well as he. But your zeal, your attitude, your zest for work can still put you in front! (Remember, you are in competition against yourself, not the other fellow.)

How about wage cheating? Do you punch the clock a little early? Earlier at quitting time, that is? Or do you punch it earlier, before work starts? Do you do the job as you would want it done for yourself? For Christ?

How about you women? If you are at home, do you live up to the high standard that "wife" and "mother" imply? If you are working, do you produce on the job? Or are you letting down (*asham-ing*)?

Something or Nothing?

Another very common Old Testament word for "sin" is *aven*. The word is quite often connected with idolatry. Remember, an idol is anything in your mind higher than God, or anything you love more than God. The word sometimes expresses the "nothingness of sin." It may include deception, self-deception, and legal injustice.

Read I Samuel 15:22-23. *Aven* occurs in the phrase "and stubbornness is as iniquity [*aven*] and idolatry." The Bible says stubbornness is a form of idolatry!

Notice how the concept of idolatry connected with "*aven-type*" sin helps explain Isaiah 1:13. "... The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity [*aven*], even the solemn meeting." As the next verse says, these days were "*your* new moons and *your* appointed feasts."

Remember Christ's famous rebuke of the false ministers in His Sermon on the Mount? Perhaps you did not know part of His condemnation (Matt. 7:23) is a quote from the Old Testament: "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity"

(*aven* in Hebrew, quoted from Psalm 6:8). False ministers are still "working" deception (*aven*) in their lives today!

Are you still stubborn? Bull-headed? Or is your particular brand of vanity personal idolatry?

Perhaps you are caught up in the vanity of this world's vogues and fashions. Possibly you're all hung up on being "in." Maybe you preen like a peacock before the "vanity mirror" by the hour in a vain attempt to keep up with current trends. Of course there is nothing really wrong with being in fashion, but it shouldn't become a pre-occupation.

Offbeat

Vanity is not all that is wrong with our society! Satan is twisting everything he can. Crazy, weird, outlandish, far-out, offbeat, perverse — that describes our society. *Avon* means "crookedness" or "intentional sin."

What about some of our modern



"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her . . ." (Gen. 3:6).

music? Have you heard some of the weird, outlandish — yes, fiendish — modern noise? It seems that the goal of many modern "composers" is to make as many notes clash in discord as possible.

God knew this final generation would bend, twist natural laws and natural beauty into a wrong use. That is why He inspired the word *avon* to describe our sins today.

"Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? Or what is our iniquity [*avon*]? Or what is our sin (*khata*) that we have committed against the Lord our God? Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Eternal, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law. . . therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not. . ." (Jer. 16:10-13).

Yes, God knew that we would come up with crazy, offbeat modern art, weird music and lustful dances! Surely our iniquity (*avon*) is not hidden from God's eyes (Jer. 16:17).

"Painful"

Another Hebrew word for sin is *amal*, meaning "labor, toil" (usually including the idea of wearisome, painful effort). Though this word can be translated "sin," it brings out a special aspect of sin. Sin is not delicious or sweet. The results of sin always bring painful, agonizing unhappiness and toil.

Imagine how much work a gambler goes to, just to make a "fast buck." Stays up all night, drives all the way across the state, skips meals, worries, schemes and plans and plots, fights off headache, backache and hangover — just to get something for "nothing." *It doesn't work!* As King Solomon wrote: "... The way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15).

A lot of painful labor and toil (*sin, amal*) goes into the body-building game. Have you ever stopped to wonder just exactly what in the

world mirrors have to do with lifting weights? I am speaking of these popular — and money-making — gymnasiums which advertise the “body beautiful” for men (!) and women. We know what bars are for, and disks of iron, weights, pulleys, rowing machines, etc. But what about the mirrors?

Mirrors are an essential part of body-building apparatus. The mirrors are there so they can see themselves — that is why so many body builders can't walk normally. They must tense their arms slightly to make the biceps and triceps bulge, and spread their “lats” (the muscles that make the V-shape in the outer part of the upper back), etc.

You will note that many body builders usually work in tight bathing trunks, or at least stripped to the waist. The reason for all this is simple. They want to see themselves! They have to build up that vanity: the “pride of [physical] life”! And all the labor and toil they go through becomes *amal* — that is *sin* — as long as it is for a vain purpose.

It actually *hurts* to build a body. It actually takes pain and sweat and strain. But as long as you have a mirror in front of you, you're in business. The mirror pulls you on — that vanity of seeing yourself.

A Nation of Cheats

Amal also includes the great, strenuous effort so many students put forth to cheat. Some years back over one hundred top men in the nation at the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, were expelled for cheating! My wife and I have visited the academy. We saw what tremendous advantages those men had there — the best of everything. Beautiful area, mountain setting, fabulous new buildings, everything going for them. We noticed also they had great *esprit de corps* — spirit and zeal. But at least a hundred of them — the nation's cream of the crop — were cheats!

The *work* involved in cheating is phenomenal. It takes great effort, much eye strain and mental strain

to secrete the answers where a sharp-eyed examiner will not spot them.

Stop to ask yourself how much effort you are putting forth just to get around the law. It takes pain and toil (*amal*) to get around God's laws, man's laws.

Good as Gold?

Once upon a time men used to keep their word. Sounds like a fairy tale now, doesn't it? A fairy tale, because so few men today keep their word. If you are disloyal, faithless, perfidious, or hypocritical, you are sinning; you are *ma'aling*. *Ma'al* is a Hebrew word meaning to act treacherously, unfaithfully, or fraudulently. This word is used with adultery — which is a form of disloyalty and dishonesty — and adultery *fills our nation!* The returned captives from Babylon under Ezra had transgressed (*ma'al*) in taking their strange wives and thus acted treacherously and perfidiously with Almighty God (Ezra 10:10).



“The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground . . . So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way . . .” (Gen. 3:23, 24).

You may not be an adulterer, but how good is your word? It should be “good as gold”! Christians are supposed to place so much stock in their word so as to bring back the old days of “once upon a time.” Are you willing to *suffer* in order to keep your word?

God's Word never fails! “Thy testimonies are very sure . . .” (Ps. 93:5).

Ask yourself how loyal you are to God's Work. Are you loyal only while it is convenient for you? Or are you — as David was — willing to hurt yourself, suffer loss, sacrifice whatever, rather than to see the Work take a loss? How about before the judge and the magistrates? How about before the police, the medical profession or the boss?

If you are loyal, God will reward. If you are not loyal, you are a sinner — you are guilty of *ma'al*!

When Uzziah the king stepped out of his office and tried to gain God's favor by burning incense, Azariah and the priests condemned Uzziah of treachery, faithlessness, disloyalty, saying to him: “Thou hast trespassed” (*ma'al*). See II Chronicles 26:16 and 18.

Another common sin coming under this category is sneakiness and petty thieving. Have you broken all your habits of petty thieving? You must train your children against this vice also. Petty thieving and sneakiness are common among children.

Enough?

Are you tired of reading about sin? Have you had enough?

God has had *enough!*

God is fed up with sin. Christ is busily preparing for a new world which will gradually stamp out sin. Right now Christ is purging sin out of His Church. You need to read yet more about the many sides of sin catalogued in the Bible.

You have plenty to work on now. In a future issue you will read more about sins you must purge out if you are to be with Christ in that new world He is building. □

(To be continued)

We received a very large response to the recent article "How Liberated Can You Get?" Below are excerpts from some of the letters from our readers. Answers to questions are given where appropriate.

How Liberated Can You Get?

What a wonderfully refreshing and much needed article. It takes courage to slice through so many foolish, typically American social superstitions about what a real woman is supposed to be, and to do it all with an honest dedication to the Word of God as our guide to true femininity. May many more women and men alike be liberated through your article.

Mignon K.,
Tacoma, Washington

After reading your article entitled "How Liberated Can You Get?" I felt I just had to comment. First of all, the article was very well written — for the other side. It is also full of well-written innuendos and double meanings.

If a husband becomes frustrated from not having an underling to delegate to, then there's something wrong with his ego! You can't have very much respect for your sex if you feel that women would go to the extreme of pestering their husbands about every picky little thing.

Another thing that bothers me about your article is your example of Proverbs 31. It seems to me as though she was doing all the work. If that's what you think it means to be a fulfilled woman — a biologically defined workhorse — thanks, but no thanks! I'd rather stay single and be my own master (mistress) — at least if there's a mess to be cleaned up, it's mine; and if there's something to be done, it's because I want it or thought of it for myself, seeing as I do have some brains.

Judy R.,
Farmington Hills, Michigan

• *If you think some women wouldn't go to the extreme of "pestering their husbands for every picky little thing," read the next letter.*

This is one of the most important articles ever [published in the GN] and I know a lot of women are really going to be shaken up because you have removed any excuse for them to cop out.

So many women love being told what time to shower, brush their teeth, what to wear, etc. One man admitted to me that he writes out his wife's entire schedule for the day . . . and he commands her to follow the example of the virtuous woman by arising long before he does . . . but insisting that she go to bed long after he does at night.

Ann M.,
Hyattsville, Maryland

I am very annoyed with the way Proverbs 31 has been used so unrealistically as an example of what Christian liberated

women can be and do. That woman had been married a long time, her husband was rich, and they had servants! Why don't you write about real women who have to cope with the present society and economic situation?

Brenda F.,
Oshawa, Ontario

• *Proverbs 31 is an acrostic poem describing a composite picture of what the ideal, "virtuous" woman might have been like in Old Testament times. She was an unusual person, and undoubtedly few women back then ever reached her pinnacle of attainment.*

Since this chapter is the only comprehensive biblical description we have of what a woman's role can encompass, it would be difficult not to refer to it in a religiously oriented article on women. Although none of us live in the same circumstances she did, we can still glean a lot of valuable information from reading about her. One of the important things to notice is the wide variety of activities in which she took part. It shows that God never meant for women to be trapped in a narrow, stereotyped role. Instead, they have the option to attain whatever their own personal potential allows.

Of course, not all women today have rich husbands, grown children, or servants. Some are limited in the extra things they might want to accomplish by the age or number of their children, the area they live in, or the state of their family finances. "Let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him [or her], and in which God has called him" (1 Cor. 7:17, Revised Standard Version). God expects both women and men to do the best they can with what they have been given, within the context of our own personal circumstances. But Proverbs 31 helps women see the options that are available if they are able or want to take them.

I'm liberated enough to tell you that I think your article in *The Good News* (April) is garbage — it is superficial, illogical and ridiculous.

I thought usually *The Good News* puts out some fairly reputable reporting, but you slipped up this time. Did you ever think that today we live in an entirely different world, social environment and pattern of daily life than did the women of biblical times? This just might have some influence on women's roles, eh?

Mary M.,
Jackson's Point, Ontario

Mr. Armstrong, we have thoroughly enjoyed your literature, especially *The Good News* magazine. However, in the latest issue, the article on "How Liberated Can You Get?" seemed to be a little sarcastic. I really am concerned how this will affect the women who read this. It seemed as though she halfway agreed with the Lib Movement. She didn't bring out all the wonderful rewards and accomplishments of being a truly feminine wife, mother and homemaker, except in passing at the end. I don't feel it is wrong to drive my own car and

work out of the home . . . but it's almost as though the author is insinuating a woman is less of a woman if she doesn't do these things.

Judy S.,
Huntsville, Alabama

I'd be the last to argue that Mrs. Andelin is 100% correct in all her advice, but use of such a label as "fake" on the basis of personal opinion rather than on proof seems to do a gross injustice to *The Good News*, the article, and the book. The woman who is faster, smarter, or better than her husband in areas he considers "his field" is headed for trouble if she makes it obvious. *The Fascinating Woman* is anything but a "fake."

Mrs. H. S.,
Spring Hill, Kansas

Thank you so much for your article "How Liberated Can You Get?" A few years ago the *Fascinating Womanhood* book was popular reading in this area. It caused me more mental problems. My husband wanted and still wants me to be able to do many of the things the book says we shouldn't. Finally I just decided to put it aside and quit worrying. Thank you very much for your article! It is the way I live.

Ruby C.,
Blue Springs, Missouri

Thank you for speaking out against *Fascinating Womanhood*. I'm not saying all the book is bad. About 25% of it is very good, but the other 75% will teach a woman to be a hypocrite. Thank you again for telling the women the world over how to be a real woman.

Gladys K.,
Drexel, North Carolina

• *The concepts contained in "Fascinating Womanhood" can only bring a marriage up to a certain level. If that's what some marriages need to make them tolerable, well and good. Or if some can use such a book (or others like it) as a starting point, fine. But ideally two converted mates who deal with each other as fellow Christians and equals — and don't try to fit themselves into our society's (not God's) preconceived roles — could rise far above the author's concepts. Surely God wants the marriage relationship to be an honest one between two equals — like His relationship to Christ. (They are on the same plane even though God the Father is in authority.) It is dishonest to oneself and one's husband to manufacture a helpless, dependent attitude just to live up to somebody else's expectations. Think of the opportunities for service and enjoyment that could be missed due to a misguided sense of what's really "feminine."*

God doesn't expect us to follow the dictates of a secular book — but neither would He condemn us for finding helpful information in it. He's pleased with us as long as we operate within the confines of His law, and He expects us to be tolerant of those who choose to live differently than we do (Rom. 14:4).

GN

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“YOU SHALL HEAR OF WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS ...”

Matthew 24:6

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