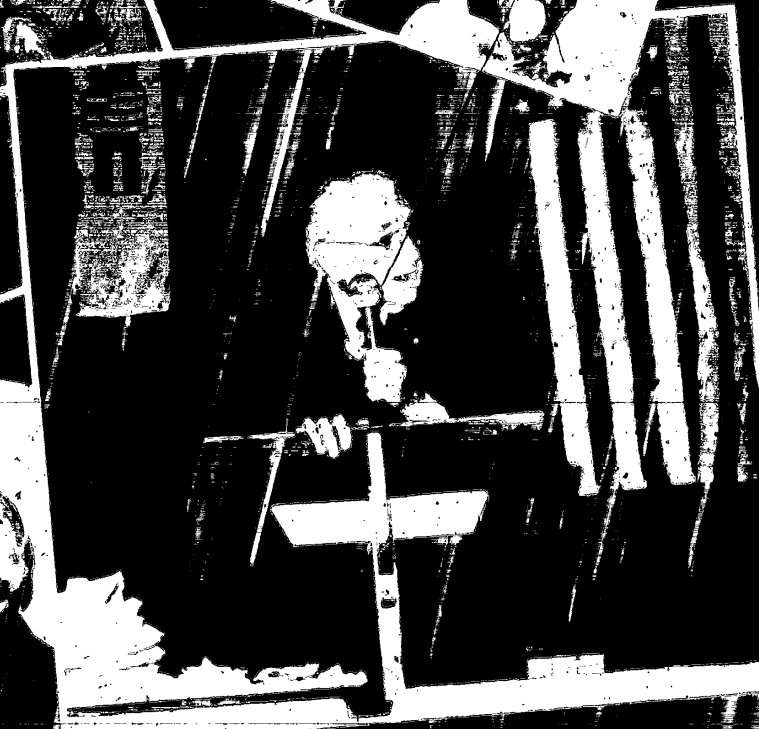


SEPTEMBER 1976



Good News



**MR. ARMSTRONG
VISITS
SOUTH AFRICA**

See Page 1

HOW DOORS ARE OPENING WORLDWIDE TO THE GOOD NEWS!

Just how are doors opening wide for Herbert Armstrong to have private meetings with presidents, kings, emperors, prime ministers all over the world? Here is an interesting inside story of the South African campaigns.

by Robert Fahey, Regional Director, South Africa

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you decided you would like to have private meetings of a half-hour to an hour-and-a-half with scores of heads of government all over the world, just how would you go about it? If you set out to try it, you would meet with nothing but humiliating disappointments. Heads of state are heavily guarded. They do not see anyone, unless they themselves so desire. Their daily schedule is filled solid. But Herbert W. Armstrong does not meet with humiliating rebuffs. He is invited. For some seven years it has been happening continually. In no two cases does it seem to happen the same way that these doors swing wide open to him. He never invites himself, or makes personal request directly or through his own staff. Yet, as if by mysterious magic, the doors keep opening wide and the reception continues to be cordial, warm and friendly.

Here is one specific example — unlike any other that we've before.

Johannesburg: Having just spent, one full month with Herbert W. Armstrong and Stanley R. Rader on their trip to Southern Africa, I want to share with you a few highlights of a very exciting and successful visit. I have seen firsthand that God has put before Mr. Armstrong an open door to speak and write openly and forcefully the good news of the coming Kingdom of God!

After giving an overview of world conditions that would be extant at the end of the age, Jesus Christ said in Matthew 24 that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Verse 14.) There is a lot in that little verse. Among other things, it shows that the gospel would not be preached to convert the world at this time — but only as a witness to them!

In the book of Revelation, Christ said that one of His churches, the

Philadelphia church, would have before it a door opened by Christ Himself — no man would be able to take credit for it! Christ said He would have to miraculously intervene and provide an open door because that church has a "little strength" (Rev. 3:8).

That is exactly what has happened in South Africa recently. I have been privileged to see the whole scenario from beginning to the present.

Here is the story!

The South Africa Foundation. The South Africa Foundation is a group of leading South African men and women of all races and backgrounds who have grouped themselves together to improve the image of their country abroad and seek the betterment and progress of its customs and laws at home. It is a very prestigious organization and has the government's ear.

Its President is Dr. Jan S. Marais. As chairman of the Trust Bank of

Africa, he is also one of the leaders in South African banking. He first saw *The Plain Truth* magazine in Europe. What caught his eye first was the title — *Plain Truth*. When he returned to South Africa he became a subscriber through the Johannesburg office.

On November 22, 1974, Dr. Marais wrote to me, saying that he felt *The Plain Truth* would be interested in an article on the Foundation. He wrote: "The S.A. Foundation has as its aims and objects to make the plain blunt truth about South Africa better known among the world. And as a further dimension to also inform South Africans of the facts of life internationally and how our manners, deeds and actions here affect our image, our international relations and our future." A luncheon was arranged to discuss the possibility for an article.

After discussing the article, we talked about Mr. Armstrong's travels and his awards for efforts toward world peace. This intrigued Dr. Marais and he began reading about Mr. Armstrong's activities more closely. There followed an unexpected invitation from Dr. Marais, as president of the South Africa Foundation, for Mr. Armstrong to visit South Africa.

To emphasize the point, a few weeks later Dr. Marais invited me to another luncheon to urge me to impress upon Mr. Armstrong the need for his visit to this part of the world. He said that Mr. Armstrong could make a great contribution in all of Africa. He said: "The concepts Mr. Armstrong expounds are of inestimable value to this continent." He hoped that Mr. Armstrong would visit every country and every leader in Africa, and offered the offices of the South Africa Foundation to help do that.

In other words, the door was wide open. **Meets State President.** Last February we learned that Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Rader would be visiting South Africa in June. Originally



PARAMOUNT CHIEF Kaizer Mantzima meets with Mr. Armstrong.

nally they planned to stay only two weeks. But so many meetings and speaking invitations opened up that the trip was extended to four full weeks.

Through Dr. Marais' office a meeting with the State President, Dr. N. Diederichs, was arranged for the 2nd of June. This was the first major meeting of Mr. Armstrong's trip.

The office of State President is in many ways a ceremonial one. Yet it embodies all the prestige, dignity and respect of the nation itself. Even the Prime Minister, the main political leader of the country, is considered second to the State President.

Dr. Diederichs listened intently as Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Rader explained something of the Worldwide Church of God, the Ambassador Colleges, and the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation (AICF). Then, followed a discussion during which comparisons and contrasts were drawn between the racial situation in South Africa and the United States. Dr. Diederichs stated his belief that it was difficult for South Africa to get a fair presentation in the world press.

The State President then said that when we look around the world today, filled with poverty, literacy

and its mountain of human suffering, one must wonder what progress mankind has really made. Mankind now has advanced technology, unbelievable conveniences such as the automobile and all the electrical gadgets to make his life happier. But it seems that mankind on the whole is less happy and further from real contentment. Mr. Rader said that Mr. Armstrong would agree totally with what he had just said. That was the reason Mr. Armstrong brought his message of hope for the future of mankind.

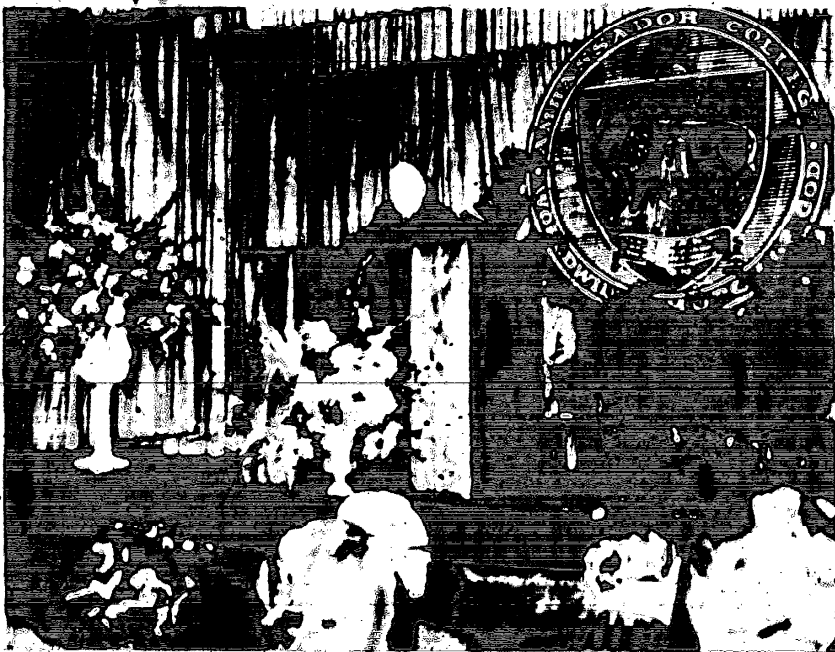
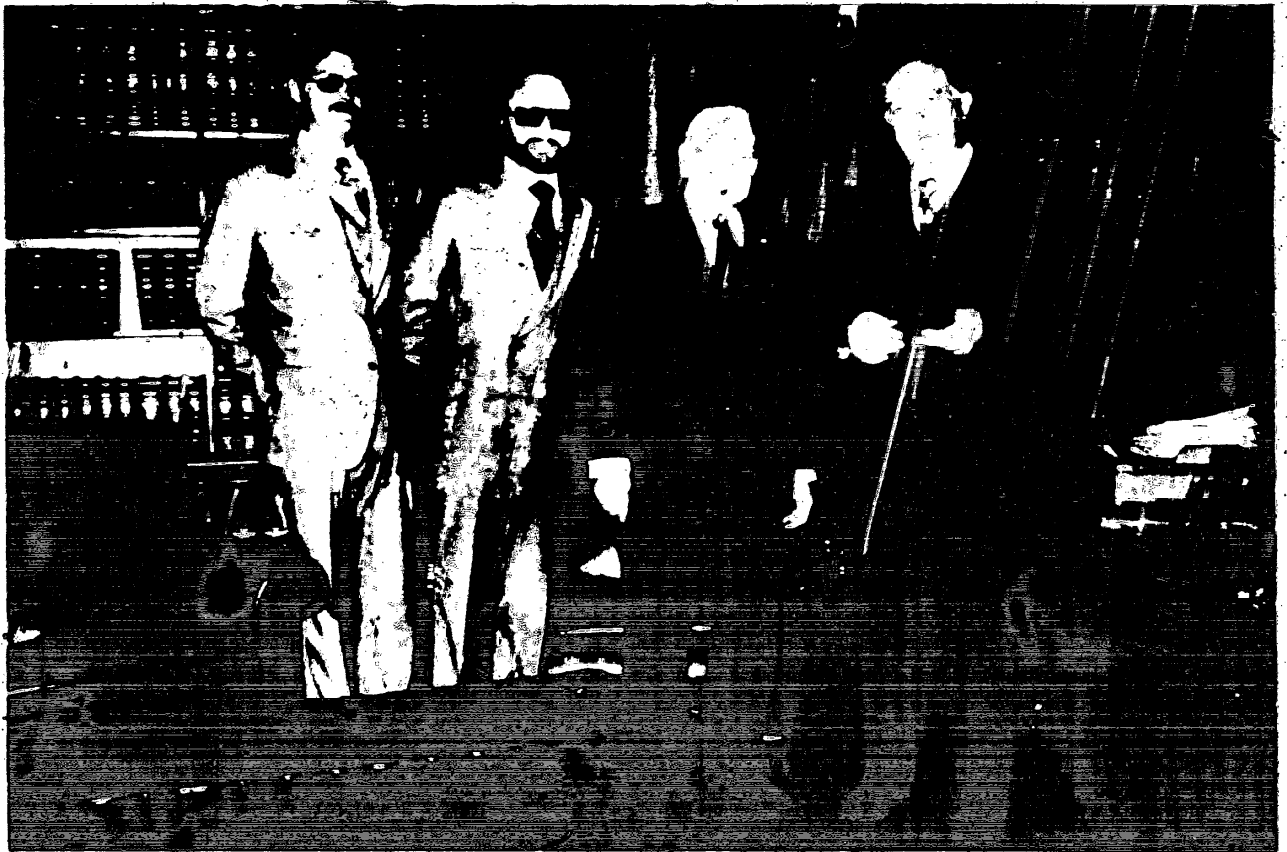
Next, Dr. Marais organized a luncheon in his office in Cape Town, with Mr. Armstrong as guest of honor. Present were the minister of Information and the Interior, Dr. Connie Mulder, the chief of the Defense Force, Admiral Bierman, and the Cape Town representative of the South Africa Foundation, Mr. Freddy Hirsch.

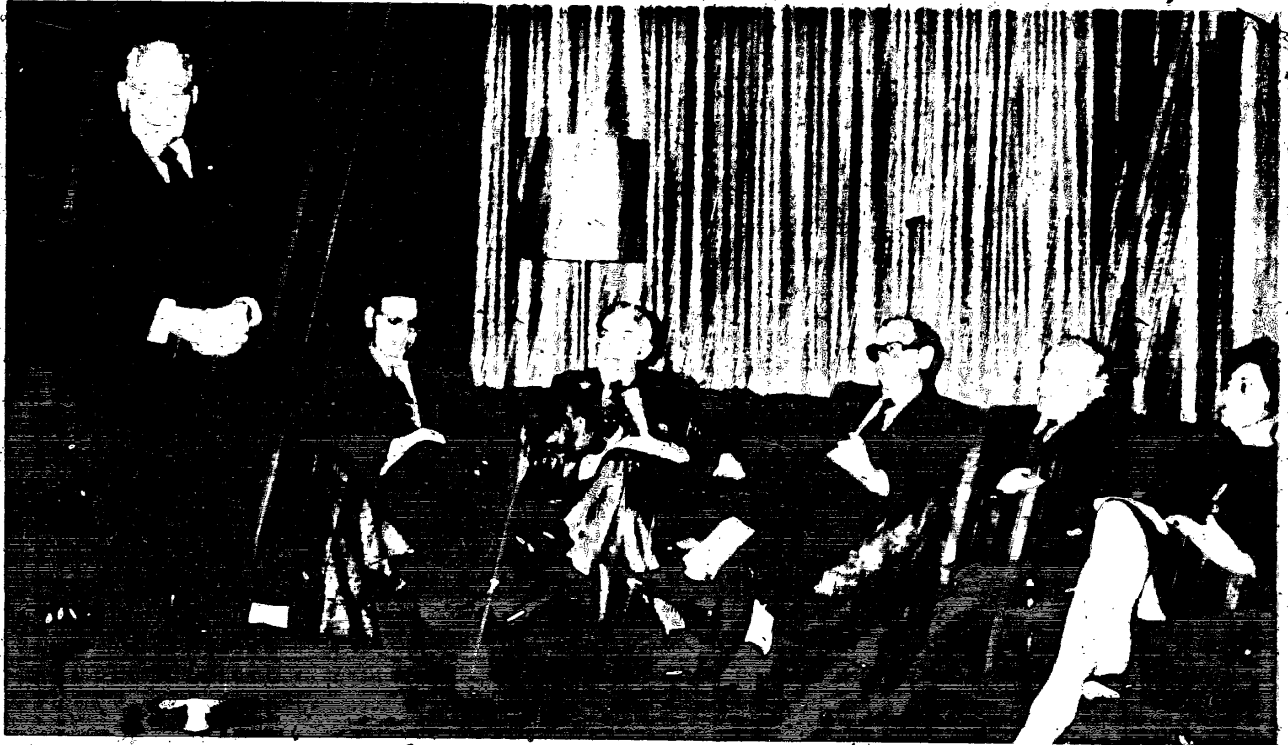
It was a most convivial luncheon. The two South African leaders, Dr. Marais and Dr. Mulder, were of course interested in the United States Presidential race. They asked several questions of Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Rader that led to a very lively and pleasant discussion about the election and the many individuals involved.

The Prime Minister. It was shortly after this luncheon meeting that the visit with Prime Minister J. B. Vorster was confirmed for June 14. In the British parliamentary system, which South Africa uses, the prime minister is the real seat of political power.

Mr. Vorster was particularly busy at this time (Ian Smith of Rhodesia).
(Continued on page 5)

ABOVE: Mr. Herbert Armstrong is received by South African Prime Minister John Vorster (right). Also pictured are Robert Fahey (left) and Stanley R. Rader. Below left: Mr. Armstrong addresses overflow audience during the Durban campaign. Right: A gift of Steuben crystal is presented to State President Dr. N. Diederichs.





had just called on him in Pretoria, and in the next day or two Mr. Vorster was due to take off for Germany to meet with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Nevertheless we had an open door — but it was only open a mile! We were given only ten minutes for the meeting.

Our conversation revolved around the present conditions in South Africa and the military position she faces with the Cubans just across the border in Angola. The Prime Minister gave his analysis of the Angola situation and went on to discuss South Africa's image problem with the rest of the world.

He noted that in the early 1950s South Africa had taken a very strong stand against international communism. In 1963 the government discovered a communist conspiracy for revolution in South Africa and took steps to stop it before it started. The Prime Minister was of the opinion that "the communists have never forgiven us for that." He cited South Africa's anti-communist stand as a reason for the continually biased reporting by outsiders of events in the country.

He stated that South Africa is never given any credit whatsoever for the fact that her blacks are the best paid in the whole of Africa. He also stated that they are the best educated and enjoy the highest standard of living of any blacks on the whole continent. He acknowledged there is still much room for improvement, of course, but no credit is given for improvements already made.

By the time the visit was over, we had used up our ten minutes and another 20 besides.

Mr. Armstrong was also able to

MR. HERBERT ARMSTRONG addresses the Zionist Federation of Cape Town (top), and talks with Mr. Eigin Curry, president of the Cape Town Rotary Club (bottom right). While in Johannesburg Mr. Armstrong and Stanley Rader were interviewed by SABC-TV at the Carlton Hotel.



MR. ARMSTRONG talks with Jewish community leader in Durban.

meet with the minister of Education and Sport, Dr. Piet Koorhof. This was in connection with the proposed AICF activity in Southern Africa. The minister suggested that we consider helping with athletic and sporting opportunities for the blacks of the country. Dr. Koorhof said that he considered the project important and wanted to be involved personally.

Talks With Namibia Leaders. The South Africa Foundation also invited Mr. Armstrong to Windhoek, the capital of South West Africa (Namibia), to talk with the leaders of the constitutional committee. These individuals of many racial and ethnic backgrounds are trying to hammer out a constitution that will enable all of them to maintain their separate cultures and languages and still permit the country to operate successfully. It was a very pleasant luncheon where Mr. Armstrong became acquainted with the local leadership and they became acquainted with him and the organization he represents.

More Opportunities. So many opportunities opened up that we really had to struggle to fit them all in. Believe me, we tried our best. Having lunch one day on the G-4 flying from Durban to Cape Town, Mr. Armstrong said: "You took me at

my word that I am 37 years old, going on 36 when you set up the schedule!" I said: "I hoped it wasn't too strenuous." He said: "Oh, no! I thrive on it!"

Mr. Armstrong met with Paramount Chief Kaizer Matanzima of the Transkei on June 9. The Transkei is soon to become an independent country on October 26 when South Africa grants the area total autonomy. Chief Matanzima will then become prime minister. During the hour-long interview in his hotel room, Chief Matanzima said that his country looked forward to the independence they once had centuries earlier and invited Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Rader to visit them after the country is independent. They accepted the invitation and are planning to fulfill it in November.

The South African Zionist Federation, aware of Mr. Armstrong's esteem in Israel, arranged for meetings in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Mr. Armstrong addressed both groups in what were some of the most warm and friendly meetings we had in Johannesburg. Mr. Armstrong ended his speech to the Jewish leaders by telling them that he knew every Jew had at least some concept of the Messiah, and that he could tell them that the Messiah was coming in our generation to bring world peace. No one seemed upset by this. In fact, it seemed they were hoping he's right.

Other opportunities opened up when knowledge of Mr. Armstrong's trip became available. In Edenvale, the mayor's staunch *Plain Truth* reader, invited all the leading citizens to a reception in Mr. Armstrong's honor. Mr. Armstrong was invited to speak to the group (I don't know what they were expecting — but what they ended up getting was a very strong dose of the gospel!) in Port Elizabeth, the former mayor, who is also district governor of the Lions Club, contacted the Johannesburg office and virtually insisted that Mr. Armstrong visit his city. Then he spared no effort in encouraging every local leader to attend Mr. Armstrong's

lecture. Five hundred people showed up, including the presidents of the universities, the leading industrialists, the leaders of the service clubs and the mayor.

Again we did nothing. The door just stood open! All we could do was walk right through it!

Mr. Armstrong also met with many community leaders throughout the country by speaking to service clubs. These included combined Rotary Club luncheons, combined Lions Clubs and the same for Round Tablers.

Standing-Room-Only Campaigns. The first campaign held by Mr. Armstrong in South Africa was in Durban, Natal, on June 12. We had an overflow crowd of 944 people in a hall that only held 700! Another hall was booked and the sound piped in, but many preferred to stand around the edges and see Mr. Armstrong in person.

Since he only had one lecture, he had to condense a great deal. But he was able to deliver a very strong, clear message about the government of God. One listener wrote afterwards "I have never seen Mr. Armstrong more dynamic or more forthright especially when he said, 'I make no apology for anything I have said today.' He has not lost any of the fire and zeal for God's work."

The next day we flew from Durban to Cape-Town, where a similar one-day campaign was arranged. This time 1244 people crammed into a hall that holds 600! Again a small side hall was booked but again many preferred to stand around the edges inside the main hall.

A two-day campaign was also arranged in Johannesburg. Unfortunately, just before the campaign began the riots broke out in Soweto — the first racial conflicts in South Africa in 15 years. A television announcement was made that all public meetings were cancelled. Later this was clarified to mean all-out-door public meetings — but apparently the damage had been done. In addition to this, we had the coldest night in Johannesburg since 1923 (June is our winter, you know.)

These factors combined to bring an estimated 2000 attendance

down to 1000. The audience was very attentive and responsive, however. Having two nights enabled Mr. Armstrong to go at a little slower pace. He covered much the same material, but in greater detail.

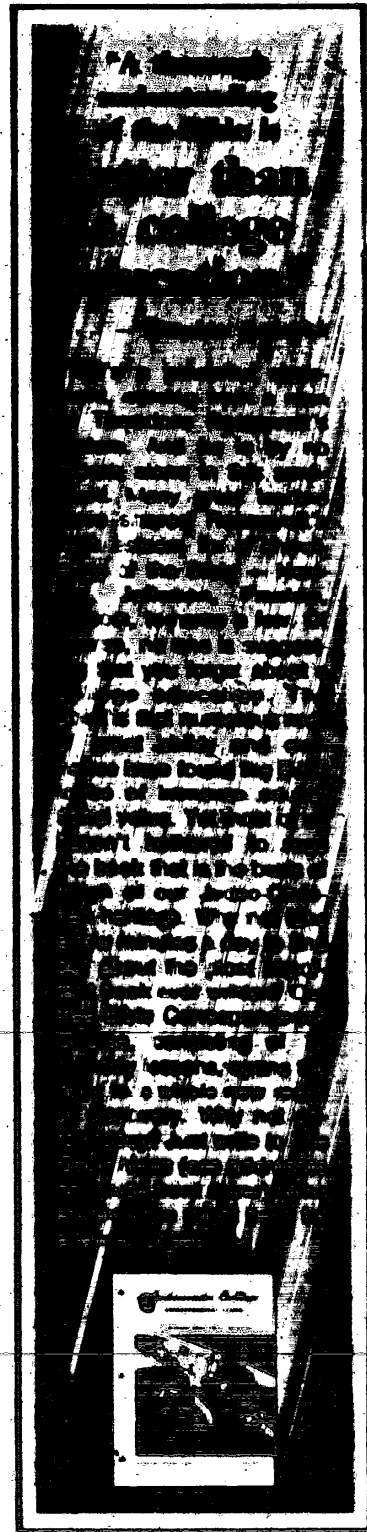
Speaks to Church. Of course, we had regular church meetings too. Mr. Armstrong spoke for the first time to the Worldwide Church of God in South Africa at a combined meeting for all races on Sabbath, May 29. Since the South Africa office opened in March 1963, Mr. Armstrong had never visited the country. Of course, many have been members much longer than that. One elderly man, who first heard the broadcast in what is now known as Zambia, told me "I have waited 20 years for this day!" The applause when Mr. Armstrong arrived was astounding!

In all Mr. Armstrong had 34 functions in 28 days! Plus nine local flights totaling 9000 kilometers. News of his next trip in November is getting around and invitations are starting to come in. We already have a firm date for him to meet King Sobhuza of Swaziland. Chief Jonathan of Lesotho has extended an invitation and a specific date is being worked out. Rhodesia had to be cancelled this trip, but hopefully he will be visiting there in November. It is interesting that they want to see him, the door seems to be opening wide.

On June 22, Mr. Armstrong returned to Pasadena, before continuing with his unique work in other parts of the world. As a result of his visit, we have before us in South Africa a whole string of opportunities to pursue.

The *Plain Truth* magazine has now been advertised strongly and widely throughout the leadership of the entire country firsthand by the editor-in-chief! The Worldwide Church of God, though very small, is recognized as a dedicated group with the very highest standards and goals.

And the job of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God in this area of the world has been made very much easier. That job is not done yet. It's not half done yet. But we have wide-open doors before us to do it! □



WHEN A MAN FROM SPACE VISITED EARTH...

by Garner Ted Armstrong

In the April and May numbers of the GN, we published a two-part series about the unique man from space — Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Favorable response was overwhelming! And along with all the propitious letters came many thoughtful biblical questions on the articles. As a little bit of a break from our usual format, I am going to answer some of these questions in the space normally devoted to my monthly article.

QUESTION: "In your article 'When a Man From Space Visited Earth,' you stated that the best kept secret was that Jesus Christ did not know His Father would turn His back on Him when He was crucified. How could this be, since Jesus inspired King David to write in Psalms 22:1 that He would be forsaken? These are the same words He spoke while on the stake. Surely as a human Jesus read this passage. So would you please explain how He still did not know He would be forsaken?"

Carol J.,
Jeffers, Alabama

ANSWER: Be glad to. Take a closer look at Psalms 22. It consists of a prayer of David when he was in the midst of some type of horrible affliction. Notice the context of this scripture (one of the most important rules of Bible study): "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the

night season, and am not silent. . . . But I am a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of; the people (verses 1-2, 6).

The total time that Jesus spent on the stake was no more than about six hours (compare Mark 15:25 with Matt. 27:45-46, Mark 15:33 and Luke 23:44). He actually cried out the words of David only a very short time before His death (see Matt. 27:45-50). The realization that the Father had left Him utterly alone came only moments before He died.

Yet in David's psalm — which, as you correctly pointed out, Christ had read before — the time factor of "being forsaken" was at the very least a twenty-four-hour period. David said he had cried out in vain both day and night (Ps. 22:2). So it was not always readily apparent from the context of Psalms 22:1 that this scripture was to be fulfilled just prior to Christ's death.

Jesus Christ directly and personally fulfilled a whole host of Old Testament prophetic scriptures, but not all under the same circumstances.

Some Jesus Himself, in relatively calm circumstances, made absolutely sure were fulfilled, as the account in Luke 22:36-37. He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me [and then follows a quotation from Isaiah 53]. And he was reckoned among the transgressors.

Other Old Testament fulfillments were only apparent after the events occurred. Days after Judas Iscariot was already dead, the apostle Peter was inspired to say, "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas. . . . For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein, and his bishoprick let another take" (Acts 1:16, 20). Amazingly, Peter paraphrased "let his habitation be desolate" from Psalms 69:25 and "his bishoprick [office] let another take" from Psalms 109:8, two separate psalms, both of which King David wrote under inspiration. But linking

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at it logically, there is no way in the world you would ever figure out that those two verses were referring to Judas Iscariot. This knowledge came to Peter only through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Notice John 12:16 in this connection: "These things *understood not his disciples at the first*; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were *written of him*..." Matthew 27:46 is in this category. During His last moments on the stake, Jesus Christ of Nazareth was in greater pain and agony than David ever was at any time in his life. It was only natural that He should think the thoughts of David when He came to the realization that He had to bear our sins utterly alone and without the Father. But by no stretch of the imagination, while Jesus Christ was in terrible agony, did He calmly and deliberately, as a *preset duty*, parrot the words of David in Psalms 22:1:

Q: "I must say that the lead article was just a bit beyond me — or perhaps I was reading in a hyperanalytic frame of mind. I started reading about a man from space and was immediately faced to face with dinosaurs. By now I am pretty well confused, and when you then tell me that He (God) entered Mary's womb to create Christ, I am about 'licked.'"

**Archibald S.,
Amityville, New York**

A: First of all, the article itself was primarily intended *not* as a doctrinal dissertation, but to at least momentarily lift the minds of our readers off this mundane earth with all its global, national and private problems, on up to a different level or viewpoint of thinking. It was a telescopic history of the activities of Christ from the Genesis 1 creation until now. It was written to acquaint the reader with that extra dimension of the spirit world which we naturally devote little thought to if we are not somehow made cognizant of its real existence.

After an introduction summarizing the article's overall intent, the reader was ushered in on the scene just prior to the seven-day re-creation of the earth which oc-

curred long after the events of Genesis 1:1. (Man was created about six thousand years ago. However, the geologic record substantiates the fact that the earth itself was brought into being perhaps several billions of years ago. Write for our free booklet *Did God Create a Devil?* for a detailed explanation.)

At some point after the original creation of Genesis 1:1, angelic sin caused the universal destruction of the earth's surface. It was this destruction that was depicted in the beginning paragraphs of my article. I did not specifically mention the angelic role because of space limitations.

As to your second question, I did not say that God entered the womb of Mary. I did write in the article: "And the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). Our Creator (Christ) actually became a tiny germ of life in the womb of the virgin Mary. When the Holy Spirit, by a divine miracle from God the Father, united with a female ovum in the body of Mary, another tiny human being, [Jesus Christ] was on its way to parturition [birth].

God the Father begat His Son, Jesus Christ, in the womb of Mary through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Q: "In your article, you said that Jesus took a bigger step when He went right through the solid rock tomb — indicating that Jesus was resurrected before the angel came and rolled the stone away. I would like to know where you find this stated or revealed in the Bible?"

**Leroy R.,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

A: After Jesus Christ of Nazareth was resurrected to immortal spirit life (remember, God is a Spirit — John 4:24), He appeared and disappeared at will on various occasions to gatherings of His disciples behind locked doors. He did not enter or leave through the door, but went right through solid walls as if they weren't even there (see John 20:19, 26). Several times He suddenly appeared right out of nowhere and then disappeared in the same manner (see Matt. 28:9, Mark 16:14, Luke 24:31).

In addition, prior to His final as-

cension (Acts 1), He took at least one space flight to the third heaven where God's throne is (see John 20:17-19). No physical human being, even with apparent paranormal powers, can do these things. Jesus, as the "firstborn" of many [spirit composed] brethren," was able to bodily accomplish many extraordinary feats that are reserved to the realm of spirit beings.

A spirit being is not confined by the laws of matter, time and space. Jesus had no need of any angelic escorts. There is no biblical statement or prophecy indicating that any angel played a role in His escape from the tomb.

The account in the book of Matthew (28:1-6) shows that when an earthquake occurred and the angel rolled back the large rock covering the entrance of Christ's tomb, He was *not there* (verse 6). This means that He had already passed through solid stone to leave the tomb. Reading this account very carefully, it is apparent that Christ *had already risen* and left the scene by the time the great earthquake had occurred in verse 2.

Q: "What you say about Jesus being a spirit the instant He awoke from being dead is not true according to Luke 24:36-40. Jesus' disciples supposed that they saw a spirit. But Jesus said: 'See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.'"

**Charles M.,
DeSoto, Texas**

A: Many of the same scriptures I referred to in the previous answer prove that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was resurrected into another dimension of spirit life. The description of Christ in Revelation 1:13-16 is simply not that of a human being. The Bible does not contradict itself (see John 10:35); any vague biblical scripture must be understood in the light of all the plain, clear scriptures on the same subject.

In the verses you quoted in your question, the disciples were tentatively frightened when Christ suddenly appeared out of nowhere. He was simply calming them down and allaying their fears by pointing out

that He was not a demon spirit or some type of ghost-like apparition: "... They were terrified and afrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit" (Luke 24:37).

Spirit beings are normally invisible, but Jesus Christ of Nazareth was able to manifest Himself as a normal physical human (with flesh and bones) for the purpose of proving to His disciples that it was indeed He, the real Jesus — the very same individual whom they had, for 3½ years, worked and traveled together with — who had been resurrected to eternal life.

Q: "The article contains what I believe are two errors. The statement was made that Christ was terribly dehydrated from fasting forty days and forty nights without a drop of water or a morsel of food passing His lips. Nowhere in the Gospels is there any statement or implication that Jesus went without water, only without food. Had it been otherwise, Christ would have had to shed His human mantle and avail Himself of His divine powers. Human beings can go without food for forty days and nights, but not without water. . . . Also you said: 'Three days and three nights later Jesus stepped through a solid rock tomb. This hardly accords with the widely accepted view that Jesus was crucified on a Friday following a Passover supper the night before, that He was entombed that Friday evening, as well as all day on the Sabbath, to come forth 'as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week' (Matt. 28:1). It would seem that Christ was in the tomb two nights, not three."

Forrest H.,

Jacksonville, Florida

A: The Old Testament records three other such facts of forty-days length. Moses was on Mount Sinai "forty days and forty nights" during which time he "neither ate bread nor drank water" (Deut. 9:9). A little later, Moses repeated this forty-day fast a second time (Ex. 34:28). Elijah also fasted for the same length of time. Notice it in 1 Kings 19:8: "And he [Elijah] arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meal

forty days and forty nights. . . . Total abstinence from any liquids, including water, is certainly implied in this account. The Ninevites fasted without either bread or water as a direct result of Jonah's prophecy of national disaster (see Jonah 3:7).

There is no example in either the Old or the New Testament where it specifically says or even implies that someone drank water while fasting.

Though the accounts of Jesus' forty-day fast do not specify water per se, the weight of Scripture certainly indicates that Jesus fasted without water as well as food. Physically speaking, Jesus, as a young man of thirty, was at the very least as healthy as the eighty-year-old Moses, who we are specifically told did fast without water for that period of time.

On the second question, I will simply refer you to Matthew 12:39-40, which says that Jesus would be in His grave three days and three nights even as the prophet Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights. Our free booklet *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* explains it all in great detail.

Q: "The article said Jesus felt a sharp metal spear jamming into His side and then He died. But I read in John 19:33-34 that Jesus was already dead when the spear was thrust into Him."

Joey M.,

Kinsale, Virginia

A: Just as a part of the verse that appears in the Authorized Version was inserted into the Greek manuscripts as a *spurious addition* after the mention of putting a portion of another was unfortunately left out. Notice Matthew 27:49 in the Revised Standard Version: "But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.'" After the word "him" there appears a little "it" directing the reader to a footnote at the bottom of the page. It reads: "Other ancient authorities insert *And another took a spear and pierced his side, and out came water and blood.*" Now read the very next verse (50): "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit [died]."

This "missing verse" appears in the main text of both the Moffatt and Fenton translations. It is footnoted in many modern versions and Robertson's *Harmony of the Gospels*. Additionally, this verse appeared in many of the early Greek manuscripts, including the ancient Codex Vaticanus, the Sinaiticus and other early manuscripts designated only by letters and numbers.

The importance of this verse lies in the fact that it tells us that Christ was speared *before* He died. John seems to reverse the events, but in all likelihood his account of the piercing (John 19:34) is a *parenthetical thought* explaining the events that occurred beforehand.

Back up to verses 32 and 38: "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake *not* his legs." If they didn't break Jesus' legs when they saw He was already dead, it certainly wouldn't make any sense for them to then jam a spear into His side.

Then follows the parenthetical thought: "But one of the soldiers with a spear *pierced* his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (verse 34). The Greek acrostic sense of the word "pierced" does not tell us, by itself, *when* the spearing occurred — whether they then speared Him or whether He had *already been speared!* The Greek, at this point, could be understood either way. We can know the time only by logically putting John 19:34 with the rest of the scriptures.

When Joseph of Arimathea came to claim the body of Jesus for burial, Pilate was simply amazed that He was dead already (Mark 15:43-45). Why? Because it usually takes a much longer period than several hours for a healthy person like Jesus to die by crucifixion. What happened was that one of the soldiers had brutally ended Jesus' life "prematurely" by jamming a spear into His side.

This relatively short explanation only hits the tip of the iceberg. For a complete exegesis of the texts involved, please write for our free article "Did Jesus Die of a Broken Heart?"

GOD'S FAITH IN MAN

by David Jon Hill

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Ps. 84:12).

Faith and trust in God is paramount for salvation — no one questions that. God is faithful to perform all the promises He has made to us: He is merciful, forgiving, always alive and on hand to help His people; holy, just, eternal, loving — perfect in all His ways. Again, no one argues with this premise.

But *man*, on the other hand, is just the opposite: he is vile, evil, fallible — the wickedness of man is so great that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart are only evil, continually. Full of vanity, lust and greed, the best of them is as a briar, and the *most* upright as a thorn hedge. David sums it up for us when he says: "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. *Every one* of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is none that doeth good, no, not one!*" (Ps. 53:2,3).

Helpless Clods. Isaiah nails it on the head when he quotes God as saying, "Thou *worm* Jacob!" (Isa. 41:14.) Peter tells us: "... If the righteous *scarcely* be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:18.) Paul lays it on the line in his first book to the Corinthians where he tells us what kind of people the brethren are: foolish, dumb sheep, weak, base, despised, helpless clods!

Don't worry, nothin's goin' to turn out all right! Even after you have done *everything* God commanded, you are supposed to recognize that you are an *unprofitable* servant, only doing your duty (Luke 17:10).

Faith and trust are for men to

have in God. But you don't suppose your Father in heaven and your Savior put any trust or faith in *you*, do you? O wretched man that I am, I die daily and beat my body into submission. I can't so much as lift my eyes to God, but just hang my head and say, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner."

Sometimes we outrival the "humility" of Job. We know God is so good and perfect and we are so evil and bad that there is nothing we can do to please Him, yet "Though he *slay* me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15.) We develop a negative assumption: God is so good, He is bound to do bad things to us bad people, and we deserve every bit of it!

All these scriptures quoted or referred to are in God's Word, and they are true — but often we allow them to all gang together by our guilt complex to make the situation look hopeless. We forget all the *thousands* of positive comments God's writers make about Him, and quote Him as making about His people.

Poor George. Sometimes we allow ourselves to get into an attitude where we picture ourselves spiritually like poor George. George fell off a scaffolding from three stories up, broke half the bones in his body, scalded himself with hot tar and lay in the hospital covered with bandages from head to foot, strapped in traction, fed intravenously — only his left eyeball was visible! The doctor came in, checked the chart at the bottom of the bed of pain, hummed knowingly, but not too encouragingly, came around the side, looked closely at George and said, "I don't like the looks of that eye!"

Hopeless!

Somehow we forget that God in His perfection devised a plan to bring us *out of* our natural depravity and into the divine perfection of His own family!

There is a currently popular, country-western song that pictures God as many see Him, called "God's Gonna Getcha Fer That!" The lyrics tell about the common foibles of human nature and end each refrain with "God's gonna getcha fer that!" It shows God as only concerned with being divine Judge, Jury, Policeman and Jailor. Forgotten are His love, mercy, forgiveness and concern — and no mention is even made of His plan for mankind.

Did God really make a mistake when He created man? Did Satan upset God's applecart when he deceived our first parents in the Garden of Eden? Does the dismal history of man prove that whatever God may have planned for him must have been a failure — with the one possible exception that man seems to be an excellent machine for destruction?

God's going to "get you" all right — but it is His plan to "get you" into His Kingdom, "get you" changed, saved, born into His very family so *you become God as God is God!* It is our Father's pleasure to bring *many* sons to glory, to see to it that no temptation comes our way which is impossible to overcome, to make *all* things possible through Christ, to give us freely of His own divine nature, to grant us eternal life, to bring us to the same perfection He enjoys, to make us more than conquerors, coheirs with Christ to be possessors of the universe, and, believe it or not, to make us *ultimately* worthy of worship! "But as many as received him, to them gave he *power* to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

God's Will. That is God's plan for frail man. His counsel will stand. His plan will work. He, Himself pro-

claims that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance — and God's will, *will be done!*

God has not chosen a plan that has a built-in failure mechanism. God has not created an instrument (man) which is hopeless in the hands of its Creator. And more, God — the Father *and* the Son — has *perfect faith* in His own plan, in His instruments. In short, *God has faith in man!*

Now God doesn't need faith in man in the same way man must have faith in God. God doesn't need to be saved from anything. He is life, self-regenerating, eternal, all-powerful. Yet, by His own design and the purpose for which He created mankind, He will remain alone in His Kingdom with His Son unless that plan succeeds and men become full-born God-Sons. The Bible exudes confidence that the many will eventually make it (see Rom. 11:26; II Peter 3:9; I Tim. 2:4). (Write for our free article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?")

He is no harsh judge eager to punish every wayward act of every wayward human who so easily goes wayward — He is rather our loving Father, anxious to smooth our way at every turn, pursuing, caring for, praising, blessing us a thousand ways every day to bring us to the point of birth in His own family! **Benefit of the Doubt.** Let's see the measure of His trust in us. Let's see the measure of how much He has gambled on us, if you please — because there is with each of us that possibility that we may not make it; we can *reject* Him, His Spirit, His efforts, His will. Let's see how much of the benefit of the doubt He has given to each of us.

First, mankind is unique in all of creation, both physical and spiritual: we are the only beings God ever created in His own image! (Gen. 1:26.) Physical, mortal, frail, temporary, finite, feeble — *but in*

the image of God! God gave uniquely of Himself in our very basic design. Of the entire created spirit world, the angelic host, but Father God says they were created to be ministering spirits, servants, for them who shall be heirs of salvation! (Heb. 1:14.)

The entire limitless universe was created both as a setting, an incubator, a birthing place — and as a possession, a reward, a responsibility for His future sons (Rom. 8:17). Now, nobody goes to that much effort unless he has faith his plan will work, trusts the instruments he has chosen to accomplish the plan!

In addition, God offers His own life — in the person of Jesus Christ, our Passover sacrifice (I Cor. 5:7) — to pay the penalty of the sins that so easily beset us (Acts 2:38). Given freely before we recognize its need (Rom. 5:8). No other beings are offered that sacrifice!

Beyond that, God designed us to be uniquely capable of receiving His own Spirit, His mind, His power. His essence to be joined to that "spirit in man" to become a new being, a true Son of God, calling Him Abba, Father — not just as a religious-sounding phrase, but as a spiritual reality (Rom. 8:14-16). No other being is designed with that capacity.

He gives us an "earnest," a down payment of His very Spirit (II Cor. 1:22). He trusts us with His greatest treasure, His Holy Spirit (I Cor. 14:32; Luke 19:12-27). He offers all we need at any time, without measure, to deal with the difficulties we face (I Cor. 10:13) — and adds special gifts of that Spirit for us to use! (I Cor. 12.)

"Cloud of Witnesses." And these evidences of God's trust in mankind are amplified in the daily care He lavishes on us. He says: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. . . . If ye then,

being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:9, 13.)

Examples from the lives of others who have gone before us, that "cloud of witnesses" Paul refers to in Hebrews 11 and 12, help us see how much our heavenly Father is for us — and "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31.)

Take Noah, for example. And remember, God is no respecter of persons. The great men of the Bible were great because of *their* exercise of the spiritual gifts God granted them: They were all erring and very human, just like you and me — "Elias [Elijah] was a man *subject to like passions as we are*, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17-18). If God trusted Elijah with such power, and Noah with such a job, He will trust you and me to do what He requires of us.

Noah was about 500 years old. Noah was a farmer, a grape grower and a wine maker. Noah was *not* a ship builder. But God's plans called for the construction of a ship the likes of which the world had never seen. A vast vessel half the size of the Queen Mary, a construction feat not duplicated until the turn of the century! Noah was given the commission and 120 years to finish the job.

I'm sure Noah had his doubts, doubted his capability, was unsure he could complete such a fantastic task. But God knew he could. God trusted Noah to build that Ark. And not only trusted Noah to build a boat, but to save all life on earth! Animal life and human life. God placed in trust with Noah *all life on earth!* And God was right — Noah did the job. Thankfully, for you and me!

Mission impossible? Moses didn't

exactly volunteer for his epic accomplishments either. Check Exodus 3 and 4 for the story. Moses made every excuse in the book: "Why me, Lord? Who am I to go talk to Pharaoh? Select someone else. I'm too old; I've been away too long and don't even know how to talk to those people anymore. I'm slow of speech. Who'll believe me anyway? I don't even know what name to use for you!" etc., etc., etc. But in Acts 7:22, Luke refers to Moses as "mighty in words and in deeds"!

God knew Moses could do the job; it didn't matter that it seemed like a "Mission Impossible." God knew the power and gifts He was going to supply — God had more faith in Moses than Moses had in Moses, or than Moses had in God at the time! God trusted Moses with the freeing of an enslaved people; with the execution of the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham more than 400 years before; with the establishing of an entire nation; with the giving and codification of His own law; with the establishment of a priesthood, civil and religious laws; with the power to perform some of the most outstanding miracles ever recorded; with the ability to endure putting up with rebellious Israel for 40 years in the wilderness.

And God was right — Moses did the job!

Abraham and Sarah had their doubts. They looked at the circumstances, their age, the track record of a barren marriage. They tried to work out God's promises some other way: have Abraham produce an heir through Hagar. At age 99 and 89 they both laughed inwardly when God told them *they*, Abraham and Sarah, not any other combination, were going to have a baby in one year's time! They couldn't believe it!

But God was right again. And when the baby was born, God had them call his name "Laughter" (Isaac) to teach them and us a lesson. God not only trusted Abraham to father a child in his old age, but trusted him to perform an unbelievable act of obedience: the sacrifice of his miraculously born son Isaac! God was "betting" on Abraham — and both won!

Betting on a Winner. Consider Job. God put a lot of faith in Job. First He brought Job to Satan's attention, then turned Satan loose on him. Satan did his best to cause Job to curse God and die. Satan failed, and never would have brought up the subject again. But God persisted, pointed out Job again, and allowed Satan to personally afflict Job in every way, physically, mentally, spiritually — to within an inch of his life. Job had a problem God wanted overcome: self-righteousness. But, problem or no, God wanted Job in His Kingdom. In order to provide the lesson, God unleashed the greatest power known, apart from His own, to afflict Job.

God trusted Job, not only to survive the onslaught, but to survive it with greater spiritual stature and character. God trusted Job to be able to resist Satan at his best (or worst as the case may be)!

God was right. God "bet" on Job — and again, both won!

The examples of men exercising faith are too numerous to document, as Paul said (Heb 11:32).

Walking on Water. What about Peter? Now there is someone you can identify with. Overzealous, naive, suffering from foot-in-mouth disease, jumping to conclusions, weakening at the wrong times — very human. But God believed he could be a leading apostle.

Remember when Peter tried walking on water? Jesus was stroffing on the surface and Peter wanted to try. Jesus said: "Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, *he walked on the water*... but..." (Matt. 14:28-30)

Walking on water was not an exclusive ability of Jesus. He knew what He would tell His disciples later: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Granted, it is the power of God that makes all possible, but the all possible is done through, by and with human beings.

Jesus knew Peter could walk on water. The problem was Peter didn't believe Peter could do it —

even after he did it! Peter looked around at the physical circumstances, lost his nerve, dropped his eyes from Christ, and promptly sank!

That same Peter later preached and thousands were converted — a miracle Christ Himself never personally performed! That same Peter passed by sick people, and they were healed by the shadow of his passing. That same Peter exercised the trust placed in him and the power given: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6.) How fitting that Peter should be instrumental in causing a man to walk, who had never walked! That same Peter raised the dead.

Who Does God Trust? And God knew he could do all these things all along. He trusted Peter (and all the other apostles) with access to "All power... in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).

And what about Paul, the reluctant apostle? What about Timothy, the sickly youth reared by his mother and grandmother? Dorcas? Phoebe? Silas? Titus? Philemon's slave Onesimus?

What about you?

Do you have faith that God could trust you? Do you believe God could perform wonders through you? Do you think God likes you? Wants you?

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12.)

How much power does it take to become a son of God? Do you doubt that you are capable of exercising such power? Do you doubt God means you when He said, "as many as received him, to THEM gave he power to become the sons of God"? Do you think God would ever trust you with power like that?

Wouldn't you like to hear those words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34.)

You can do it! God is FOR you! He is willing to trust you with His Spirit, power and mind!

God knows you CAN!
Do you? □



A DEMONSTRATION or rock festival temporarily gives people the sense of community they crave.

PEOPLE WHO NEED PEOPLE

Most of our lives are full, exciting, even hectic. We come home to a comfortable environment — maybe to a family that loves us. But it's not enough. There's still an emotional void that nags at the back of our minds. It's hard to put our fingers on exactly what's wrong, to pinpoint the missing ingredient. We feel empty, but empty of what? This article will give you an idea of what might be lacking and how you can put it back into your own personal life.

by Carole Ritter

We covet privacy. We go to all kinds of Howard Hughesian lengths to maintain it. Six-foot fences around our backyards, unlisted phone numbers, carefully avoided car pools — they're all symptoms of our nearly paranoid desire to avoid contact with the rest of the human race.

But paradoxically, we also crave intimacy. Many of us seem to be searching for a lost sense of community, a closeness that has slipped through our fingers in the last three or four decades.

Practically nobody has a hometown any more. Our jobs have turned us into nomadic wanderers who travel from oasis to economic oasis, never really putting down

roots. The places we live awhile before moving on to something better all look alike — Xerox-copy franchises and look-alike supermarkets give a feeling of comfort, familiarity, or at least *déjà vu*. But the checker behind the counter doesn't remember us from day to day — and we're probably glad he doesn't, because we also crave anonymity.

A Nation of Strangers: This lack of community has hit people in the United States a lot harder than those in Europe or the rest of the world, who generally maintain a less-mobile lifestyle and closer family ties. According to Ralph Keyes, the U.S. character seems to be based on three cherished things: mobility, privacy, and convenience — which are the very

sources of [their] lack of community" (*We, The Lonely People*, p. 15).

But a sense of community is a basic human need. Take it away and we start feeling uneasy, even a little desperate. U.S. young people were the first to translate this feeling into action, grouping themselves together into counterculture communes. At times flouting conventional religion and mores, they tried to recapture this lost feeling of tribal or extended-family closeness. The young vanguard of the sixties was followed by a surprisingly large number of middle-aged and even old people, searching for belonging outside the mainstream. Many communes today include a mixture of young and old people.

who make up a self-chosen "extended family." And this movement, orfad, or whatever you want to call it, has begun its spread through Canada and even Western Europe.

This flight to the communes is a sad commentary on our society's lack of community. Communes may provide a temporary feeling of belonging and sense of identity, but most of them don't last very long. Unless they are authoritarian in structure or have some sort of transcendental goal or religious purpose, as a general rule they fold in a year or two. And some communes degenerate into crash pads for commune-hoppers; members searching for community can't seem to overcome the call of the open road, the easy mobility our society offers.

What Are We Looking For? But just what is a community? Would we know one if we saw it? And would we know whether or not we really wanted to become part of it if we did recognize it?

Ralph Keyes, who has extensively studied the problem, states that "for me . . . the minimum criterion of being in community, for being known [is] that my absence, as well as my presence, be noted. The minimum question about whether a group of people is really a community for me is: 'Would anyone notice if I didn't show up?'"

Keyes goes on to say that this is "a frightening question, perhaps the most scary one I could put to a group of people. I'd dread so what the answer might be. Better not to ask it at all — anywhere. This fear, I think, fuels a lot of our frantic rushing around — the feeling that if we just keep moving we'll have an excuse never to raise such a question with any group of people. The fear of being rejected also fuels our lust for seclusion. By living in splendid isolation we can beg the question of whether anyone else would want us around. Not accepted, at least we're not rejected. Nor do we risk getting known" (*ibid.*, p. 146).

Most of us live in fear that people will "find us out," that our deepest personal secrets will be revealed, as indeed they almost certainly would be in the typical small-town com-

munity of the past. We are too scared of each other to be known as whole human beings, to reach out and begin the process of relating to each other as a group or community. Dr. Sidney Jourard writes: "Many of us dread being known because we fear that if we were known by others — as intimately as we know our own experience — we would be divorced, fired, imprisoned, shot or otherwise harmed" (*The Transparent Self*, p. 41). We might open ourselves up to some sort of ego-destroying rejection — people might not like us, and we might have to deal with it. Hiding is so much simpler and easier.

People Need People. But hiding is not healthy, and it doesn't solve our problems or fulfill our needs. Where then do we go to find roots, people who know us fully and still accept us? There is no way most of us can return to those cozy days of yesterday and live in an everybody-knows-everybody-and-their-ancestors-all-the-way-back hamlet tucked away in the foothills somewhere. If there are many such hamlets left, the inhabitants would probably look on us as outsiders anyhow. And we might find such an atmosphere stifling.

The ideal would probably be to build our own community of people like us, who are willing to make a long-term commitment to love and friendship — who accept us in all of our flawed humanity and still like us — and want to hang around us for the duration.

What about you? Are you satisfied with your life just the way it is? Or do you really want company — want to feel like you really belong somewhere?

Suppose you've decided you're somebody who needs people. You honestly don't want to be alone anymore and aren't afraid to admit it. Where do you go to find those people you need, people who will accept you and want your fellowship in return?

A Ready-Made Community. Almost two millennia ago, a small group of men and women gave up a place in their own local community to follow a Teacher who promised them an abundant life here and

now and immortality in the hereafter. The book of Mark records how one of their number, a man named Peter, began to mention all that he and the other disciples had left behind. "We've given up everything to follow you," he said. "And that Teacher, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, answered, 'Let me assure you that no one has ever given up anything — home, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or property — for love of me and to tell others the Good News, who won't be given back, a hundred times over homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and land. . . . All these will be his here on earth, and in the world to come he shall have eternal life'" (Mark 10:28-30, *The Living Bible*).

This promise wasn't just for those first-century followers, though. Christ promised that He would found a community of believers that would last down through the ages (Matt. 16:18).

Christ promised that if we decide to go His way — accept Him as Savior and want to help spread His gospel — He will make us members of a tight-knit community of like-minded believers. His body, the church of God. He also made sure that this community of believers would never need to be without a goal (Matt. 28:19-20) or a system of government. Thus, it would never need to fall apart like many latter-day communes. And He promised that the people in this community would be given His own Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) to help them feel the love and forgiveness they would need in order to stick together.

Paul, one of Christ's students, wrote to this group: "Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body [this group or church]. We are all parts of it and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each needs all the others."

Paul went on to show these members of the Christian community how they should interact within their new group: "God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. . . . If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well."

Don't just pretend that you love others. really love them. Love each other with brotherly affection and take delight in honoring each other. When God's children are in need, you be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night. When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow. Don't try to get into the good graces of important people, but enjoy the company of ordinary folks. Don't quarrel with anyone. Be at peace with everyone just as much as possible (Rom. 12:4-19, *The Living Bible*).

The letter to the Hebrews warned these people not to "neglect... to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encourage... one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Heb. 10:25) There are still groups of people like this today who meet together regularly, who hold to the same system of basic beliefs. They have the same Spirit, the same goal of sharing their good news with others and warning the entire world of what is going to happen in this unstable end time.

God's Church. If you are looking for community, if you want to go God's way, His Church is the ideal place to find an "extended family." Here is a ready-made group of people who think the way you think and are committed to the same goals, you are committed to. This group is not some kind of exclusivist club or clique. Each and every member is trying their best to reach out and share what God has given them with whoever will listen, whoever wants to join in and help, whoever needs the love they have to pass on.

Meeting every weekend with a large group of people who want the same things you want — who observe the same customs you do every year, who are willing to dedicate their lives and their substance to the preaching of Christ's message — can be an exhilarating experience.

Here is an enthusiastic reaction from someone who just discovered this community in his own neigh-

borhood: "I must let you know how much I enjoyed Sabbath services. It was my first real contact with God's people. As is my custom, I sat in the back, not knowing anyone. Then I got hit with some of that outgoing concern that I have been reading about. Within minutes people just started coming over and introducing themselves. One family, on finding this was my first service, temporarily 'adopted' me and had me sit right in their midst up front. The service was excellent, but it was the warmth, friendliness and sincerity that really impressed me. (man from Trenton, New Jersey)

Here is another. We have just attended our first Sabbath meeting. Were we surprised! We never believed people would be so friendly and homely even though we had not previously met. It is most definitely the environment we want to bring up our four-month-old daughter in and to learn and grow in ourselves. (married couple, Greenfield, Massachusetts)

And another. "On that first week I went they greeted me as a total stranger. Now that gives you a warm feeling that makes you want to return again, and again, and again." (man from New York, New York)

But belonging to God's church isn't just a weekend thing. It gives you an unparalleled chance to develop a circle of close friends of like mind, people you will want to be with during a lot more than church services. These are the kind of people who really do what the apostle Paul said — who visit you when you are sick, listen to you when you need a sympathetic ear, and have a good time with you when you're feeling great. They have their flaws; none of them are perfect, but they're trying hard. If you feel like getting in touch with a group like this, call the toll-free number (see box at right) for information on the Worldwide Church of God in your area (or write to the address nearest you — see inside front cover).

It could be one of the most important steps you ever take — and you could be on the road to finding the missing community you want and need. □

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW JOE?

Many husbands have written asking how they represent their wives in church areas. It is our goal to help you personally and to answer your questions.

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JOB AND YOU

PART I

IS SUFFERING ALWAYS THE RESULT OF SIN ?

by D. Paul Graunke

The title of this article could just as well be "Job, God's Favorite — or God's Fail Guy?" or "How Much Can a Man Take and Keep His Faith?" or "Will a Man Be Religious Only if God Blesses Him?" or "Why Do Men Suffer?" or any number of others. This is because the story of Job touches upon directly and indirectly so many and profound themes.

But the title "Job and You" was chosen for reasons dating back to the Old Testament Survey class I took as a student at Ambassador College. Each year the professor required the class to write a paper on the book of Job, and each year the theme and title of the paper was exactly the same: "Job and I."

The paper didn't have to be long. But unlike any other paper due in the class, it had to be introspective. It was not enough to demonstrate a grasp of Job's character and situation. More important was our ability to identify with Job. We had to see Job's problem as our problem, to analyze our character and situation in light of his, because the professor believed the book had a crucial message and meaning for every student in his class.

Thus the title "Job and You." In the next few pages we will take a look at the story of Job. In the process, it is hoped you, the reader, will take a look at yourself. For every one of us has something in common with Job and his friends. Every one of us has — or will have — experienced or witnessed tragedy so great that it gives rise to the questions, doubts and despair recorded in the book of Job.

Piety for a Price? In the first chapter we are introduced to Job, a man who was very rich and very righteous. In fact, he was so righteous that he took it upon himself to regularly burn offerings after his children's parties just in case they had sinned in any way (verse 5). Job was more than righteous; he was super-righteous, or as the writer of Ecclesiastes might have put it: "righteous overmuch" (Eccl. 7:16).

One day in heaven, Satan was having an audience before God. (Satan means adversary.) Since the Hebrew has the definite article each time it is used in the book of Job, it should properly be translated "the Satan" or "the adver-

sary.") God pointed out Job's piety to him. Now Satan, "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10), is an acknowledged expert at ferreting out and exploring human error. But even he could not gainsay God's evaluation of Job's character.

So he attacked his motivation instead: "Why shouldn't he, when you pay him so well?" Satan scoffed. "You have always protected him and his home and his property from all harm. You have prospered everything he does — look how rich he is! No wonder he worships you! But just take away his wealth, and you'll see him curse you to your face!" (Job 1:10-11, *The Living Bible*.)

Was Job's devotion altruistic or self-serving? Was it a labor of love or a labor for a reward? God allowed Satan to put Job to the test. But remember two things: 1) God had baited and hooked Satan for his own purposes — not vice versa. While ostensibly it may seem as if God had fallen for Satan's bait, in reality it was God who baited Satan first by pointing out Job's integrity. God was exploring Satan's bribous nature for purposes which go beyond the question of Job's disinterested service. 2) Satan could go no further than God permitted. "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only upon himself do not put forth your hand" (verse 12).

Satan proceeded to destroy Job's wealth and family. In one day Job went from riches to rags. Job was in grief and shock, but after losing practically everything, he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I

return, the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong" (verses 21-22).

But Satan is the supreme cynic. He believes that every man has his price, his breaking point in pain and suffering. So he upped the ante. "Skin for skin!" he retorted when God pointed out that Job held fast to his integrity. "All that a man has he will give for his life. But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Job 2:4-5).

"And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life'" (verse 6). Satan left and smote Job with painful sores. (The exact nature of the affliction is much debated in Bible commentaries.) Job forsook his house and took up residence on a pile of ashes (verse 8). Not just any pile of ashes, but as some commentaries point out, Job squatted on the *mazbala* — a garbage dump of dung, rubbish and rotting carcasses.

Job was now tormented by pain and rent by mental anguish. To add insult to injury, his wife told him to put himself out of his misery — curse God and die. (No wonder Satan spared her!) But Job replied philosophically: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (verses 9-10).

Friends or Foes? So far, Job seemed to have passed the test. Now enter stage right three of Job's "friends." I use quotation marks around that word because although "they made an appointment together to come to condole with him and comfort him" (verse 11), they ended up severely criticizing the afflicted man.

But at first, the three were genuinely shocked and grieved at Job's condition. They held a silent vigil with him for a week, "and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great" (verse 13).

At long last, Job broke the silence. No longer do we hear the stoic philosophy of 1:21 and 2:10. After brooding over his pain and plight for interminable days, Job's

mood changed. He broke forth with a torrent of sorrow and self-pity. In no uncertain terms, he said he wished he had never been born. Be sure to read his speech in chapter 3, better yet, read it in several translations if you have the opportunity. Some of the more modern translations, such as Moffatt's or *The Living Bible*, make vivid the thoughts and moods expressed by the speakers.

In chapter 4, Eliphaz replied, beginning three rounds of straight-from-the-shoulder, no-punches-pulled, outbursts, accusations and retorts — oh, yes, and eloquent religious and moral philosophizing. If you think the speakers were engaged in an impartial discussion with all deference to the rules of evidence and courtesy, you're wrong. It was not politeness and poetry in these chapters. Job's three friends were sure Job had it coming to him — if only he would Jess up to his sins — while Job steadfastly defended and maintained his own integrity. As the debate progressed, emotions rose and subtle and blunt insults were traded back and forth.

For example, Bildad called Job a "windbag" in 8:2, and Job replied to Zophar's speech by saying sarcastically, "Yes, I realize you know everything! All wisdom will die with you!" (Job 12:2, *The Living Bible*.) And a little later on Job said, "What wonderful helpers you all are! And how you have encouraged me in my great need! How did you ever think of all these brilliant comments?" (26:2-4, *The Living Bible*.) This is but a sample of the "friendly" sparring that took place.

Rather than give a blow by blow account of the debate, let us summarize the speeches each person made. It is just as well that we adopt this procedure for the speakers did not consistently (sometimes not at all) reply to each other's argument so much as air their own theological beliefs.

Eliphaz the Mystic. Eliphaz, the Temanite, was a very religious, even mystical man. He experienced visions in the night (4:12-17) and they told him: "Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?" (Verse

17.) This disparaging, belittling concept of man was shared by Bildad (see 25:4-6) and forms a crucial premise in their arguments and accusations. (It was undoubtedly shared by Zophar, too, as we shall see.)

Eliphaz contended that God alone is good, and that He allows suffering for disciplinary rather than punitive purposes. "Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves, therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he binds up; he smites, but his hands heal" (5:17-18) seems to be the core of his argument. At first, Eliphaz hinted that Job was hiding some secret sin (5:6), but later he came up with a bit of particulars. In 22:5-9 he accused Job of being callous and inconsiderate to the poor and unfortunate in the past. No wonder he's suffering now. Eliphaz concluded, His solution was for Job to commit himself humbly to God and get rid of the wrongdoing. Then God would reverse his circumstances (22:23, 27-28).

Bildad the Traditionalist. Bildad, the Shuhite, believed that the fathers knew best; his theological ideas were based on the traditions handed down from previous generations (8:8-10). His stock answer to Job's situation was that all misfortune is the result of sin (8:13, 20). If God doesn't get you, you'll inevitably bring misfortune upon yourself (16:8-10). You get what you deserve, and there can be no doubt that Job deserved what he had gotten. Bildad's solution: Job had better get back to God (8:5-7).
Zophar the Hard Liner. Zophar, the Naamathite, was a hard liner, a stern dogmatist. His beliefs were similar to Bildad's — only more so: God is inflexibly just. What you get is exactly what you deserve, and Job deserved more than he had already suffered! "Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves," he stated (11:6). He further declared that Job had better come clean — or else.

In chapter 20, Zophar waxed eloquent and gruesome concerning the wretched, miserable, terrifying, painful and agonizing fate of the sinner. (Here was the original hell-fire and damnation sermon with its

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTION: "In Genesis, why did God accept Abel's meat offering and refuse Cain's grain offering, even though it was of the best grain?"

Mrs. Albert M.
Angleton, Texas

ANSWER: The Bible does not specifically say why God did not accept Cain's offering (Gen. 4). But some have speculated that God instructed Cain and Abel to offer animal sacrifices. Cain may have refused and offered produce of the field instead — insisting on worshipping God his own way. Another possible explanation is that Cain may not have brought the best of his grain. Genesis 4:4 reads: "Abel . . . brought of the fatlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." Perhaps Cain's offering was neither the first nor the best.

At any rate, Genesis 4:5-7 reveals that Cain's heart was not right with God. This is another possible reason his offering was not accepted (Matt. 5:23-24).

Q: "Everyone at one time or another has heard that God gives warning before He sends punishment — that those who heed the warning will be spared the calamity. On the other hand, nearly all the apostles died by violent means. How are the violent deaths of so many repentant explained in light of this?"

Jerry D.,
Portsmouth, Ohio

A: The scripture you are probably basing your first statement on is Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."

Bible prophecies are sometimes general overall warnings to a nation as a whole.

God also gives a general overall warning to Christians. He states through the apostle Paul that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Tim. 3:12). The apostles them-

selves were practically promised martyrdom from the outset (see John 21:18-19; 16:1-2; 15:18-21). So in this sense they were warned, but were not delivered from violence at the hand of unbelievers.

It is important to realize that there is a difference between suffering for righteousness sake (I Pet. 1:6-7, 3:14; 4:12-16) and suffering for one's personal or national sins. God in his wisdom did allow the apostles to go through various trials and even martyrdom for the gospel's sake. This was in spite of the fact that they were repentant, righteous servants of His. In contrast, the entire wicked city of Nineveh received a reprieve from destruction when God saw how enthusiastically they repented. Although these people were probably not leading deeply spiritual lives even after their repentance, God gave them mercy.

Reviewing the lives of all of God's servants as recorded in the Bible, it is obvious that one's spiritual state does not necessarily have that much to do with the physical course of one's life. One of the writers of the Psalms observed that wicked men are often blessed while righteous men suffer. But he realized that in the end God will see to it that all these seeming injustices are equalized (Psalm 73). For more on this subject, write for the free booklet *After Death — Then What?*

Q: "What are the two types of sin John is speaking of in I John 5:16?"

John G.,
New York, New York

A: I John 5:16-17 reads: "If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal."

In other words, once a Christian is justified, he is dead to sin; unless he commits what some refer to as the "unpardonable" sin, he will be resurrected to immortal life (see

Rom. 8:1-2, 10). Therefore any sin which one commits and is willing to repent of is not a "mortal sin." For more on this subject, write for our free booklets *What Do You Mean — "The Unpardonable Sin"?* and *Just What Do You Mean — Conversion?*

Q: "Christ said not to judge. Yet every day one must avoid dangerous places, be careful in choosing associates, and be aware of the difference between quality and shoddy merchandise. This is judging! How does one do something he must do when Christ says he can't?"

Paul D.,
Fairfield, California

A: Christ said: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? . . . You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:1-5).

This type of "judging" has to do with *condemnation*. Only God knows what goes on in a person's heart, and only God can know if what a person is doing is really wrong in his own private circumstances. Also, only God can tell whether or not he is in a repentant attitude and genuinely regrets the mistakes he does make. Therefore we should focus on improving our own behavior rather than watching and condemning what our neighbor does.

The type of "judging" necessary in day-to-day life is not condemnation but *discernment*. The Bible tells us we are to discern between good and evil. We are to "test the spirits" (I John 4:1) and to "test everything; hold fast what is good" (I Thes. 5:21). These scriptures (and many others) show us that we are to have our faculties trained to distinguish between right and wrong (Isa. 5:14). In fact, we must do this if we are to obey God in all things. □

ARE WE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS? PART TWO

IS DOOMSDAY AT OUR DOOR?

by George Ritter

It's becoming increasingly difficult to discern the difference between the utterances of the secular prophets and those of the Bible-thumping religious prophets! Terms like "the four horsemen of the Apocalypse," and "the handwriting on the wall" are frequently used by those who are not overtly religious. The apocalyptic language of Scripture is beginning to creep more and more into the working vocabulary of the secular prophets.

If no Holy Bible had ever been written, there would still be reason for alarm. If there had never been a Jeremiah, or an Isaiah, or an Ezekiel, there would still be ample reason to believe that we are living near the end of an age!

This article focuses attention on those areas of concern where human problems appear to be reaching "critical mass."

The Almost Forgotten Crisis. None has been more obvious than the shock brought on by the Arab oil embargo and the energy crisis. But these chilling events should not have come as a surprise. Numerous "secular prophecies" regarding energy shortages were sounded years ago. In 1972 John F. O'Leary, former director of U.S. Bureau of Mines, warned: "We can anticipate that before the end of this century energy supplies will become so re-

For centuries, eschatologically oriented prophets and evangelists have been launching impassioned jeremiads on a perpetually frightened populace. Every natural or unnatural disaster has been seen as a sure sign of the end of the world. Many have become skeptical. The religious prophets have cried "Woe!" once too often. But today, a whole new "school of prophets" is raising a collective voice of warning about the possibility of the ultimate in global disasters.

stricted as to halt economic development around the world."

Today it appears that the message still hasn't sunk in. Since the Arab oil embargo, total energy demands have galloped along at a five percent annual increase and are projected to double in another 15 years. Most Americans and a large number of their Congressmen act as if the nation is still sitting on top of unlimited supplies of petroleum and natural gas. Rather than attack the problem of America's growing dependence on imported oil, many seem more interested in dismantling major oil companies. Few

seem concerned with the fact that proven petroleum and gas reserves in the lower 48 states are nearing exhaustion.

"No problem. Eventually technology will come to our rescue," cry the optimists. "We can develop nuclear, solar and fusion power. We also have unlimited coal reserves."

"It sounds fine in theory, but it doesn't work that way in practice. People have been overoptimistic about new energy sources for years. After World War II, nuclear power was heralded as the wave of the energy future. Now almost three decades later, the atomic power program is mired in a sea of uncertainty. Concerned citizens are worried about things like reactor melt-downs, earthquakes and sabotage. Nobody has figured out what to do with the highly toxic nuclear wastes. And as fission power grows, so does man's capability to manufacture atomic weapons. By 1980 there will be enough worldwide nuclear by-products accumulated to produce 35,000 Hiroshima-type atomic bombs.

This "too-little, too-late" problem plagues other new sources of energy as well. Fusion power is decades away, if then. Solar power is not as unlimited as the name implies. Solar collection and transmis-



sion systems would themselves require tremendous amounts of energy, resources and capital. If the sun were used to supply the entire electrical needs of the city of New York, a solar collector 15 miles long would be necessary.

Coal is one energy source that is eminently usable in its present state. But like the others, it too has serious drawbacks, not the least of which is strip mining. While there are vast reserves in the western United States, limited water and energy supplies have already put something of a damper on its current development.

And how does a society "hooked" on petroleum and natural gas ultimately adapt itself to other energy sources? When does Detroit start retooling to make steam-, electric-, or methane-powered automobiles? How much capital, energy, time and resources will it take to replace oil-fired power plants? Perhaps that's why Representative Morris K. Udall warned: "America has been on a three-decade-long energy binge, and a massive hang-over is in prospect."

End of Metallurgical Affluence. The same can be said for the Western world's prodigal use of minerals during the twentieth century. Like energy, the days of cheap, easily recoverable ores is rapidly drawing to a close. Reserves of platinum, uranium, tin, silver and mercury are projected to be extremely tight by the end of this century. Known supplies of other important minerals such as copper, nickel and aluminum could be severely depleted in the next century.

In viewing the situation, Lester R. Brown of the Overseas Development Council recently warned: "The U.S. and the world are moving from an age of relative resource abundance to an era of relative scarcity." California Senator John Tunney was also moved to write: "The United States and the world are approaching the threshold of the outer limits of growth in the use of finite resources and the pollution of the planet. Rationality and will are required if humanity is to survive."

But others don't see it that way. According to the noted economist

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen of Vanderbilt University: "The apparent mineralogical bonanza which over the last one hundred years fostered the unparalleled economic progress of a handful of nations may account for the strange conviction of the economists of these lands that material growth can go on forever."

Again, unbounded faith is placed in technology to bail us out of our future mineral woes. According to the advocates of the technological fix, we can dig deeper, use cheaper grades of minerals, extract precious metals from the sea, recycle and come up with substitutes. There is no such thing as a mineral shortage, they claim, because the earth's crust, taken as one massive mother lode, is loaded with more than enough of the precious metals.

"For years we laughed at Malthus' gloomy theory, but now he is coming into his own as we have come to the realization that the world's resources are not unlimited."

But this approach is fraught with ecological, economic and energy-oriented shortcomings. Ultimately we would be forced to tear into valuable timber, farm and grazing lands. Already plans for strip mining in the western United States are being hampered by this conflict of terrestrial interest. And the environmental penalties incurred by uprooting and processing huge chunks of real estate could be devastating.

The idea that man can go on perpetually mining ever poorer grades of minerals until he is virtually extracting them from common rock is also fallacious. The advocates of this approach forget that in nature, as in every human enterprise, there is no "free lunch." Progressive mining of poorer grades of minerals in itself requires massive inputs of resources and energy. Eventually a point is reached where the amount

of resources committed to the production of minerals which is extracted, the ventures will not only be unprofitable, but unproductive as well. This "dig deeper and deeper" solution is also predicated on the availability of cheap and abundant energy. As we've already seen, energy supplies will be far from cheap and abundant in the future.

The same limitation applies to recycling. Up to a certain point recycling can be both profitable and productive. But recycling produces its own wastes and is impractical for minerals such as silver and mercury that are dispersed widely in small quantities.

Mining the seas does hold some promise in the short term for increasing future supplies of copper, cobalt, manganese and nickel. These minerals have been discovered scattered across the ocean floor in the form of small round objects called nodules. But nodules are by no means a metallurgical panacea. They can only supply four basic minerals, and if present growth rates continue for any length of time, deep-sea nodules would be hard put to meet future demands. Getting them to the surface may turn out to be a thorny technological problem. And in the process, no one is sure what kind of impact this type of oceanic mining will have on the marine environment.

Substitution is another alternative with limitations. Copper was the number one metal of the bronze age, but was not made obsolete by the discovery of iron. Neither has the use of aluminum conductors diminished overall demand for copper substantially. Given sufficient and continuous demand, eventually supplies of both the original mineral and its substitute will begin to diminish. And many scarce materials such as helium and mercury have, at present, no known substitutes.

A Not-So-Vast Planet. While man continues to voraciously deplete the land, he indiscriminately pollutes the oceans with refuse, poisons and industrial wastes. Unfortunately, the sea, as it turns out, may be the weakest link in the earth's fragile chain of life. Recently Captain Jacques Cousteau warned: "Each month we now pour so many

millions of tons of poisonous waste into the open sea that in perhaps twenty years, perhaps sooner, the oceans will have received their mortal wound and will start to die.

And according to Thor Heyerdahl, "a dead ocean" will ultimately result in "a dead planet."

Strong words from the secular prophets! Yet few take them seriously. Many feel that such warnings are exaggerated overdramatic jeremiads that have no basis in scientific fact. Several years ago, a leading British scientist took issue with the ecological doom-sayers in regard to the continued pollution of the oceans with mercury. "The oceans are so vast and contain so much mercury already," he wrote, "that if the annual production of the world's mercury mines were dumped straight into the sea, it would take between 2,500 and 10,000 years before the natural concentration was doubled.

In his haste to reprimand the ecological prophets, this eminent scientist overlooked some rather obvious scientific facts himself. First of all, life is not evenly distributed throughout the oceans. Over 90 percent of all sea creatures occupy less than one percent of the marine environment. Those areas most heavily populated are also most easily polluted by man. Toxic materials themselves do not uniformly spread throughout the sea. And what phytoplankton may absorb in diluted amounts, ends up in the tissues of higher-order predators such as birds, seals, and man in highly concentrated doses.

It's no wonder that Barry Commoner, in assessing man's unecological mortality, recently had this to say: "Unless we begin to match our technological power with a deeper understanding of the balance of nature, we run the risk of destroying this planet as a suitable place for human habitation."

The Growing Hunger Gap. Commoner is also joined by a growing chorus of secular prophets who see little hope in the current world food situation. Even those who would tend to be somewhat optimistic have little to cheer about in this regard. Senator Hubert Humphrey re-

cently stated: "For years we laughed at Malthus' gloomy theory, but now he is coming into his own as we have come to the realization that the world's resources are not unlimited."

Don Paarlberg, chief economist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, lamented: "Those who are pessimistic about the ability of the world to feed its people have more persuasive evidence to lay before us than in many years."

Norman E. Borlaug, Nobel laureate and "father" of the Green Revolution, predicted: "Unless we can do something about this problem, it will destroy us."

And Dr. Binay Sen, former director of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, was even more emphatic: "If the rate of food production cannot be significantly

But the Israelites weren't about to listen to any messages that weren't sweetness and light. According to the prophet Isaiah, they wanted to hear "smooth things" (Isa. 30:10).

increased, we must be prepared for the *four horsemen of the Apocalypse*."

At the heart of this potential time bomb is the population explosion. The statistics are daunting to say the least. Current estimates show world population projected to pass the 6.5 billion mark by the turn of the century.

According to Lester Brown, an internationally recognized food authority: "World population growth alone — with no increase in per capita food intake — would require an increase of nearly one billion tons of grain per year, or roughly four times the current production of North America" (*By Bread Alone*, p. 44).

The main problem with the population juggernaut is that it can't be turned around overnight. Even if all the women in the world were bearing children at replacement level

(roughly two children per couple) by the end of this century (which is highly unlikely), world population would continue growing until it hit the eight-billion mark!

Efforts to control this spreading wave of humanity have not exactly been a smashing success. In many of the poorer countries, a high birth rate is essential to assuring the survival of at least one male offspring. Children are looked on as economic assets rather than liabilities. Traditionally, it is only after people rise above a poverty-level existence that they think about having fewer offspring.

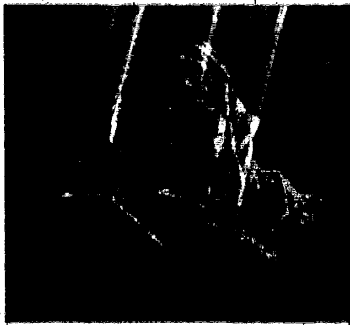
Religious and ideological considerations also act as major barriers against effective population control. The position of the Catholic Church is a well-known case in point. Moslems condemn birth-control measures as being perpetrated by their "enemies." Many underdeveloped nations feel that population control is another capitalist ploy to ensure that the world's wealth and resources will remain in Western hands.

Nor can much long-range hope be placed in man's efforts to expand world food production. The so-called miracles of the much heralded Green Revolution were achieved with no small input of fertilizer, water and petroleum-based machinery. In many parts of the world these commodities are becoming increasingly scarce. Most of the best land has already been used up. Man's increasing numbers have already resulted in extensive deforestation, erosion and destruction of valuable croplands in the Indian subcontinent and African Sahel.

Overfishing and pollution have brought dramatic declines in the world's fish catch. And hoped for food miracles such as fish protein concentrates, plankton, fish farms, incaparina, synthetic proteins and the like are for the most part impractical or uneconomical.

Potential for Nuclear Nightmares. Undoubtedly the worst scenario of all is that of nuclear war. Today's thermonuclear statistics are truly awesome. The explosive power of the combined nuclear arsenals of the United States and Soviet Union

"DOOMSAYERS" TO WHOM TOO FEW LISTENED

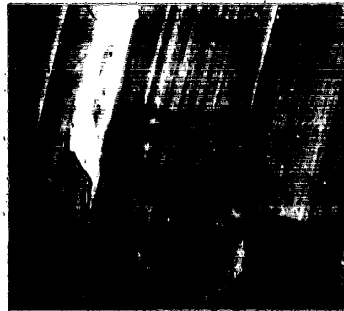


Jeremiah. Although Jeremiah is best remembered as a prominent personality in the Bible, he had his most telling impact on society as the leading "secular" prophet of his day. In the waning years of the ancient kingdom of Judah, Jeremiah's message encompassed a great deal more than purely "religious" concepts. He continually warned of the future destruction of his capital city, invading armies, famine, disease epidemics, crop failures, upset social conditions, corruption and fraud in government.

Obviously, such a penetrating analysis of the national condition was bound to raise a few hackles in high places. Jeremiah quickly found himself at loggerheads with government officials who were eager to tell the people "what was right with Jerusalem." As Jeremiah himself described this sad state of affairs: "An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land, the

prophets prophesy falsely [in this case by proclaiming that there would be no further war or famine], and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so." But Jeremiah, with an eye toward the future, pointedly asked: "What will you do when the end comes?" (Jer. 5:30-31.)

Before the "end came," the rulers of Jerusalem thought they could remove the problem by silencing Jeremiah. On one occasion he had to contend with an ancient version of a "Watergate cover-up" when the king destroyed one of his "tapes" — in this case a scroll (Jer. 36:20-23). Finally, the exasperated officials allowed Jeremiah to cool his heels in a slime pit shortly before many of his prophecies came to pass (Jer. 38:6).



Wash World Photo

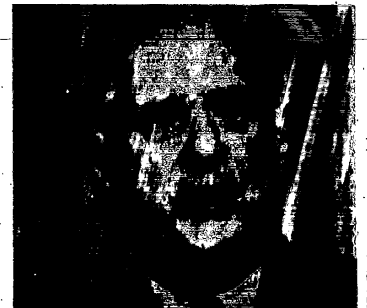
Winston Churchill caused no small stir in the 1930s when he ceaselessly labored to alert the British people to the growing menace of Nazi Germany and the distinct possibility of another major war. For the most part, his warnings were highly unwelcome in a nation where any open mention of war was considered "unpatriotic."

Churchill was considered nothing short of a political outcast and pariah by many. In the mid-1930s he asked for secret debate on the relative merits of British and German armaments. His request was peremptorily refused on the grounds that "it would cause needless alarm."

When Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich waving his infamous "peace paper" to the tumultuous crowd of the British

people, Churchill was one of the lonely few who raised a voice of dissent. Describing his speech in the ensuing debate in Parliament, Churchill recalled: "I well remember that when I said, 'We have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat,' the storm which met me made it necessary to pause for a while before resuming" (*The Gathering Storm*, p. 291).

Despite the fact that public and parliamentary opinion was decidedly stacked against him, Churchill resolutely stuck to his guns. He went on to warn his colleagues: "They [the British people] should know that we have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of Europe has been deranged, and that the terrible words have for the time being been pronounced against the Western Democracies: 'Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.' And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless, by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden times" (*ibid.*, p. 293).



CPA Photo

Charles DeGaulle. As a colonel in the French Army between World Wars, DeGaulle was continually clashing with military and political leaders over the woeful lack of French military preparedness. In the teeth of opposition from the French high command, he continued to press for the establishment of a mobile mechanized tank force.

But unfortunately for France and the rest of the world, too few people took him seriously. "To its venerable, veteran generals," wrote William L. Shirer, "all this rash talk of a great autonomous armored force breaking through the infantry and artillery was claptrap" (*Collapse of the Third Republic*, p. 156).

Marshall Pétain, irritated by the radical ideas of the upstart colonel, spoke out forcefully against the use of armored forces that would in a few years overrun his country: "As for tanks, which are supposed by some to bring us a shortening of wars, their incapacity is striking."

By 1936, a short three years from the opening rounds of World War II, the minds of the French high command were still mired in the mud of Verdun and the Somme. For them World War I trench warfare tactics were the order of the day.

As late as 1937, French generals were still advocating the use of horse cavalry. Even after the Germans' armored blitz of Poland in 1939, nobody became unduly alarmed despite a note from De Gaulle on the "lessons of Poland."

Shortly before the invasion of France, De Gaulle took the unprecedented step of addressing an eleven-hour warning to no less than 30 leading military and political figures. In his written memorandum, he stated: "The French people must not at any price fall into the illusion that the present military immobility conforms to the character of this war. . . . Let us not fool ourselves! The conflict which has begun can well be the most widespread, the most complex, the most violent, of all those which have ravaged the earth. The political, economic, social and moral crisis from which it comes is so profound . . . that it will end fatally in a complete overthrowing of the situation of peoples and the structures of states . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 549).

In less than six months, De Gaulle's dire prediction came to pass as German Wehrmacht troops marched triumphantly through the streets of Paris.

is equivalent to 50,000 Hiroshimas. One Poseidon-type submarine with its 16 nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles can destroy a nation the size of the United States. The total destructive force of the tactical (not strategic) weapons stationed in Europe is 30 times that of all the TNT exploded in World War II.

Currently six nations — the United States, Soviet Union, England, France, China and India — are members of the nuclear club. But in the years ahead the membership roster is certain to grow dramatically. Austria, Brazil, Finland, South Korea and Yugoslavia had nuclear reactors under construction in late 1974. Egypt, Argentina, Spain, Japan, Pakistan and South Africa can't be far behind. Argentina, for example, will probably be producing enough plutonium in the late 1970s to manufacture ten atomic bombs a year.

The potential implications of such wholesale proliferation are chilling to say the least. As Dr. George Rathjens, professor of political science at MIT, put it: "I shudder to think of Uganda's General Amin having nuclear weapons in his control, and yet we will face such situations in the next 25 years."

Dr. Thomas Schelling, professor of political economy at Harvard, and an expert on arms strategy, also voiced his concern at the world's future nuclear prospects: "It is very frightening to realize that by 1999 a device with the power to blow up a community the size of Cambridge, for example, could probably be carried on the back of any strong person."

In view of the fact that world civilization finds itself facing unprecedented peril from war, famine, overpopulation, resource depletion and pollution, it's understandable that a great deal of pessimism exists among the ranks of the secular prophets. Some, in fact, have resorted to biblical terminology reminiscent of the prophets of old. Physicist Bernard T. Feld, for instance, recently was quoted as saying: "The world is entering upon perilous times, perhaps the most dangerous period in its entire history."

McGeorge Bundy, aide to late

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson: "We will look on a time [1974] that will have been on the edge of travail."

And former Senator William J. Fulbright: "Unless peace and stability is brought to the Middle East, mankind will witness a new war, a new oil boycott, and possibly consequences therefrom ranging from another great depression to Armageddon itself."

Will History Repeat Itself? Unfortunately, the words of the secular prophets tend to fall on deaf ears. Many people immediately dismiss them as a group of eccentric doom-sayers.

Centuries ago, the nation of ancient Israel was faced with a similar situation. They had been repeatedly warned about the imminent destruction of their nation. Numerous "secular prophets" (generally they weren't quoting the Bible) tried in vain to rouse the people and their leaders from their self-centered state of spiritual lethargy.

But the Israelites weren't about to listen to any messages that weren't brimming over with sweetness and light. According to the prophet Isaiah, they wanted to hear "smooth things" (Isa. 30:10). They didn't even want to entertain the possibility in their minds that Isaiah might have been right. So they went right on with a "business-as-usual" attitude, figuring their own institutions and defenses would see them through (verse 16).

The ancient Israelites, like numerous other peoples throughout history (see box at left), were afflicted with their own form of "Maginot mentality." According to the prophet Jeremiah, they were fond of shouting phrases such as "no evil will come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine" (Jer. 5:12). And like the British and French peoples just prior to Hitler's blitzkrieg invasions, they were shouting "Peace, peace, where there [was] no peace" (Jer. 6:14).

Can we, today, take the secular prophets of the 1970s seriously? Or will we, like ancient Israel, allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep in the face of mounting world and national crises? □

(To be continued)

WILL YOU GAIN THE VICTORY?

"To him that taketh the path of least resistance and floateth downstream like a dead fish, giving in to every whim and desire, will I grant to sit with me on my throne." That's not a quote from the Bible! It's not a quote from anything, but it's what some "Christians" seem to think is the way into the Kingdom! If you have been bitten by the above attitude, you need to wake up and take action — or you could lose out!

by Brian Knowles

God did not call you to be a loser! He did not intend that you should miss out on the joys of eternity in His family Kingdom simply because you were too lazy to put forth the effort to overcome anything. Your Creator and mine holds out a magnificent reward to those who are willing to "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Not that you can earn your salvation. The Church of God does not teach "salvation by works." Eternal life is a gift of God (Rom. 6:23). But God is not going to grant that precious gift to just anybody. There is a "string" attached.

To Him That Overcomes. Speaking to one of the local congregations in Asia Minor in the last decade of the first century, Christ said through John: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with

me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 3:21-22, KJV).

That message is as relevant today as it was in the first century — God still expects Christians to overcome if they wish to be in the Kingdom! The same thought is repeated many times in the course of these messages to the churches (see Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

It is important to note that Christians are instructed to overcome "even as I also overcame" (Rev. 3:21, KJV). Christ Himself set the example. His followers are to imitate the pattern of overcoming set by Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

But what, or whom, did He overcome? And just what does "overcome" mean in this context?

The Greek word translated "overcome" in these verses is *nikaoo*. It means "to become the victor," "to prevail," "to conquer" (see Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 541).

Jesus used the word in making a point: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes [*nikaoo*] him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil" (Luke 11:21-22).

To overcome, then, is to struggle and to emerge victorious, to prevail, to conquer! It involves effort. God expects His people to exert themselves in the struggle to emerge victorious at the end of life's course. The Kingdom of God is a prize for which we must fight. Paul wrote of his own struggle: "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Paul's life is a chronicle of struggle. He went from trial to trial and each time emerged victorious through Christ. He never fully gave in to the baser aspects of his na-

ture, though he did occasionally slip into sin (Rom. 7:13-20). Near the end of his life, Paul wrote to Timothy, his friend and protégé: "For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Christ overcame. Paul fought, struggled and overcame. And you and I must also overcome in order to receive that crown of righteousness! When our life's race is completed, we must emerge victorious — we must finish the course. Those who drop out of the race prematurely will not be in the Kingdom! **What We Must Overcome.** But over what must we gain the victory? Against whom do we struggle? And exactly how do we fight? With what weaponry?

Remember, we are to overcome as Jesus overcame. And what was it that He prevailed over? Quoting Christ, John's Gospel account explains: "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

"The world" is our enemy! But in what way are Christians to enter into a struggle with "the world"? "The world" means the "system" or "society" in general with its outlook, values, mores (or lack of them). It does not mean the physical globe upon which we live.

Jesus' prayer for the Church is revealing on this matter of the Christian's relationship to "the world": "I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent

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them into the world" (John 17:15-18). Christians are in the world, but they are not of it.

Who is the "evil one"? Revelation 12:9 informs us that it is Satan who has "deceived the whole world." In II Corinthians 4:4 he is called "the god of this world" who has "blinded the minds of the unbelievers." This world — this system — is not God's world; it is not of Christ's making; it is the devil's world! He is the "one who is behind the general misery of much of the human race. He is the philosophical father figure of ungodly religions and ideologies. It is he who has been deceiving man ever since that initial deception in the Garden of Eden. He is a liar and the father of liars (John 8:44). He, and the system that he has produced, are the enemy!

Paul put it this way: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

The spiritual forces that hold sway in this "present evil world," marshaled by no less a personage than the devil himself, are the avowed enemies of the Church of God. Of course, to the modern mind, much of this may sound like ignorant, religious superstition. But there really is a devil. And there is a spiritual kingdom influencing the affairs of this world (see Dan. 10:10-14; Job 1:6, 7). (Write for our free booklet *Did God Create a Devil?*)

Society in general follows the course set by the god of this world. Prior to conversion we are all very much an intrinsic part of society, which functions in a spiritually blinded condition. Satan and his minions exert a spiritual influence upon the citizens of mother earth. All of us were "following the course of this world, following the prince of

the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:2-3).

That is, we took the path of least resistance and did what came *natural*, really.

Newness of Life. Now, as Christians, we are called to be led of the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14) instead of the spirit of this world. Our lifestyle changes. We walk, as Christians, in *newness of life*. Our values and standards change. We are obliged to "walk worthy of our high calling." The apostle Peter wrote: "Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. They are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild, profligacy . . ." (I Peter 4:3-4).

It's quite simple really: Christians cease following the way of the world upon conversion and commence to follow the way of God that leads to eternal life. They come out from under the spiritual influence of Satan the devil and become led by the Holy Spirit of God. They are no longer the "children of wrath," but now are the "children of light."

Our principal fellowship is with the Church of God, which is the body of Christ — not with the world. Upon conversion we seek the fellowship of those of like mind: "Do not be misnamed with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ [who is in us] with Belial [Satan]? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" (II Cor. 6:14-15.)

Of course, we are still in the world in the sense that we are a part of humanity. We must still earn our living among the "unbelievers." We are called to be a light to the world — not to be *of* the world.

Jesus did not intend His followers to become "spiritual isolationists" and separate themselves physically as hermits from society.

But He did expect us to keep from this world's evil ways and avoid the influence of its spiritual leader — Satan the devil!

Jesus existed within Satan's world and yet was apart from its evil. He lived 33½ years as a human being in Roman-occupied Palestine, *never once* giving in to the lusts of the flesh and of the mind! He was in the world, yet He was above and apart from its ways.

Jesus Overcomes Satan. Jesus personally defeated the world's spiritual leader and god in the most titanic battle of wills that ever took place! The account is found in two chapters in the Gospels — Matthew 4 and Luke 4. "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.'" (Matt. 4:1-3).

This account is important because it shows us specifically how Jesus overcame Satan the devil. In this first round of the battle, Satan hoped to capitalize on two things: Christ's vanity and his ravenous hunger after a forty-day fast.

But Jesus had no vanity! The taunt "If you be the Son of God" meant nothing to Him. He knew who He was and what powers were at His disposal. And He was not about to "show off" His powers for the benefit of the devil. He did not take the bait! Instead, He replied by quoting scripture: "But he answered, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"'" (Matt. 4:4; quoted from Deut. 8:3).

What was Christ's weapon in defeating the devil in this first test? The Word of God! Jesus had a thorough working knowledge of the

Scriptures. On another occasion, when the religious leaders of the day had made some false assumptions, Jesus' reply was: "You do err, not knowing the scriptures." (Matt. 22:29, KJV). Having failed once, the devil now made a second attempt: "Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will give his angels charge of you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone"'" (Matt. 4:5-6).

Now the devil tried a new trick. He quoted scripture (Psalm 91) to Christ! Yes, the devil knows how to use — and to twist — scripture to suit his own ends!

But Jesus knew that no one scripture is of any "private interpretation." All of the scriptures must be put together — "rightly dividing the word of truth" — before the right conclusions can be drawn. Therefore, He quoted another scripture which qualified those quoted by the devil: "Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God"'" (Matt. 4:7; quoted from Deut. 6:16).

To deliberately place oneself in danger is to tempt God. God's promise in Psalm 91 assumes an accidental mishap — not deliberately placing oneself in jeopardy. Once again Christ used the Bible as a weapon to defeat the devil!

But Satan was not finished. He decided upon one last attempt. This was to be the ultimate test: "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me'" (Matt. 4:8-9).

You will notice that Jesus did not challenge Satan's right to offer Him the world's kingdoms! He was, and is, the "god of this world," (II Cor. 4:4). It's his world for now.

The Ultimate Weapon, God's Word

Jesus wielded the two-edged sword of God's Word: "Then Jesus said to him, 'Begone, Satan! for it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve"'" (Matt. 4:10).

In this brief account of an incredible battle in which Jesus disqualified Satan to rule over the kingdoms of this world, we learn several important lessons. First of all, we learn something of the nature and attitude of the devil. Satan capitalizes on our physical appetites (in this case hunger). He attempts to take advantage of human weaknesses such as vanity and ego. He tries to make us "show off." He also quotes scripture and he desperately wants to be worshiped! That is why Satan has his ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15). That is why the worship of idols is, in reality, the worship of demons (I Cor. 10:20-22). These are Satan's weapons. He stalks the earth like a roaring lion "seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8-9, KJV). He preys upon human weaknesses.

We also learn that the greatest weapon we have against Satan and his worldly system is the Word of God! The Bible (notice that Christ quoted from the Torah — the five books of Moses), in its entirety, reflects the mind and will of God. It is inspired by the Spirit of God. It is called the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17). Is it any wonder that men have tried throughout the ages, led by the devil, to suppress the reading of the Bible — in fact, to even stamp it out.

One of the most effective ways you can gain the victory over Satan the devil is to be thoroughly familiar with the Word of God. In other words, *Read the Book!* (If you don't already have it, be sure to request our free booklet by that title.) True Christians should devote a substantial amount of time to the study of the Scriptures. Paul instructed Timothy to "attend to the public reading of scripture" (I Tim. 4:13).

He knew that the Christian's competence had to be derived solely

knowledge of the Word of God. Otherwise they would be defenseless and would "err, not knowing the scriptures." The way to "discern the spirit" is to be armed with the Word of God. The writer of Hebrews said: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

The Apostle of Overcoming. The apostle John had much to say about overcoming. He confirmed the fact that the Word of God is the ultimate weapon in defeating evil — and the evil one: "I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (I John 2:14).

Though young in the faith, these men had successfully been able to defeat the attacks of Satan and the influence of his world by their strength in the Word of God! Like the powerful preacher Apollos, they were "mighty in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24, KJV).

Christians are to possess a "healthy suspicion." We are to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16, KJV). We are not to be gullible. We should not allow ourselves to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). Nor should we "heap to [ourselves] teachers, having itching ears" (II Tim. 4:3, KJV). Any teacher who professes to represent God should be put to the test. God's people should develop what might be termed a "healthy suspicion" of those who claim esoteric insight and special knowledge. The apostle John warned: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

In these early days of the apostolic churches, there were prophets — true and false alike — who claimed to bear messages directly

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from God. The true prophets, fellowshiped with the churches and could be trusted. Such prophets existed at Jerusalem and Antioch, for example (Acts 13:1; 15:32). The daughters of Phillip were also prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9). God also sent reliable messages of impending disasters through the two prophets Simeon and Agabus (Luke 2:34-35; Acts 11:28).

But there were others who were false to the truth. They bore no message from God but sought only to deceive and draw away followers after themselves. They even denied that Jesus was the Messiah and that God had actually come in the flesh: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God" (1 John 4:2-3).

No one can truly represent God and claim that Jesus was not the Son of God, the Messiah, incarnate! Those who deny that God became flesh and dwell with men represent "the spirit of antichrist" (1 John 4:3).

There is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). It is through faith in Christ that men can be justified (Rom. 3:26; 5:1). Those who preach, and yet deny Christ, cut themselves off from God and qualify for the title "false prophet." Those who are of God acknowledge Christ as their living Lord and Master (1 Cor. 12:3).

Yet, false prophets and dishonest teachers will continue to plague the religious world as long as there is a devil to inspire them. And true Christians must be constantly on guard against those who would undermine their faith.

Jesus Christ — The Key to Overcoming. "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them [the false prophets], for he who is in you [Christ] is greater than he who is in the world [Satan]" (1 John 4:4).

Christ, who once defeated Satan and qualified to become King of

kings and Lord of lords, will again and again defeat him in you! So long as Christ is in you, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:24; Gal. 2:20), you can defeat Satan! You can gain the victory over him. You can prevail and conquer him. You can overcome him and his world.

Through faith in Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, you can readily discern between "the spirit of truth" and "the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6).

This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5.) It is only those who have "faith in Jesus" who will be justified (Rom. 3:26). It is through Christ, and through His Word, that Christians can conquer or "overcome." Paul wrote: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

As Christians we must not allow ourselves to be swamped by the evil influence of Satan's world. We must walk worthy of our high calling. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

False Freedom. Those who would "liberate" true Christians from the "bondage" of obedience to Christ will promise "freedom." Don't be deceived! "They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first! For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is

washed only to wallow in the mire" (cf. Peter 2:19-22).

Those are powerful words of warning! Satan can use the enticing thought of "freedom" to induce you to forsake Christ and the truth of God and adopt a life of effortless "do-nothing" religion which is both hollow and meaningless. The "way of righteousness" involves effort! It is the opposite of the path of least resistance. It is the "straight-and-narrow" road that leads to life — not the broad, easy way. God does not want dead fish in His Kingdom — He wants "live wires"! God seeks those who place enough value on the Kingdom to be willing to fight for it — and if necessary, to die for it. The "pearl of great price" is not easily won, and God does not cast his pearls before "swine" (i.e., those who couldn't care less).

A Promise and a Warning. If you really want to be in the Kingdom, you had better start making an effort. Begin by making a meaningful attempt to overcome some of your personal sins and weaknesses. God is not interested in "dabblers." He seeks those who are willing to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). He wants people who are serious about being in the Kingdom! To what are you enslaved? What habits? What sins? Are you really in control of your life through the power of the Holy Spirit? Or are you succumbing to ungodly, unchristian patterns that will ultimately destroy you?

John, "the apostle of overcoming," has told us with a promise and a warning. His words, God's words, come ringing down to us across the centuries: "He who conquers [overcomes] shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all fans, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:7-8).

Which will describe your destiny — the promise or the warning? □

GN

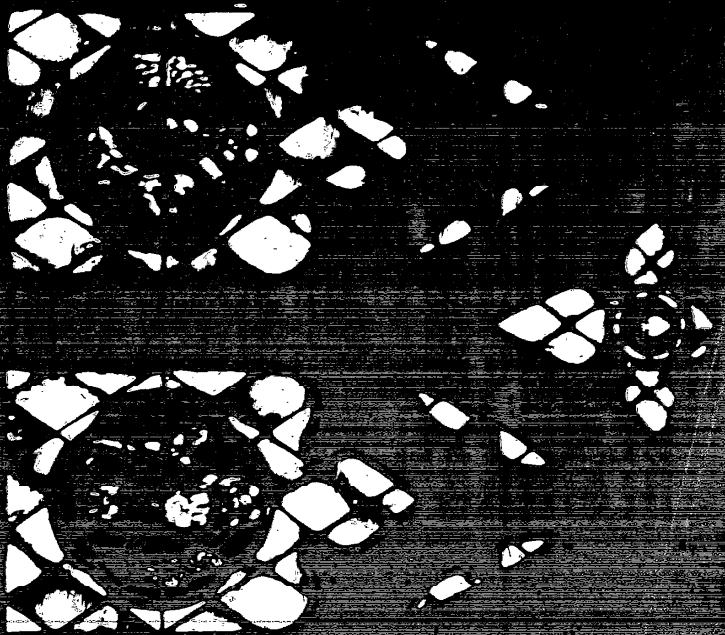
The Good News

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The sinister side of religion is well documented. The holy wars, inquisitions and persecutions of the past, as well as present-day religious warfare, are all grim reminders that religion — which preaches love and peace — often leads to war and death. But religion's darkest hour, sadly, is yet to come. The Bible, in the book of Revelation, relates a disturbing vision of four fearsome horsemen. Each symbolizes the end-time culmination of one of the four major punishments prophesied to befall a rebellious mankind, probably in the not-too-distant future. One of these horsemen, riding a



white horse, represents a great counterfeit religion that will wield extraordinary influence as it lends its full support to an oppressive, despotic super government bent on world conquest. If you'd like to know more — to be informed and prepared for these startling events foretold in Bible prophecy — write for the free booklet entitled *The White Horse False Religion*. Just write to The Good News (see inside front cover for the address of our office nearest you).



Through the stained glass darkly