

The

Good News



1981—The Year of the Family

It Takes Courage to Be a True Christian
A Model for Christian Fathers

**Billions Not Being Judged?
-And Not Lost?
By Herbert W.
Armstrong**

The Good News

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COVER: Families in the Church should picture the very Family of God! Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong has directed that more emphasis be placed on building happy, godly families. Read Mr. Armstrong's "Personal" (page 1) and "A Model for Christian Fathers" (page 5). Photo by Roland Rees.

Letters

Article fosters friendship

Thank you so very much for a job well done. The printing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a great job, and you have succeeded in building a great magazine in *The Good News*. I devour every issue as soon as I get it, no matter what I am doing at the time.

I've never written to tell you how much I appreciate what you are doing, but something happened to me that I can't keep quiet about.

In your February, 1980, issue, you ran an article by David Albert, "When You Need a Friend," that really hit home to me.

After reading the article I was overwhelmed by what Cindy DeStefano had to say. I decided I would see if I could get in touch with her.

I first wrote to the Los Angeles *Times* and asked if they would give me her address or tell me how I could get in touch with her. They were a long time in responding, and I almost forgot about sending the letter.

Then, on June 16, I received a letter from the *Times* saying they couldn't give out addresses due to company policy, but that my letter would be forwarded to Cindy. I had almost broken through!

All I had to do was wait for Cindy to write. In only a very few days, bam! I checked the mail and got a letter from her. I was overjoyed to say the least.

Cindy is a very beautiful young lady. Life dealt her a bad blow, but she has high spirits and loves people.

Cindy is a tripletic and is blind, yet I get a letter from her now once a week. A lady who lives near where Cindy stays comes every Tuesday to work with her and write for her.

Thanks to you I have found a great friend. Again, keep up the good work.

Randel Harrison
Casper, Wyo.

More precious than jewels

With deepest love and appreciation we thank you whom God is using to feed us the rich spiritual food, and whom He is using to get *The Good News* to us. The free gift of this magazine is more precious to us than all the jewels of the earth!

Mr. and Mrs. John Stalnaker
Portland, Ore.

Spencer Armstrong

Some of You May Not Make It Into God's Kingdom— Does It Mean YOU?

MOST PEOPLE who follow this world's traditional "Christianity" take it for granted that, if sometime in their life they "accept Christ," they will go to heaven when they die. But in God's Church we talk about "making it into God's Kingdom."

I wonder if YOU really do understand the *difference!* This world is SATAN'S world — not God's. Satan is a DECEIVER! This world is DECEIVED! But *often* I wonder, dear brethren, how many of YOU have really come to see the *difference!* How many of OUR brethren just substitute "the Kingdom" for going to heaven, and think we "get into the Kingdom" the same way *they* think they shall go to heaven — just by having somehow professed to have "accepted Christ!"

This deceived world lives the way of "GET." And "GET" is the way that TRANSGRESSES God's LAW! They want to "GET" salvation. They "RECEIVE" Christ — they profess to "ACCEPT" Christ. And they think that's ALL THERE IS TO IT. Once they have declared they "accept" — that is, "GET" Christ — there is nothing more to do. It is all settled. They go to church once in a while and sing that old hymn, "It Was All Settled Long Ago." They were THEN "saved." They are never told to REPENT. They are not instructed on what REPENTANCE really is. Instead

they are taught that if they obey God's law they will be "LOST." Obeying God's spiritual LAW, they are caught, is "works," and their preachers quote Ephesians 2:8-9:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast." But the preachers NEVER read right on the next words, verse 10, which says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

They MISS God's whole PURPOSE in saving us. DO NOT SOME OF YOU, ALSO? Just WHAT is this important matter of salvation all about?

The first created man, Adam, disobeyed God. He followed his wife Eve in choosing SATAN'S "GET" way of life, rejecting God's spiritual LAW, which is GOD'S WAY OF LIFE — love to God and outflowing LOVE to other people!

God had, long before creating Adam, set the super archangel LUCIFER on the THRONE with power to RULE over all the earth. When Lucifer rejected God's LAW — God's WAY OF LIFE — he abrogated the GOVERNMENT OF GOD on earth, and he became SATAN, THE DEVIL. But it is the LAW of God's government over the universe that SATAN must remain on that throne, with SUPERNATURAL POWER OVER ALL THE EARTH, UNTIL the government of God is restored, and CHRIST is sitting on that throne with supreme POWER to rule all the earth — when Satan shall be banished from the earth.

So Satan was still there to deceive Eve and lead Adam into SIN. After the beginning of the New Testament Church SATAN was still there. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted" (II Cor. 11:3). Satan is still on that throne today, deceiving, misleading the world. And I have to often wonder, as Paul did in writing the church at Corinth, if Satan is deceiving some of YOU dear brethren? So I appeal earnestly to you to listen and to THINK, ABOUT THIS!

Adam cut himself and HIS FAMILY off from God — from God's LAW — from God's GOVERNMENT!

Now WHAT IS GOD'S PURPOSE? WHY did He create humans and put us humans here on earth? LISTEN! UNDERSTAND THIS! God is reproducing Himself! He is begetting human PEOPLE as HIS very own CHILDREN. His children together with Him and with Christ will become the GOD FAMILY! There will be, in His Kingdom, God the FATHER, Christ the SON and we of the Church as Christ's WIFE — married to Christ at the time of the resurrection at His Second Coming to earth — at the final making of the NEW COVENANT, which is the NEW Covenant! It will make us of the Church — then made immortal GOD BEINGS composed of immortal spirit — both the children of God and the Wife of Christ — the GOD FAMILY — and called also THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

Now we talk about "making it into

(Continued on page 28)

Billions Not Being Judged? - And Still Not Lost?

Can that be possible? Doesn't traditional Christianity teach that all who do not accept Christ are lost — go to hell when they die? Let's get this straight.

By Herbert W. Armstrong

WHAT ABOUT the billions on earth who have not accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior? Are they not LOST — condemned to hell unless before they die they do "accept Christ"?

That's the teaching of traditional Christianity! Many have preached: "There's NO MIDDLE GROUND! This very moment you're either 'saved' or 'lost'!"

A world famous evangelist has preached to vast crowds up to a hundred thousand at a time. In some of these crusades, televised, he has said that before he finished his sermon someone somewhere on earth would die. By tomorrow morning, he said, many will die. You, any one of you, might be one of them. Accidents do happen unexpectedly. Unless you come on up to the altar tonight, and accept Christ as your personal Savior, you might be roasting in hell tomorrow morning!

How many of our own people have taken that Protestant teaching for granted — just because you have heard it so many times since childhood? How about YOU?

Let's understand this clearly!

What did Jesus mean, when He told the Pharisees it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for them? The evil people of Sodom were then long since dead. The Pharisees — who died some 1,900 years ago — are to be in that judgment!

Jesus was speaking of a future judgment on the Pharisees and the Sodomites. They all died. Have they been roasting and burning in hell? The Sodomites were long since dead when Jesus spoke. They were not yet judged. Were they sent to roast in hell before being judged?

On the other hand, Jesus said, plainly, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).

God tells us who are in His Church, through Peter, "For the time is come" (had come then, when Peter wrote) "that judgment must begin at the house of God" — that is, the Church — "and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Pet. 4:17).

There was no judgment on Sodom — YET! There was no judgment on the Pharisees — YET! But there was judgment then on the Church — for judgment had begun on the Church!

You and I, called by God to be in His Church, are being judged now! But those not being called now are not yet being judged!

Actually, we who have been called now were predestined to be called now! But that is another subject.

What does all this mean, then?

God has called some of us — just an infinitesimal few of all the people on earth — to be trained in the Christian life to be KINGS and/or PRIESTS ruling under Jesus Christ when He comes as King of kings to RULE ALL NATIONS, in the Kingdom (the divine Family) of God.

To train us for that position — to QUALIFY us to be given power to

RULE under Christ (see Revelation 2:26-27, 3:21) — God has given each of us a PART in the WORK of His Church! In the Church, He has set apostles, evangelists, pastors, elders, deacons, deaconesses and lay members. Not many are evangelists. There is now but one apostle. All do not have the same office or place of service. Most are to stand back of those Christ sends forth proclaiming His message. To stand back of your local pastor. To help with PRAYERS first of all, with God's tithes and your offerings and in whatever way is assigned. But what of those NOT YET CALLED?

They are also NOT YET JUDGED!

What, then? Are others free to commit sin, commit crimes and not be punished? BY NO MEANS. Others will be judged for what they are doing NOW! They are being held accountable.

They are like the bank robber who robbed a bank several months ago. But he was not judged the same day he committed the crime. The police had to catch him, arrest him and a date is set when he will be judged for what he did several months ago. He is not judged until he is brought to trial in a courtroom before a judge — and probably a jury.

We, called now, are given our chance to RECEIVE by grace God's GIFT of eternal life. And Christ, Head of the Church, is the living JUDGE! We who receive God's grace are to be rewarded according to our WORKS! Christ our High Priest is ALIVE in heaven, JUDGING YOU AND ME RIGHT NOW, as to whether we still have and

are led by God's Spirit, and the degree and character of our works. God has given some higher positions than others, but to whom much is given much shall be required. We shall be judged accordingly! And God's judgment is righteous and equitable!

Let me make this CLEAR — UNDERSTANDABLE!

Are you, then, saved now? *NO!* "He that shall endure unto the end, the same *shall be* [when Christ returns to earth in power and glory] saved" (Matt. 24:13). Jesus Himself said that!

When Jesus comes in POWER and GLORY TO RULE ALL NATIONS, then will salvation come to you and we who are in God's Church — IF Christ has so judged! And we are now BEING JUDGED DAY BY DAY! Jesus Christ is now ALIVE. The living Christ is now HIGH PRIEST over the Church. All judgment has been assigned by the Father to HIM (John 5:22).

As Christ's Second Coming approaches, we read, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God" (Rev. 12:10). We in the Church "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1:5).

The world blinded!

The whole world is blinded to this great TRUTH — the TRUTH OF SALVATION — of how one obtains it — of what it is (going to heaven or to hell — or remaining on earth). Is salvation going to a PLACE? — or being changed from mortal to immortal?

If I should tell a "Christian" who has accepted Christ (in the spirit of "GET") that when one is "saved," he is changed from a human person into a GOD BEING, would he not call that blasphemy? How did the whole world become so BLINDED — so mixed up — in such religious CONFUSION? God says, "The god of this world [SATAN] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4). Satan has deceived the WHOLE WORLD (Rev. 12:9).

That's why in religions, religious leaders, deceived by Satan, blinded to GOD'S TRUTH, have started this world's religions — Buddhism, Con-

fucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Moslemism, Christianity and Judaism. The latter is NOT the religion ancient Israel received from Moses but a perversion introduced by rabbis after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. There are some 250 sects and denominations of Christianity. They use the NAME of Christ but are FAR, FAR from the teachings of Jesus and His apostles!

Yet the TRUTH is all PLAINLY preserved for us IN THE BIBLE — but religious leaders have insisted on "interpreting it" — putting their twisted meaning on it!

The PURPOSE for humanity

Winston Churchill said, before the U.S. Congress, "There is a PURPOSE being worked out here below." A higher Power above is working out that PURPOSE.

Behind all creation there had to be the preexistence of an almighty Creator — of supreme MIND. A Creator who RULES over His creation. That Creator placed angels on this earth prior to man. To govern them, with the government of God, He placed a super archangel, the cherub Lucifer, on earth's throne. But Lucifer rebelled. He led his angels (a third of all angels) into rebellion. *The government of God was no longer administered on earth.* Lucifer became Satan the devil. His angels became demons — all with superior but perverted minds.

God's PURPOSE was to reproduce Himself through mortal MAN, made from the dust of the earth — to instill within MAN, by man's own decision and desire, the holy, righteous, perfect spiritual CHARACTER of God — converting mortal man into immortal GOD BEINGS! God purposed through men to RESTORE HIS GOVERNMENT on earth. For this dual SUPREME PURPOSE — restoring His GOVERNMENT over the earth and reproducing Himself through mortal MAN, God had devised a MASTER PLAN for its accomplishment.

So first, learn about the GOVERNMENT of GOD no longer operative on earth. Of necessity all government is based on a foundational LAW or constitution — whether local city government, state government, national government or the GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

The government of GOD is based on His spiritual LAW. That LAW is a WAY OF LIFE! It is the way that will produce peace, happiness, contentment, joy, abundance for ALL — and for mortal MAN eternal salvation — immortal life as a GOD BEING!

It is the way of OUTFLOWING LOVE — first in obedience to and worship of God — secondly, loving human neighbor as one's self. I simplify this way of life by the term "GIVE" — cooperation, serving, helping, sharing. God Himself is the epitome of that — He is the great GIVER who, Himself, IS LOVE! The transgression of that spiritual LAW I term "GET" — vanity, covetousness, envy, jealousy, competition, strife, violence, resentment of authority.

The three divisions of government

In any government there are the three major divisions:

1) *The lawmaking*, or legislative. In the United States this is the Congress. In Britain, the Parliament. In the government of God, God the Father is LAWGIVER.

2) *The executive*. In the United States this is the president. In Britain, the prime minister. In the government of God it is CHRIST!

3) *The judicial*. In the United States this is the Supreme Court. In the government of God it is CHRIST, for all judgment has been given by the Father to Christ. The Father judges no man (John 5:22).

Because of the extreme sin of Lucifer and the angels (II Pet. 2:4, Isa. 14:12-14) the earth had come to a physical condition of decay, waste and emptiness (II Pet. 2:4-6, Gen. 1:2). So God renewed the face of the earth (Ps. 104:30) in six days to make it habitable for man (Gen. 1:2-26).

Now began God's supreme PURPOSE of reproducing Himself — creating holy GOD BEINGS as His very begotten GOD Children — from MAN made from the dust of the earth.

On the sixth day of that "creation week" (actually a renewal of the face of the earth) God created MAN after His own likeness (form and shape) out of the dust of the earth (Gen. 1:26, 2:7). But unlike the dumb animals, God breathed into men the essence of spirit, empowering the

physical brain with thought-functioning MIND (I Cor. 2:11, Rom. 8:16).

Now how about salvation?

So here was mortal MAN — and his wife — Adam and Eve, the first mortal humans. Bear in mind, GOD is composed of SPIRIT — with immortal life inherent — self-sustaining. God does not have to breathe air to live, He does not have to have a physical heart pumping blood all through the body. He does not have to eat food for fuel, nor even to sleep to recoup strength. Man is in God's form and shape — but not composed of self-sustaining SPIRIT as is God.

But God did put a spirit in form of spirit essence *in* man. This is no part of man — it is something *IN* man from his first breath until he dies. It empowers his physical brain with intellect. Unlike animals, therefore, man has a *mind* quite similar to God's mind — with one exception.

What is that exception? The spirit in man is not an "immortal soul." This "human spirit" cannot of itself see, hear or think! The physical brain sees through the eye, hears through the ear, and it is the BRAIN that *thinks*.

But UNDERSTAND THIS. This is VITALLY important! God DID NOT COMPLETE THE CREATION OF MAN when He created Adam and Eve. He has not completed it *even yet!* Man was made to NEED another Spirit — the Holy Spirit of God — to join with the spirit that is in man from birth until death. God did not yet *finish* the creation of man when He created Adam and Eve. Nor was it finished when their children and their children's children were born.

The Spirit of God, needed to be in man *with* man's own spirit, further empowers man to comprehend SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. Without God's Holy Spirit added to the spirit with which man is born, man CANNOT UNDERSTAND NOR COMPREHEND SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. Realize HOW IMPORTANT this is. All man's problems and troubles and evils are SPIRITUAL in nature — not physical nor mental nor emotional. Without God's Holy Spirit added, NO WONDER man cannot understand nor solve his problems, troubles and evils! Further, God's HOLY SPIRIT, on entering within a human person, begets that

person with eternal immortal God-life — so that, by a final resurrection man, through the Holy Spirit, may be BORN OF GOD — which means born a very GOD Being!

Yet people today think they are "born again" when they merely say or profess that they "accept Christ," or "receive Christ." They think they "GET" Christ. When I received God's Holy Spirit, it was when I "GAVE" my very self and my whole life over to Christ. He had bought it and paid for it with His shed blood. I belonged to Him. And He has been USING IT! It was not a matter of "GET" — which is SATAN'S way! It was a matter of "GIVE." That is GOD'S way!

Man merely the raw material

It is important to understand this. God's process of reproducing Himself out of MAN (who is so much dirt or earth made into organic or living MATTER) was only STARTED in the creation of Adam and Eve.

All we humans, born by the physical reproduction process, from them, are merely so much material CLAY in the hands of the Master Potter who is GOD. God says: "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Isa. 64:8).

Let me here remind you of God's PURPOSE — to make of us immortal divine GOD Persons, who, with and under CHRIST, shall RESTORE the government of GOD over the earth. That process is still going on after nearly 6,000 years. And none but Jesus, who was mortal, has ever yet been resurrected immortal GOD! The government of God has not yet been restored to earth!

Now at this point consider another important point in the government of GOD. It is NOT "democracy" — government from the bottom of the people being ruled. It is government from the TOP — from GOD the Father on down.

God delegated the government — His government — into the hands of a super archangel, Lucifer. Lucifer had been trained in the operation of GOD'S government from God's throne in heaven. He was set on earth's throne to be the executive ruling the earth with GOD'S LAWS AND GOD'S GOVERNMENT.

God's government regulates the

WAY OF LIFE of those ruled by it. The way is "GIVE" — but Lucifer rebelled and chose the way of "GET." For Adam or any human to QUALIFY to RESTORE God's government over the earth, that human would have to 1) reject Satan's way of "GET" and 2) accept and choose GOD'S WAY of "LOVE." Adam had that chance.

Before Adam in the Garden of Eden were two symbolic trees. One, the tree of life, symbolized receiving God's Holy Spirit, which Adam so sorely needed. But first Adam had to REJECT Satan's way of "GET" and that was represented by the tree of the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD AND EVIL. Satan wanted to remain on that throne in POWER over the earth. He did! He got to Adam by deceiving his wife Eve!

The one who replaces Satan on that throne over the whole earth must be one who will never — NEVER — NEVER turn against God's law of LOVE — God's way of "GIVE" — but must rule people *IN* living in that way that will CAUSE universal PEACE, happiness, joy, abundance!

Satan is the most unhappy, discontented, resentful, embittered, spiritually MISERABLE personage anywhere in the vast universe!

Satan caused Adam and Eve to make themselves UNhappy, living the way that produces sorrow, pain, suffering, anguish, discontent, resentment, bitterness, anger, desire to "GET" from others and make others UNhappy.

The whole world (Adam's children) lives that way today. In our sports we talk about "the ecstasy of WINNING and the agony of defeat!" For one to enjoy ecstasy, he must cause his opponent to suffer "AGONY!" Even in human government! I'm writing this November 7. Just three days ago Ronald Reagan enjoyed the ECSTASY of WINNING by a landslide, and Jimmy Carter the AGONY of defeat. They FOUGHT bitterly, even accusing one another! Mr. Carter and wife went alone into a room and bitterly wept! Four years ago they ENJOYED the ECSTASY and exhilaration of WINNING, and causing President Gerald Ford and wife to SUFFER AGONY of defeat! Four years ago, did it hurt Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn that Gerald Ford and wife were suffering AGONY? Somehow I

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Photo by Roland Rees

A Model for Christian Fathers

By Joseph Tkach

The fact that human beings can produce children does not mean that parents are automatically capable of raising those children properly! Humanity today, to its chagrin, is experiencing the truth of that statement.

Today the lack of right childrearing is contributing to the erosion of the family unit, and the decline of the family is a major cause of the societal collapse we see taking place around us. Juvenile crime, drug abuse, psychological problems and even suicide are on the rise. And family problems are present even in God's Church!

So where do we turn for answers? Notice what God intends to do: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart

of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

God is guiding parents in the Church, through the leadership of Herbert W. Armstrong, to better fulfill their responsibilities to their offspring.

Malachi's message, quoted above, specifically singles out fathers. Of course, fathers and mothers must work together to provide godly upbringing for their youngsters. The duties of mothers will be described further in other articles to come, but in this article we will concern ourselves with the special part God says the father, as head of the home, must fulfill for his children.

Actually, the most important example human fathers can look to is that of God the Father Himself! The human family, as Mr. Armstrong has

explained, is a model of what God's Family — His Kingdom — will be like. And God is the Model of the perfect Father. Human fathers need to develop the qualities God the Father exercises in caring for His Family. Let's look at a few.

Right leadership

A vital quality Christian fathers need is *right leadership*. Notice God's command: "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

This task requires that your children maintain proper respect for you as their father. In this day of "children's rights" and "letting kids decide for themselves," real *respect* for parents may sound old-fashioned. But this is the relationship that must exist if you are to lead your children

properly. Some men in the Church have misused this concept of "respect," and have succeeded only in terrorizing their children and their wives. To be truly respected you need to display compassion, courage, godly understanding and firmness. Yes, your decisions as head of the family will stand, but you will use wisdom in making them, and you will carefully consider the input your wife and children offer.

On the other hand, some parents think they need to be their children's "friends." The last thing a normal child needs is a middle-aged man or woman "buddy." Your children don't have your years of life experience. By bringing yourself down to their level, you compromise your position and destroy their respect for you. Your children desperately need mature, loving leadership from you.

A firm resolve to obey God, along with an outgoing, compassionate personality — that is what makes for true leadership:

A good provider

God the Father is a *good Provider* — He supplies all His Family's needs. He is the Giver of every good thing (Jas. 1:17). In this, too, He is the Model for human fathers.

During the Church's wedding ceremony the man vows, before God, to provide for his wife. This responsibility extends to any children they produce. God shows His scorn for any able-bodied man who refuses to work when He says, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (1 Thess. 3:10).

But this responsibility for human fathers to provide for their families extends beyond physical needs.

A father must give of himself personally as well. This means spending time with your family, especially at meals. When was the last time you took your family on a special outing? Do you *plan ahead* to spend meaningful time with your wife and children, fellowshiping with them, teaching them and enjoying each other? God has given you charge of them — you are to care for them as He would. God is always available for us to call upon; and we fathers should always be available to our families. A father must provide emotional and spiritual support for his family.

What do all these provisions add up to? Love. Fathers, *love* your families. This is pleasing in the sight of God, the Father of us all.

Ability to teach

Your children look to you fathers for guidance. God the Father teaches His children the right way to live, and He commands you likewise to train up your children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). That means instructing them about God's laws (Deut. 6:7).

Train your children to respect their elders. Teach them to take care of their belongings and the possessions of others. Expose them to the finer things of life. Don't let your kids decide for themselves in moral matters — that would be like a gardener refusing to pull the weeds out of his flower patch, reasoning that it is up to the flowers to choose their own companions. Your children do not naturally know right from wrong. You, with the Holy Spirit, do, and you must teach them.

Learn to exercise discipline properly. Remember that your children are not converted and don't have your level of character and understanding. Temper discipline with understanding, mercy and compassion.

Remember, too, that the example you set as head of the home teaches your children more than any number of lectures does. Do your children see you practicing God's way of life? Do they hear you belittle your wife — their mother — or criticize the Church or its activities? These things register in young minds. You as a Christian are to be a light to the world, and a major part of your particular world is your family. Are you a godly light to them? You will be blessed if you are:

"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord: that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord" (Ps. 128:1-4).

Consistency

God the Father is consistent. He has existed from eternity, and has

never deviated from His purposes. His Son Jesus is just like Him, "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). This quality of *consistency* must be present as well in the makeup of a Christian father.

Do your kids know where you stand on the issues that affect them? Do you need to say "No" only once for them to get the message? Are your views even predictable? If so, your children will learn that they can *rely* on you for the support and solid foundation they need.

Don't, however, make yourself a god to your children. They must learn to be independent. They need to be strong emotionally and morally regardless of the actions of others — even you. Some parents in the Church have been rudely surprised when, after years of training, their children grew up and bolted from the Church! The kids had never, of their own independent will, seen the value of living this way of life.

But being consistent as a father will help avoid this problem. Your children will see that you really believe, live and reap the rewards of what you teach them.

God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33). In a consistently peaceful and reliable environment, your children can develop a right confidence in themselves and God's way of life.

Meet the challenge

Raising children properly in this chaotic world is a real challenge. God lays much of the responsibility on fathers. But you as a father can meet this challenge!

God Himself is your Model. If you stay close to Him and practice what He teaches you in His Word, you can produce some fine young people who may be leaders in the world tomorrow. Try to become more like God, the perfect Father, and you will see positive results in your family.

The apostle Paul encourages, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Cor. 16:13-14). You can be a truly Christian father, and God will be well pleased with your effort. □

Christians Must Have ZEAL

Lukewarm water has a soothing effect on a bather's nerves — it helps relax a troubled mind. But it's not good for you to be neither hot nor cold spiritually — a lukewarm Christian!

By Selmer L. Hegvold

Lethargy is all too prevalent in the Church of God today! Many brethren complain of flagging interest and drive in prayer and Bible study. The easy chair, television and personal pursuits entice and capture the minds of too many. Real effort at being a Christian — at setting the proper example and getting along with people — is only minimally present in some lives.

Does this description apply to you?

I knew a man years ago who said, "I dread the prophesied Great Tribulation, but I think it will take that horrifying ordeal before I can stir myself enough to make it into the Kingdom of God!"

Another person I love dearly could see the rapid approach of this horrible period on earth — the Great Tribulation — but still rejected God's way of protection. The calm statement was: "I'll just have to go through it with all the rest of the world, I guess. Then perhaps I'll understand and start doing something about it."

I myself have often said that it took the shock of combat in World War II to bring me to my knees, before God could begin to deal effectively with me.

How many rough knocks do we need to bring us to our senses? Can God get through to us only through violent means? Let's hope none of us have resigned ourselves to that approach in life.

The Laodicean attitude

Notice Christ's warning to the Laodicean church: "I know, thy works, that thou art neither cold nor

hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16). What an alarming statement, when we understand it! This is a warning about lethargy.

We are living in the Philadelphia era — the sixth of the seven churches described in Revelation 2 and 3. We are to be zealously active in fulfilling the great mission assigned to us today! The overcomers in each era — those who faithfully do their part — are promised a reward. Mere awareness of that reward is sufficient in some cases to keep those called by God striving to maintain closeness to Christ.

For some of us, however, the reward alone is not enough. Regrettably, it takes not just the offer of a reward but threats to life, health and well-being. That is the wrong attitude!

If you are one of these, the Revelator continues: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold *tried in the fire*, that thou mayest be rich [the trial of fire is intended to motivate the Laodiceans to overcome the lethargy they have slipped into]; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (verses 17-19).

God created us for His pleasure (Rev. 4:11). Our purpose in life is to

fulfill His will and perform the commissions He gives us. We should be dedicated to this goal regardless of threats. We should not have to go through the fire — that is, if we understand our calling and are dedicated to becoming converted.

A lesson from Esau

Read about Esau's tragic mistake (Gen. 25:29-34). It is recorded to warn us not to take lightly our present calling. It took some time for Esau to realize the error of his way. By then he had scared his conscience and was unable to grasp the meaning of real repentance. The same danger now faces you!

Some have said they will pass up all opportunities to become converted in this age, hoping to come up in the second resurrection. They cling to the hope that God will give them a second chance. Then they will "make the grade." Then they will be much more apt to overcome and apply themselves zealously to serving God, knowing it will be their last chance for life!

That approach, along with the Laodicean attitude, is not sound reasoning. Can you know you would then be willing to apply God's way? You cannot foresee what your attitude might be at that time. Can you afford to take that chance?

Even though Esau sought to rectify his error, he failed: "As Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright: For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:16-17).

Don't despise the high calling you

have of Christ — don't ever take it lightly. If you have truly been called, this is the only chance you will have (Heb. 10:26-27). It is worth more than all the material wealth and physical pleasures that attract you so strongly today.

Christ's easy yoke

God desires above all things that you prosper and are in good health, now and forever in His Kingdom (III John 2). He has decreed that, if at all possible, none should be lost. "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26). And, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all" (verse 32).

Christ has provided you with the goal, the example, the environment and the power needed to attain that great prize. Pick your tools carefully, for if you have slipped into lethargy you will require the very best. Look to the superb example — Christ Himself. Fasten your eyes on the goal. Call upon the promised power, of God's Holy Spirit.

Through the Holy Spirit, Christ will make all your burdens light. He has never broken a promise — not one. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls: For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Your contact with God

You signed a contract with God at baptism. You surrendered your life to Him to use as He saw fit. Your end of that contract, the most important covenant into which anyone can enter, was to draw constantly closer to God through prayer, Bible study and practicing His way of life. He, in turn, guarantees eternal life with Him! The stakes are extremely high. They are attainable, though, if you will continually stir yourself to keep your part of the contract and draw on God's power to help you do so.

At conversion you sampled Christ's yoke and His burden. Have you forgotten? Did you not understand at that time what you had committed yourself to perform?

Christ is our Leader in all things.

His way of life is not the popular or easy way. The message He brought from God the Father antagonized those of His generation and, after rejecting Him, they slew Him.

Christ forewarned all who were to follow Him: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). Remember that warning, and the burden that came upon you? You rejoiced that you were counted-worthy to suffer for Christ's sake!

Lifelong friends, associates and

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even your own close relatives turned away from you in dismay over your newfound direction in life! Some left you in sorrow; others shunned you in anger. Even your livelihood came into jeopardy and, in some cases, finding new employment and a new home became necessary. You suffered. Your children suffered, and you along with them, in their bewilderment.

You counted the cost and willingly paid the price for conversion and the promise of eternal life. You accepted these adjustments in your lifestyle.

Now, years down the line, these early commitments may have grown dim — perhaps you have forgotten them. The early challenges of learning God's will — or eagerly stepping out in faith with the help of God's Spirit — have faded with the routine

of everyday Christian living. Bible study is stale, less challenging and, therefore, has become sporadic. Prayer is somehow less meaningful.

How to get "back on the track"

Don't wait for another major crisis — or the worldwide cataclysm of the Great Tribulation — to smash you between the eyes! Satan has an arsenal full of weapons to strike you down permanently. Let that realization sink home — let it stir you to furious, righteous anger with the devil, and revive your determination to turn wholeheartedly to Christ. Rely on His promise of divine help — He will never leave you or forsake you (Heb. 13:5).

No Laodicean is going to rejoice in the Great Tribulation to come. He may survive it and ultimately be in the Kingdom of God! Certainly, the Tribulation will straighten out most lukewarm Christians and put them back on the right track. But you don't need that remedy, nor should you want it!

Go to your knees even if you must force yourself to do so! Cry out to God for help. Talk it all out with Him. Confess your lethargy, your lackadaisical attitude, to Him! He will hear and He will answer.

Then stir up your interest in reading your Bible daily. When was the last time you read it through word for word? Or does that bore you? If so, try chain-referencing different subjects in your margin. Go to your minister for ideas and help.

Invite your minister to begin a regular, small Bible study in your home for friends and brethren in your part of the community. You will not only learn but you will have helped others find a solution to the same problems. Your minister will be able to fathom the difficulties you face. He can initiate ways to rescue you from the Laodicean pitfall into which some brethren have stumbled.

Rejoice in the great Work you were called to perform and help build the unity so necessary to the Body of Christ (I Cor. 1:10).

Give! It's so rewarding now and will be for all eternity. Soon you can rejoice in a battle well fought and won with God's promised help! God's Kingdom is just around the corner!



After the Millennium- New Heavens and a New Earth

By George Karkos

A few years ago, I was driving on an expressway toward a major United States city. Patches of ice covered the road here and there, but the drive had gone well. Suddenly a car in front of me spun out of control. Startled, my mind froze for a moment on an awful vision. I could see several automobiles crashing together, seriously injuring or killing many of the passengers.

Fortunately, an accident was averted, but the vision had a profound effect on me. It made me a more cautious driver, especially on that day.

An incredible vision.

What if we all could have a vision that would motivate us to really obey God and become like Him? What would it be worth spiritually?

The Good News January 1961

Centuries ago, one of God's servants had a vision so moving that he tried to worship the angel who gave it! That same vision had a tremendous effect in the lives of the ancient patriarchs. Just what was it that drove them so powerfully to overcome the pulls of the flesh and obey God?

The vision of the new heaven and earth given to the apostle John (Rev. 21 and 22).

Abraham, the "father of the faithful" was driven by this vision to leave his homeland in his old age and sojourn in unfamiliar territories in obedience to God. Abraham knew what lay at the end of his journey, and became the person to whom God gave the promise of a new promise.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not

knowing whether he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."

Why? What motivated him? "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:8-10).

There it is! Abraham saw a vision the same way John describes.

Abraham knew that at the return of Christ, we with him, would inherit the Kingdom of God. The snow of our future spirit bodies, described in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54, and granted us we do to possess this promise (1 Cor. 15:47). Abraham had vision. He had faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

In our efforts to please God, we too should adopt in faith the goal His servant Abraham did. Think of

Picture courtesy NASA

it! We all anticipate the restoration of the government of God to earth and rulership with Jesus Christ. We all desire this time of world peace and abundance during Christ's 1,000-year reign.

However, do we overlook an important part of our inheritance — New Jerusalem? For many Christians, New Jerusalem is a vague concept and they don't anticipate it eagerly. This incredible city is coming to the new earth and can be a powerful source of inspiration for us now.

The setting

The study of the new heaven and new earth is fascinating. Sometimes in our limited thinking we see no further than the Millennium. But to God the Millennium is only a day — a mere fraction of eternity (Ps. 90:4, II Pet. 3:8). We are going to spend a "day" in the Millennium, but we will spend forever inhabiting the new heaven and the new earth!

To get a better understanding of New Jerusalem we must go to Revelation 21 and 22. Laid out for us are the details that provided such inspiration for God's people before us — and that will provide the ultimate joy for us when this city is established.

When will we see New Jerusalem? The context of Revelation 20, preceding Revelation 21, reveals the answer. In Revelation 20 we are told about the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ and the saints. After this comes the Great White Throne Judgment, during which the multitudes of people who died without knowledge of the true God will be given a chance for salvation. For further information, write for our free article, "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?"

After the Millennium and the judgment period the new heaven (or heavens, as it is rendered in scriptures such as Isaiah 65:17, 66:22 and II Peter 3:13) and the new earth will be established.

Who will be there?

With the establishment of the new earth comes the holy city, New Jerusalem. It is pictured as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2). Whose Bride will she be? The Bride of the Lamb, Jesus Christ (verses 9-10, John 1:29).

The Bride of Christ — New Jerusalem — is pictured as the saints resurrected at His Second Coming (Rev. 19:6-9). During the Millennium and judgment phase of God's plan of salvation, other saints will be added to God's Family. They will either have access to or live in New Jerusalem. Therefore, New Jerusalem is called the Bride of Christ since its inhabitants will include the Bride.

This is God the Father's gift to His Son, Jesus. He will join Jesus Christ in ruling the universe from this location (Rev. 21:3). The "men" mentioned in this verse will already have

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been made members of the God Family.

What a wonderful picture — God the Father, Jesus Christ, the resurrected saints and other spirit beings such as the 24 elders, the beasts before the throne of God and the angels, all united in harmony, peace and love in a beautiful environment beyond human imagination!

One of the Bible's most inspiring scriptures describes a time of "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain for the former things are passed away" (verse 4). How wonderful is the plan of God! No wonder Paul said, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

(Rom. 11:33). We can look at this aspect of New Jerusalem and rejoice greatly.

Christ Himself promised that all things will be new. He is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8) and promises this inheritance of new life and new opportunity to those who overcome (Rev. 21:7). But some, unfortunately, won't make it:

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (verse 8).

Why must these be rejected? They simply don't have the right character to be happy or to make others happy. So God will mercifully remove them from the scene by destroying them and their misery for eternity. Our free booklet, *Is There A Real Hell Fire?*, explains the details.

The city's appearance

What does this great city look like? It defies human imagination. Containing the glory of God and illuminated like a jasper stone, it glows in deep, rich, blue-green tones, with the transparency of crystal. The walls have 12 gates, with the names of the tribes of Israel written upon them and 12 angels present. There are three gates in each of the four walls. The 12 foundations of the city wall contain the names of the 12 apostles (verses 11-14).

The angel who measures the city gives its dimensions in terms of the reed (12½ feet). New Jerusalem is 1,500 miles in length, breadth and height (verse 16).

Though the shape of the city is not clearly revealed, it apparently forms a cube. This is certainly in keeping with the "Highest of All" that, as a section of the tabernacle and later the Temple, represented the throne room of God (Heb. 9:5). It was here that God manifested Himself (Heb. 16:2).

Another possibility is that the city is shaped like a pyramid, with God the Father and Christ appearing in the apex. The pyramidal structure is unique architecturally — the design may have originally come from God Himself. Other spirit beings may occupy areas at lower heights, de-

pending on their status. Whatever the shape, New Jerusalem is a huge city. A spectacular example of God's handiwork is that the city itself is made of gold that appears as clear glass (Rev. 21:18).

The walls encompassing New Jerusalem are 216 feet high (assuming a cubit measures 18 inches). Supporting the walls are an array of beautiful stones. Visiting a gem dealer would help you appreciate the beauty of the jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and amethyst that are used (Rev. 21:17-20).

Though hard to imagine, each gate is made from a single pearl. That's quite a contrast to the small pearls we see today. A street is described as being made of pure gold having the transparency of glass. Since there are 12 gates, it seems logical that there are other unmentioned streets leading from the gates. The presence of God the Father and Christ are the temple, providing the light for New Jerusalem. This is a departure from the heavenly Jerusalem, which has a temple (Rev. 21:3), and seems to indicate that New Jerusalem will undergo changes before it arrives on the new earth.

This is not surprising in light of Christ's statement in John 14:1-3. He told His disciples that His Father's house contained many mansions. He was referring to the temple on earth — the Father's earthly house (John 20:19) — as a type of New Jerusalem. Christ is now preparing different offices for us to hold and places for us to inhabit once the 7,000-year plan for man is completed. God is preparing a home for His future Family!

Our reward

Christians from the present Philadelphia era of God's Church will gain entrance to and travel in New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12). What a glorious reward for those of us qualifying for God's Kingdom! We will be pillars in New Jerusalem and bear the names of God the Father and Christ's new name. What is a pillar? A spiritual pillar is a leader in God's Work (Gal. 2:9). The clear indication is that we will be top leaders in God's government.

The kings of the earth are pictured

as bringing the glory and honor of the nations into the city (Rev. 21:24-26). Thus we may conclude that not everyone will actually live in New Jerusalem.

A pure river of water will come forth from the throne of God. A street runs by this river, with the tree of life bearing 12 manner of fruits, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of this tree are used to heal the nations (Rev. 22:1-2).

The seventh verse of Revelation 2 reveals that spirit beings will eat of the tree of life, so the healing element of the leaves may be for members of the divine Family.

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Why would spirit beings need healing? The word *healing* doesn't have to imply recovering from illness. It can be viewed in the sense of refreshing one's body. For instance, thirst can be "qualed" by drinking tea, which is a product of leaves. God enjoys drinking wine (Judg. 9:13, Luke 22:17-18).

Thus far in history no one has had the opportunity to see God face to face (John 1:18). But God promises to eliminate this curse that has plagued man's relationship with God. We who are His servants will serve Him and see Him. What a wonderful privilege!

Our rulership with God the Father and Jesus Christ will be for eternity (Rev. 22:5). God has promised us all things (Heb. 2:8).

These incredible promises will come to pass (Rev. 22:6), though the details may not all be clear now. As Paul said, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). From God's point of view these prophecies will come to pass quickly. As the end-time generation awaiting the Second Coming, we will soon see Christ our King. Then it will be only a short period of time until we see the New Jerusalem!

Be spiritually diligent

John's vision of the new heavens and new earth affected him powerfully, and he attempted to worship the angel who delivered the vision (Rev. 22:8). But he was told by the angel, "Worship God" (verse 9).

This is the real message of the new heavens and new earth! We must strive with all our might to worship God in spirit and in truth. Science speculates about a future with less work, more leisure, advanced technology and electronic gadgetry. But Almighty God promises a time when He and His spiritual Family, headquartered at New Jerusalem on a new earth, will set out together to finish His creation in the rest of the universe. That is the incredible human potential!

God has given us this precious knowledge while the world around us gasps for its last breath. We should be motivated to purge out the spots and wrinkles from our character by setting our eyes on this revelation from Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:10-14). This is the effect this knowledge had on Abraham and the other patriarchs — they strove, through daily adversity, to perfect their character.

Thankfully, the vision of death and destruction I saw on the highway a few years ago didn't come to pass. It turned out to be false. But the vision of the new heavens and the new earth will come to pass — Christ's words guarantee it, and He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18).

Can you envision the reward God has for us? Can you live for it? Will it motivate you to perfect your character? If so, you will be a strong Christian awaiting the realization of the greatest vision known to man. That is very good news! ☺

Good News on Plain Truth Circulation

The Message Gets Out

Asked by His apostles what signs would precede His Second Coming, Jesus Christ said that "the gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13:10) before the close of man's rule on earth.

More than 1,900 years later, God is fulfilling this prophecy through His Church — through the personal evangelism of Pastor General Her-

bert W. Armstrong and through the pages of *The Plain Truth* magazine.

Mr. Armstrong has written: "*The Plain Truth* was founded under God's leading to be one of the two — and perhaps even the No. 1 — medium for carrying out the GREAT COMMISSION. Some might think radio and television, to be our No. 1 means of proclaiming

Christ's GOOD NEWS but, without THE WORD OF GOD IN PRINT, radio could never have built the Work."

On February 1, 1934, an old Neostyle press cranked out approximately 250 copies of Volume 1, Number 1, of *The Plain Truth*. Since then, the magazine has grown to a glossy, four-color publication printed in five languages. With more than two million copies now going around the globe monthly, *The Plain Truth's* circulation has multiplied more than 9,000 times since its modest run 46 years ago.

"THINK ON THIS!" wrote Mr. Armstrong. "We are the only voice in the wilderness of today's evils, frustrations, discouragements, with the world's ONLY HOPE — and its one sure HOPE of happiness: abundance and eternal life!"

Many programs have been undertaken to develop a larger circulation and expose more people to this message. Throughout the first several decades of the magazine's existence, readers could come in contact with the *PT* only through advertisements in publications such as *Reader's Digest* or by writing directly for a free subscription after hearing it advertised on Mr. Armstrong's broadcasts. Various broadcasting campaigns had saturated the populace in Europe, for example, but the British government, in 1967, had closed the stations airing *The World Tomorrow*.

In 1971, Christ opened a new door. The decision was made to display the *PT* on racks to allow people to see the magazine firsthand. Accordingly, whether individuals subscribed or not, copies of the magazine would expose them directly to Christ's message. A distributing firm was hired and free copies began appearing in the United King-

dom, proved plans to expand the program, and soon copies were going throughout Europe.

The magazine began trickling into homes in Norway, France, Sweden, Finland and other countries. Copies were even distributed in the EEC (European Economic Community) headquarters and the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE).

With the success of the European program, brethren in other countries started distributing *Plain Truths* on newsstands.

"We are going to develop the NEWSSTAND circulation into multiplied millions," said Mr. Armstrong, and Church members around the world responded energetically. Copies of *The Plain Truth* reached Japan, South Africa, Australia, Canada, the Philippines, and the United States by way of the newsstands, literally blanketing the globe. More than 20 million magazines were distributed in the United States alone since 1976.

The U.S. Program

Following the lead in Europe, a Pasadena-based operation was set up in 1976. In July of that year 50,000 copies of the *PT* were distributed as part of a pilot program in Sioux Falls, S.D., and Lexington, Ky. A year later, the program was working in 150 church areas with 300,000 magazines distributed.

Like the European program, which no longer relies on an outside distributor, the U.S. effort directly involves Church members by allowing them to obtain and restock newsstand locations.

More than 3,000 members across America have distributed more than half a million special 32-page newsstand *Plain*



Plain Truth newsstands, which distribute millions of magazines annually, help more people come in contact with the Work's message.

Truths every month. This effort accounts for 40 percent of all new subscriptions each year, as many of those who pick up newsstand copies eventually subscribe to the regular magazine.

U.S. pastors praise the program, having members work together to spread the Gospel fosters unity in local churches.

Chattanooga, Tenn. pastor Bill Cowan said, "Personally, it is my opinion that this is one of the strongest means for the local church to back up Mr. Armstrong's efforts. It's encouraging to the brethren, it's creating a good image for the Church and it helps Mr. Armstrong get his job done."

The U.S. newsstand program is bearing fruit.

More than 160 members were baptized into God's Church after receiving their initial exposure to the Work through the newsstand program.

Thousands of other people have become co-workers, enrolled in the Ambassador Col-



A counter-top display offers a free Plain Truth.

lege Correspondence Course and requested Church literature.

Louisville, Ky., pastor Ray Meyer related, "The newsstand program has brought a greater degree of unity to our brethren here. They are encouraged because they have immediate visual proof of the fruit of their labors."

"Take One" Cardholders

God's Work in other countries also adopted the newsstand program, but with varying degrees of success. Favorable economic conditions and advanced shipping methods helped the effort in the United States, but government restrictions, customs regulations and high costs hampered newsstand distribution in some other countries. But Christ opened another door.

The Work's Spanish Department began a modest newsstand program in January, 1976, but soon found that expanding the program presented many of the obstacles listed above.

While expanding the newsstand program among the Spanish-speaking population in the United States, a new concept for gaining subscribers to *La Pura Verdad* (the Spanish Plain Truth) was developed. An attractive, inexpensive holder filled with subscription cards was tested at various locations, and the results were rewarding. By-passing government censors, red tape and other problems, the cardholders were sent to



Offering the lowest cost-per-response of any of the circulation promotions, PT cardholders are used in the United States and Latin America.

areas in Latin America. Currently the cardholder program offers the lowest cost-per-response of any of the circulation programs.

As the program expanded in the Spanish-speaking countries, it was also implemented in the United States. Many of the same brethren who handled newsstands began placing the cardholders in grocery

stores, retail shops and other public areas.

Since the U.S. program began in May, 1980, more than 10,000 new people have subscribed through the program. Because of the cardholders' effectiveness and remarkably low cost, God's Work in Europe and other countries are exploring the possibilities for their use.

"You Read That Where?"

People sitting in waiting rooms of doctors, dentists, lawyers and other professionals often spend several minutes or longer with nothing to do. Several brethren in the United States now try to fill these people's wasted time by providing special copies of *The Plain Truth* for various waiting rooms.

In six months, a concentrated effort by hundreds of members resulted in 21,000 subscriptions to waiting rooms and libraries throughout the country. The regular, monthly *Plain Truth* is sent to these offices with four subscription cards inside.

Accordingly, the new waiting room and library subscrip-

tion programs allow new audiences to review the PT's biblical insight into world problems, and the great commission moves a little closer to being fulfilled.

What Can You Do?

According to Mr. Armstrong, the Church of God exists for two reasons:

1) To provide a united body of Spirit-led believers to back up the apostles (and evangelists) who had been specially trained to GO FORTH into all the world with Christ's Gospel message. ALL this, as their part in THE GREAT COMMISSION. There's a WORK OF GIVING, giving of their prayers, their encouragement

and financial support of the ORGANIZED Gospel WORK. And this is God's means of and the training ground for:

2) The overcoming of Satan, and the constant development of that holy, righteous CHARACTER — thus qualifying them to sit with Christ on the throne of earthwide GOVERNMENT."

It requires an organized body of volunteers to help distribute newsstand *Plain Truths* and cardholders and make calls for the waiting room programs. If you would like to further your part in helping Mr. Armstrong complete the great commission, talk to your local pastor. You can join thousands of others working to spread the one true message of hope for this dying world. — by Michael A. Snyder □



Astrology

Should You Let The Stars Guide Your Life?

By Clayton Steep

Are you "Capricorn" or "Scorpio"? Should you avoid strangers today? Should you contemplate marriage? Are you and your pet dog or cat compatible? Is this a bad day to put a new idea to work? Should you postpone trying to overcome a bad habit? What do the stars and planets indicate?

Millions of people daily check their horoscopes to find out. Contracts are signed, employees hired, business ventures started, lifestyles changed, occupations chosen, friendships altered, diets formulated, bets made, trips planned, babies named — yes, sometimes, government policies and political decisions arrived at — all based on astrological readings.

Even if you yourself do not believe in astrology, you may still be directly or indirectly affected because of the decisions others in all walks of life make under the influence of zodiac charts.

What is astrology?

Briefly put, adherents claim astrology is a method of anticipating or foretelling events by calculating the effect the sun, moon, stars and planets have on human activities.

Supposedly, the relative positions of the heavenly bodies at the moment of a child's birth influence the child's character and personality. Plotting

the movements of those heavenly bodies, it is thought, will reveal an individual's destiny.

As to whether astrology really works, the debate has been intense. A few years ago 186 eminent scientists, among them 18 Nobel prize winners, signed a declaration that there is no scientific evidence to support astrology.

Armed with this and similar statements made by other scientists and astronomers, many have sought to debunk it.

On the other hand, devotees and practitioners respond, "Don't knock it if you haven't tried it!" They insist the principles work regardless of certain charlatans and fakes who have given the study of astrology a bad name.

And so the arguing goes on and on, some claiming there is nothing to astrology, others insisting there is. Numerous books and papers have been written giving both sides of the story. There is no need to go into all the arguments here because they are voluminous and inconclusive.

Psychology Today (February, 1976) focused on the crux of the matter when it referred to the conclusions of science writer Lawrence Jerome: "Arguments against the irrationality of astrology's claims miss the point, he says, because astrology

isn't based on science or logic. It is a system of magic. . . . Astrologers since Greek times have tied their art to whatever scientific facts came to hand, Jerome said, 'more and more ascribing astrology to physical influences and obscuring the magical principles upon which it was based.' But the basis is still magic" [emphasis ours].

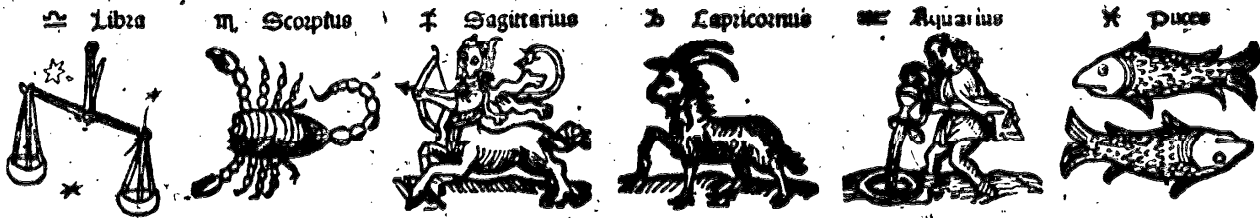
The Bible concurs. It groups astrologers along with magicians and soothsayers (Dan. 1:20, 2:2; 10:27, 4:7). The Bible nowhere says magic does not sometimes work. It worked, remember, for the sorcerers in Egypt (Ex. 7-8). We should not assume that soothsaying and astrology do not also work — sometimes. The same holds true for ESP experiments, hypnotism, water witching and other unexplained phenomena.

But just because they may at times work does not mean God's people ought to become involved with them. The source of these powers is definitely not God.

Don't let the stars get in your eyes

The Bible is clear as to how Christians should view astrology.

Just the knowledge that astrology began among the ancient pagans, particularly in Babylon, and that it pays special attention to a person's



birthday (see the article "Should Christians Celebrate Birthdays?" in the May, 1980, *Good News*) ought to make any true Christian suspicious.

The heathen were the first ones to look at the heavens and to react to portents they thought they saw. However, God commanded His people, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them" (Jer. 10:2).

Isaiah prophesied that even though astrologers originated in Babylon, they would be unable to help Babylon in its time of trouble: "It was your magic craft and cunning that misled you... Therefore shall evil assail you... Go on with your spells! Practise all your magic arts [notice once again the connection with magic]!... You have worn yourself out with them all; let the astrologers come forward now, let the star-gazers save you now, who calculate the future, month by month! They fare no better than the straw burned by a fire: they cannot save their own lives... and there is none to save you" (Isa. 47:10-15, Moffatt version).

There are numerous biblical condemnations of those who "observe times," as an astrologer must do (Deut. 18:9-14), those who worship "the sun, and the moon, and the stars" (Deut. 4:19, II Kings 23:5) and those who serve the "host of heaven" (II Kings 17:16, 21:3).

Of course, many adherents of astrology protest that they are not worshipping and serving the heavenly bodies. Maybe not according to their definition of "worship and serve." But people do obey their horoscopes, and the Bible warns, "to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey" (Rom. 6:16).

Our true guide

For many, astrology is indeed a "religion." "We are modern priests," one practitioner declared, "clearing

up people's doubts about the way their lives are going."

God intended that the heavenly bodies be used by man to measure time and seasons (Gen. 1:14). He did not intend that they be looked to for guidance in making decisions and evaluations in our personal lives. We have God's written laws for that. "Thy word [not the sun, moon, planets, stars or horoscopes, palm readers, crystal-ball gazers, diviners, mediums or fortune tellers!] is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

Of course it is evident that the sun and moon wield considerable physical influence upon the planet earth, both for good and, potentially, for harm. But Psalm 121:6 promises the righteous, "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." However, no scripture speaks of the remote influence of distant stars and planets. And certainly no scripture tells us to look to the heavenly bodies for personal direction!

The heavens declare God's glory (Ps. 19:1-6). But wisdom, guidance, understanding and the forming of an individual's character come from the laws and statutes of God, not from signs in the skies (verses 7-11).

We are to judge others "by their fruits" (Matt. 7:20), not by their horoscopes. "Judge not according to the appearance," Jesus declared, "but judge righteous [according to God's laws] judgment" (John 7:24).

We are not forced to suffer, throughout life, from certain character weaknesses merely because we were born when the planets and stars were in a particular configuration. Through effort, with the power of God's Spirit, personality traits can be changed or overcome. "The spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt... be turned into another man," Samuel prophesied to Saul (I Sam. 10:6). When God's Spirit works with a person he takes on a whole new nature (II Peter 1:4). Regardless of his horoscope!

Our minds were given to us so we can weigh facts and come to our own conclusions. Many of those who consult their horoscopes daily are really trying to avoid the responsibility of decision making. They want to be told what to do. They feel more secure that way.

The American Society of Psychological and Social Studies made this point: "Faith in astrology is harmful, for it encourages an unhealthy evasion of the permanent problems of real life... The astrologers, who offer the public a horoscope, which takes the place of conclusions drawn from serious reflection, are guilty of encouraging the human tendency of choosing facility rather than the difficult way."

Why do millions eagerly refer to their horoscopes every day? Because they feel a need for something to guide them through the complexities of life. Something they can look to for direction. We as God's elect have a guide that never fails. Jesus promised that "the Spirit of truth... will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

Before making a decision, a Christian does not have to be concerned about whether or not the planets are in a favorable position. He needs only to be concerned about what God's law says. Then he can make his decision with confidence.

"Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart... Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee... Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways" (Job 22:22, 27-28). No need to consult horoscopes, zodiac charts or astrological computations.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him [not a horoscope!], and he [not an astrologer's predictions!] shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). □

It Takes COURAGE To Be a True Christian!

By Dibar Apartian

Are you courageous? The chances are that you will answer: "Not always. At least, not as courageous as I want to be."

But do you know what courage really is? Has it ever occurred to you that to be deeply and thoroughly converted you have to be deeply and thoroughly courageous?

Indeed, not only does it take courage to *become* converted, but it takes even more to *remain* converted. Amidst moral corruption and confusion — in a world of rebellion and misery — some people think that to disobey law is to show courage. Actually, the contrary is true. It's much easier to rebel than to obey — easier to follow society, with its customs and traditions, than to stand firm for what is right in God's sight. In plain language, it takes courage to be truly Christian!

Courage is the opposite of fear — it is acting against fear.

U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt once said that all we have to fear is fear itself. But how can you stop being fearful? How can you get rid of your fears, unless you replace them with something positive, worthwhile and more powerful?

A courageous person does what God wants him to do — regardless of the consequences. As a nation, we need more courage. As individuals,

we need more courage. In our families, we need more courage. And as a Church, we need more courage!

The source of power

God has chosen "the foolish" and "the weak" things of the world to confound those who are mighty in their own eyes (1 Cor. 1:27). But God has not called the cowards of the world to confuse and confound the mighty!

People often mistake meekness for weakness. On your own you can't do much, if anything. You have no real power or wisdom. But with God's help and the power of His Spirit, you can do all things.

To be among the "foolish" and "weak" of the world is no excuse for you to live in fear: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (1 Tim. 1:7).

Think! If you are truly converted, the Spirit of God should bear fruit in you. The Spirit must express, through you, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Bible calls these virtues "the fruit of the Spirit." But do you realize that courage is at the root of each of them? It takes courage to love someone who hates you. It takes courage to express joy in times of sorrow, and to have peace of mind

amidst turmoil. It takes courage to be patient or to show kindness, goodness or faithfulness, and to practice self-control. If you feel that your spiritual growth has been slow, you are probably not showing as much courage as you should in your daily Christian life.

A true Christian is a soldier — a good soldier. But have you ever seen a good soldier who lacks courage? You



showed a certain amount of courage when you first answered God's calling, but that was only the starting point. You were called to change your habits, your ways of thinking and living. That takes courage. You were called to turn away from sin. That takes much courage.

No faith without courage

Christ came with a message of courage and faith. He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

When God called you to repentance He asked you, through His Word, to first sit down and count the cost, just like the builder of a tower, to see if you had "sufficient to finish it" (Luke 14:28). Notice — He didn't say if you had enough to *start* the job, but to *finish* it. All along the path, you were told, you would have to face trials and problems.

Both repenting of your sins and believing in the Gospel require courage. Any change in life — especially conversion — requires courage. That's why you need the power of God's Holy Spirit to live like a Christian.

If you are convinced, and you should be, that Christ is coming soon to change this world and to rule over all nations, then you must be enthu-



Illustration by Basil Robinson

siastic — filled with zeal — despite your difficulties!

Ironically, many of this world's people who call themselves Christians don't believe in Christ's return. No wonder they lack courage. But you should not follow their example. You should be like Christ, who with courage faced persecutions and condemnations, while being totally innocent of any sin.

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was also a man of courage. Facing death, he didn't hesitate to proclaim God's message and tell the people of their sins. He said, under God's inspiration: "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as

delivered, by angels and did not keep it" (Acts 7:51-53, Revised Standard Version).

Would you have this type of courage to face your persecutors, to look in their eyes and proclaim the truth even though it may cost your life? Stephen did. He died for the truth — for the Gospel — for Christ's message.

To believe in the Kingdom of God in a world that rejects God requires faith. But faith without courage is not faith. Just like Abraham, you must be fully convinced that God is able to do what He has promised, and you must act accordingly. Then your faith will be reckoned to you as righteousness (Rom. 4:21-22).

What do you do when you have a serious problem? Do you simply pray about it and wait for the answer? Prayer alone is not enough.

You must do your part. As the saying goes, after praying for a good harvest, you keep on hoeing. Trusting God is waiting actively, not passively. And that takes courage! Obedience to God sets you apart from the world; it protects you. It makes your life happier and more abundant. It makes you courageous and brings you closer to Him.

God loves courageous people! He has promised to never forsake you; you will never go hungry if you are truly of His flock. David wrote: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed" (Ps. 37:25-26).

Men of courage

The prophets of old were men of courage. When God told Joshua to begin the battle to enter the promised land, He commanded, "Be strong and of a good courage" (Josh. 1:6).

The apostles were also men of courage, particularly after they received God's Holy Spirit. It wasn't easy for them to preach the Gospel amid continuous threats and persecutions. They had to choose between obeying God and obeying man — between entering the large gate and the narrow one: They were told by the authorities, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring

this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28, RSV). The answer Peter and the other apostles gave was one of faith and courage: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (verse 29).

Do you realize that someday you may have to give the same answer to those who persecute you?

Hebrews 11 is generally known as the faith chapter. And talk about faith it does. All of the people mentioned therein lived by faith, but that required much courage. They didn't simply pray for God's help; they acted and fought as true Christians should.

How about King David? What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of him? His sins, perhaps? Or the psalms he wrote? The wives he had? Do you ever think of him as a man of courage?

Look at the attitude he had when the other Israelites were frightened in the presence of Goliath the giant. David said to King Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:32).

Where did David get his assurance? He was but a young man. He did not have Goliath's strength, or armature. But he had courage. He told the king, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard; and smote him, and slew him" (verses 34-35).

And David added, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and

Noah endured with courage the world's ridicule and saved mankind in the ark (center, left). Likewise, David did not fear Goliath (center, right), and defeated the giant with only a rock and his sling (below).



this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God" (verse 36).

Think of it! David, with no other weapon than a sling, was able to face the giant, who was heavily armed with a sword, a spear and a shield. Where did he get his strength? From God. He likewise got his courage from God.

He told the Philistine: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand" (verses 45-46).

There is a Goliath in everyone's life! Yours could be in the form of sickness or poverty or various other trials and sufferings. It doesn't really matter. The fighting is always of God, provided your courage and attitude are similar to David's. When your eyes and your mind are set on God — when you put your trust in Him — you can have all the courage you need, whatever your problems. He will do your fighting for you.

As in the days of Noah

Noah was a man of integrity, righteous before God. He lived in a world of corruption and sin, just as we do today. And he undoubtedly was a man of courage.

Do you think it was easy for him to stand up against the crowd and do what God told him to do? It took him many years to build the ark, while the people around mocked him. They didn't cease to ridicule him. They thought it was utterly foolish to expect a flood when there wasn't even a sign of one in sight.

It took courage for Noah to accomplish his job and to patiently wait for the fulfillment of God's promise.

Have you ever wondered why Christ compared Noah's time to ours, stating that the present world would have a similar fate?

He told His disciples: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giv-

ing in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away," (Matt. 24:36-39).

And Christ added, "So shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (verse 39).

We are living today in a world just as corrupted as Noah's was. People deny God, break His laws, defy His authority, eat what they ought not and contract marriages that are unlawful before Him.

God tested Noah's patience, just as He's testing ours today. How tragic that, during this testing period, some of God's people are losing courage and deserting the ship! You had better realize that now is the time God is testing your faith, patience and courage — as a member of God's Church you are being judged now (I Pet. 4:17).

In the days of Noah, he was the only righteous human being on earth. Likewise, today, the Church must be spotless, pure and righteous before God. Noah persevered to the end. He did not weaken. We, too, must persevere to the end and not weaken. Whatever the danger, whatever the persecution, we must serve God, being fully convinced that He will always deliver us.

However, just like the three Hebrews thrown in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:17-18), we must also prove that we will not serve other gods or worship "the golden image" — even if God chooses not to deliver us. That shows real courage!

Paul's courage

The apostle Paul's life was one of courage, faith and perseverance. It took tremendous courage for him to turn away from what he had previously believed was right. The change, in his case, was very difficult.

When God struck him on the road to Damascus, the first question Paul asked was, "What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

This eagerness to know and follow God's will led Paul to conversion. Paul was not afraid to change. He didn't worry what his friends would say about him if he turned from his former religion and began to worship the true God. Moreover, when God showed him the right way, Paul never

departed from it. He labored more than the other disciples, working harder and suffering more than any of them. His writings make up a large part of the New Testament.

Do you know what Paul's writings reflect most? Faith? Yes, undoubtedly. Love? That's for sure. Obedience? Of course. But above all things, *courage!*

Paul tells you to always rejoice, and be grateful whatever the circumstances (I Thess. 5:16, 18). That takes courage. Paul ran the race of life and won. So must you. But remember: It takes courage to win!

What was Paul's secret?

He reveals it throughout his epistles. The Bible never states that a true Christian will live without problems or difficulties. On the contrary, it warns us that we will be tested and proved. But just like the apostle Paul, we must withstand affliction in every way without being crushed (II Cor. 4:8, RSV).

Is this the case as far as you are concerned? Can you say, like Paul, that you are "perplexed, but not driven to despair"? Do you feel forsaken when facing persecution? Or can you say, like him, that you are "struck down, but not destroyed" (verse 9, RSV)?

If so, nothing can shake you. But it takes courage to have this attitude — and to be totally converted!

Paul further wrote: "We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (II Cor. 6:8-10, RSV).

If you are a true Christian, this is the way you must think and live. Nothing should separate you from God — no difficulty, no trouble, no persecution, not anything or anyone. God loves you and will always protect you. He will watch over you. He will lead you to victory, if you will only yield to Him and trust Him — courageously.

Therefore, "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love" (I Cor. 16:13-14, RSV).

What a tremendous warning and encouragement! □

How to Test Your Spiritual Character

What is the true test of your conversion? How does God measure your spiritual growth and maturity?

By Richard Rice

How does God evaluate the depth and quality of your character? Ultimately, how does God know that you love Him — that you are deeply loyal to Him and headed toward His Kingdom?

Jesus Christ summarized the answer when He said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

But just as nature produces both good and bad fruit, so humans can produce fruit that may or may not be acceptable to God. And God wants Christians to bear *good fruit!*

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16-20).

A biblical theme

The Bible has a great deal to say about bearing spiritual fruit.

Christ Himself used many examples from agriculture and nature to emphasize the need for Christian growth: "I am the *vine*, ye are the *branches*: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much *fruit*" (John 15:5).

God inspired David to write: "And he [the man who fears God] shall be like a *tree* planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his *fruit* in his season, his *leaf* also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3).

Paul tells us: "Now he [God] that ministereth *seed* to the *sower* both minister bread for your food, and multiply your *seed* sown, and increase the *fruits* of your righteousness" (II Cor. 9:10).

Christ also used the term *good works* to express the importance of spiritual growth. Notice Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Clearly, then, God desires that we do good works and bear holy, righteous fruit in order to glorify Him to the world.

The growth process

But how does this growth process work? How can we bear the kind of fruit God wants? To understand the spiritual parallel more clearly, let's consider for a moment the marvelous process of how fruit develops in nature.

First, a blossom is pollinated. After a few days, a tiny green bud of fruit appears. It is then supplied with nutrients, in the form of sap, from within the plant or tree. As the fruit continues to receive nourishment, it slowly grows, develops and matures. Finally, after many days, weeks or months of growth, it ripens and is ready for harvest.

In the Christian life, a similar thing happens. But remember that until we are truly converted, faithful members of God's Church, we cannot bear the kind of good fruit that really pleases Him (Rom. 8:9, Heb. 11:6). You can read more about how to become a profitable servant to God in Dibar Apartian's article in the October-November, 1980, *Good News*.

Once we are begotten of God and placed in His Church, the Holy Spirit begins to work in our minds to produce spiritual fruit. As the "fruit" develops and grows, it is nurtured through the inflowing of God's Spirit. "Abide in me, and I [Jesus] in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4).

As God's Spirit flows into our lives — like the sap of the tree — it motivates us to think and act like God. The Holy Spirit stimulates our growth. In reality, then, it is God who produces the fruit.

When we act on the Holy Spirit's promptings, our "spiritual buds" of fruit are energized — they start to change and grow. As we continue to act and respond to each new stimulus (showing love, gentleness, meekness and the other fruits of God's Spirit), we begin to form habits of obedience to God and His way of life.

The fruits of God's Spirit ripen and mature from use, practice and experience. Given time they become ingrained habits of righteous character. The development of perfect, holy, righteous character was what Christ wanted when He commanded, "Be [become] ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

God created a variety of fruit for us to enjoy in the natural world — apples, oranges, peaches, pears, figs, grapes. Since the physical world is a type of the spiritual (Rom. 1:20), it follows that God intends for us to produce a variety of spiritual fruit.

Galatians 5:22-23 lists nine specific fruits of God's Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. When we're tuned in to God's wavelength and act on the influence of His Spirit, these fruits — habits, reactions or patterns of conduct — will characterize our lives. They will be part of our every thought, deed and action, causing us to become more like God.

Your fruit is to remain

In speaking to His disciples about the necessity of bearing fruit, Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). A similar exhortation is found in Revelation 3:11, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

An important lesson can be drawn from these two verses. If our bearing fruit is to continue, we must keep up the effort! The fruits or qualities of character God is building into our lives must be maintained.

The Bible commands, "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). Like some trees that bear fruit continually — among them lemon, orange and grapefruit — the fruit produced by God's Spirit should be never ending. Even though hundreds may "eat of your fruit," the supply should never run out. In other words, you are to produce a perpetual harvest of rich spiritual fruit.

Sometimes we get discouraged because we do not grow as quickly as we think we should. We become frustrated because we do not see tangible fruit being borne.

One reason might be that we start to respond in a given direction but stop too soon — short of completion. We may become bored with routine or even weary with well doing!

Remember, it takes time for fruit to grow. An apple tree doesn't bear fruit overnight. It may take years of cultivation, pruning and nurturing before the results begin to show. And, even then, the first year of harvest may not be the best. It may take several years before the best fruit yields are seen.

The same is true in a Christian's life. The fruit we produce in the first few weeks or months after conversion may not be as much — or of the same

quality — as we will bring forth later. This does not mean we can ever let down — but that we should be constantly redoubling our efforts!

Remember that in the parable of the sower some of the seed sown produced thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold (Matt. 13:23). It all depends on how diligent we are — how much we strive to become god-like, how much we respond to the inner working of God's Spirit.

Like a tree, each of us goes through various stages of growth. The amount of fruit we bear depends on our rate of progress. God is the "husbandman" who is working with each of us, watering, nurturing, dunging, cultivating, to bring forth the fruit He wishes us to have.

Don't give up or be discouraged. Give God time to work His purpose in your life. As a tree grows, it adds more fruit. In like manner, the more we zealously practice the way of God and do good works, the more fruits of righteousness God will be able to produce.

A lifelong process

Before it is fully ripe, a peach is tart, green and inedible. In order for it to become ripe and ready for use, it must go through a lengthy process of development.

The Christian's goal is to become perfect. The word *perfect*, according to the original Greek used in Matthew 5:48, means to become mature, whole, complete or entire — fully developed. In some places, such as Luke 8:14, the Greek word translated *perfect* even means "ripe."

Becoming perfect — becoming mature, whole and complete — is a lifelong process. It may take years from the moment we are begotten until we are fully mature and ready for the Kingdom. However, in order to attain this high calling, we must become more mature — ripen, so to speak — a little each day.

This means our fruits of righteousness are not just one-time acts. The fruits of God's Spirit are to be expressed again and again in our daily lives until we actually take on God's likeness.

Thus, as we continue to allow God's Spirit to motivate our behavior, we will take on, little by little, "the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:19).

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). True righteousness is not attained quickly, but involves intense effort over a long period of time.

Some in God's Church show only the appearance of a healthy tree, but they have never borne fruit. Others produce blossoms and buds, but through neglect allow the flow of the Holy Spirit to stop, and the fruit withers and drops off. Still others let the cares of this world or persecution drain their spiritual strength so that they become barren and fruitless.

Jesus Christ warned about these conditions. In one instance, He cursed an unproductive fig tree (Mark 11:12-14, 20).

He also cautioned: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:1-2, 6).

It behooves us to examine our lives daily to be sure that we're connected to the vine — tied to Jesus Christ and God the Father in a vital relationship of love, so that we will have the continual strength to produce the rich, abundant crop God desires.

The true test

What, then, is the true test of a Christian's character and his right standing with God?

Jesus said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). The final test of a person's character is his fruits — how he lives, what he says, what he does. It involves the totality of his being.

What kind of fruit tree do you represent? If you're newly baptized, you may be only in the blossoming or budding stage — your fruit-bearing process has just begun.

But if you are an older Christian and have been in God's Church for many years, your branches should be laden with many beautiful varieties of spiritual fruit.

Are you a barren or productive Christian? This is the true test! □

MINISTRY

The Power of Believing Prayer

Prepared by Richard H. Sedljack

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Cor. 4:16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

Instructions: The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. Look up and read in your Bible the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions elaborate on the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

Prayer to God is stressed in the Bible, but neglected by many people today because most fail to realize the power of *believing* prayer.

You have read that believing prayer can move mountains, heal incurable diseases and raise the dead. Prayer was effective for Jesus and the apostles, as well as the prophets before them, but many Christians will admit their prayers aren't doing much today — if anything!

Why?

Because prayer to most people is a ritual of words — a form, a ceremony, a liturgy of sanctimonious phraseology — an utterly meaningless obligation.

God simply doesn't hear such empty prayers!

What, exactly, is prayer? And why should we pray in the first place?

Prayer is personal, intimate, understanding *communication* with God Almighty. Daily fervent prayer is intended to help Spirit-begotten Christians achieve God's glorious purpose for their lives.

Meaningful and effective prayer is absolutely essential to being born into God's Family. And only through believing prayer is God's instant help available to enable you to overcome the temptations of Satan, the world and your nature, which lead to sin!

Notice now a few inspiring examples of the

power of believing prayer by men who set themselves to obey the almighty, eternal God.

After God led His people Israel out of slavery in Egypt, they rebelled in the wilderness. When Moses climbed Mount Sinai to meet with the Creator God, the Israelites plunged into idolatry and sexual lewdness.

1. What did God declare to Moses? Ex. 32:7-8. Did God actually plan to destroy the nation of Israel? Verses 9-10.

God's wrath was stirred. The God who later came in the flesh as Jesus Christ was ready to annihilate the children of Israel because of their wickedness and sensual debauchery. A whole nation was about to be destroyed!

2. Did Moses immediately intercede on behalf of Israel? Verses 11-13.

Without hesitation Moses earnestly prayed that God would spare the nation. In utter humility and deep concern, he fervently besought God to spare His people whom He had redeemed from Egyptian bondage. Moses reminded God of his glorious promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and pleaded with Him to turn from His wrath.

3. Did God hear Moses' fervent prayer? Did God actually change ("repented") His mind and spare the nation of Israel because of one man's prayer? Verse 14.

Moses' prayer changed the entire course of history! It changed the future of an entire nation.

4. Another outstanding example in the Old Testament is that of Elijah, a prophet of God. Was Elijah weak — did he suffer the downward pull of the flesh as any other man? Jas. 5:17. And yet, what did he earnestly pray might happen? Jas. 5:17-18. Turn to I Kings 18:17-39 and read of another spectacular answer to one of Elijah's prayers.

The reason God heard Elijah's prayers is, because he served God wholeheartedly. He walked with God, talked with God, obeyed God. Not only did Elijah have faith *in* God, he had the faith *of* God! Elijah knew God was there. He knew God answered prayers. So he put his whole being into his prayers.

PRAYER

MINISTRY

And God answered!

All too many hang back in doubt today. Most are hesitant and apologetic in their prayers. They are not sure of God's will so they pray only halfheartedly. God inspired these and many other examples of answered prayer to be recorded in the Bible for us today (I Cor. 10:11) so that we might become "mighty in prayer."

5. Are we to approach God's glorious throne with boldness? Heb. 4:16. And with a sense of fervency and urgency? Jas. 5:16.

6. Did Christ have absolute confidence that the Father always heard His prayers? John 11:41-44.

When Moses prayed for Israel, he prayed boldly and courageously. When Elijah prayed, he prayed boldly — with faith and confidence. And Jesus could pray in absolute faith because He kept in close contact with and drew upon the Supreme Power of the universe!

The servants of God definitely did not hang back apologetically in fear or gnawing doubt or indifference. They all knew God's will, and they prayed accordingly — *boldly*.

7. What is our confidence when we pray to God according to His will? I John 5:14-15.

For you to pray boldly — with real faith and confidence — you must first know God's will. His will is revealed in the Bible. You must come to know how God thinks, how He acts and how He views things. You must know His character and His holiness, the purpose He is working out here below and the promises He has made in His Word. Then, and only then, can you pray to God boldly and confidently.

8. Will God sometimes perform even above and beyond what we ask of Him? Eph. 3:20.

Learn to expect answers to your prayers. God reveals Himself as a living, dynamic God who will intervene on your behalf — if you will beseech Him in believing prayer.

In Matthew 6:5-15 Jesus enumerated the principles of effective prayer. He showed that through prayer God's children — truly converted and Spirit-led Christians — can have an ever-deepening relationship with their Father in heaven. By prayer we praise and venerate His name, office and beneficence. By prayer we ask for our daily physical needs and for the spiritual help, inspiration and guidance necessary to grow spiritually. By prayer we confess our transgressions and are forgiven daily. And by prayer each and every one of us can have an intimate part in God's Work on earth.

9. Did the apostle Paul especially ask Chris-

tians to pray for God's ministers? I Thess. 5:25, Heb. 13:18-19. Was he very grateful for their prayers on his behalf and for his fellow ministers? II Cor. 1:8-11.

Offer up your personal, heartfelt prayers on behalf of God's Work and for God's ministers so they may speak and write the truth of God plainly and boldly, and be granted protection to carry on His Work. Your daily, fervent prayers for help, deliverance and inspiration for those conducting the Work of God's Church today can accomplish miracles.

10. Do Christians today need to pray that God will continue to open "doors" for His Work so the Gospel may be preached more effectively around the world? Col. 4:2-4.

Prayer opens doors of radio, television and the printed page so that Christ's Gospel of the coming Kingdom of God can be proclaimed as a "witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14).

11. Should we also pray that God will send more laborers to help in the great Work of His Church? John 4:35, Matt. 9:37-38.

Pray that Christ's Gospel will pierce the hearts and minds of more listeners and readers. Pray that God will lay it on the hearts of many more to become co-workers in helping to support His growing Work with their tithes and offerings. And pray for more consecrated laborers — with the skills and talents God foresees will be needed — to be led directly into the Work of God.

12. Are you one who for some reason is separated from other true Christians, but wants to have a greater part in helping them and God's Work? What is the marvelous example set for you in Colossians 4:12-13?

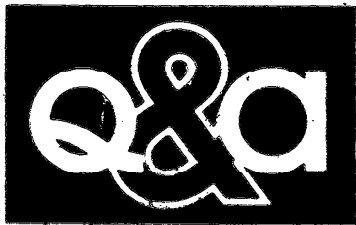
Epaphras was one of the apostle Paul's helpers. His part in God's Work that Paul referred to especially was prayer. You can have a significant role in the Work of God as well. We all have ready access to God's throne room in heaven through earnest, *believing* prayer.

So pray to God every day.

Pray fervently for the Work, other Christians and yourself — and expect God to answer!

Establish a habit of daily prayer. Maintain personal contact with God to receive the power to spiritually overcome and ultimately obtain His gift of eternal life.

When you do, your prayers will accomplish much good for others and a miraculous change in your life through the power of God's Spirit. And you will be achieving the very purpose for which you were born. □



Some who have left the Church claim Christ did away with God's law. One scripture they cite is Luke 16:16: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached." Would you explain the meaning of this verse?

Jesus Himself explains in the very next verse: "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (verse 17). Have the starry heavens or the planet earth passed away? Jesus said it would be easier for them to perish or be destroyed than for God's law to pass away or perish!

On another occasion Christ told a young man seeking the way to eternal life, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). How clear that God's holy law is still in existence.

But what, then, did Jesus mean by the statement, "The law and the prophets were until John"? When Jesus spoke of the "law and the prophets," He was referring to the Old Testament. The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, are known as the law; the books of Joshua through Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 minor prophets comprise the "prophets." The third major section of the Old Testament was known as the "writings" or "psalms." Notice Luke 24:27-45.

Jesus, therefore, meant that the Old Testament scriptures alone were preached until the coming of John the Baptist. That was all they had. The New Testament had not yet been written!

When John came on the scene in Palestine, he was the forerunner of Jesus Christ, preparing the way before Him, the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Mark 1:3-8). John thundered to the Pharisees, the Sadducees and all the people of his day, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).

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John began to proclaim the Gospel, preparing the way for Christ Himself. But what Gospel — good news — did Christ preach? "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

Christ preached the same Gospel as John! This is why He said that from the time of John the Baptist, the Gospel or good news of God's coming Kingdom was proclaimed.

What did Paul mean in Romans 7:4, when he said, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead; that we should bring forth fruit unto God"?

Notice carefully what Paul said. He did not say, "The law is dead." He clearly said, "Ye . . . are become dead." The law of God did not perish. But the people became dead to the law by the body of Christ.

Verse 5 helps explain it. "For when we were in the flesh" — that is, before we were converted, and while we were living according to the pulls of the flesh — "the motions of sins, which were [manifest, revealed for what they were] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Thus, when we were yet sinners, we were worthy of death in God's sight, having transgressed His holy law.

"But now," Paul explains in verse 6, "we are delivered from the law" — that is, from the inexorable death penalty of the law. Christ paid it for us — in our stead. The law of God no longer claims our lives, "that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

While sinners, we were worthy of execution. But, now, Paul says, we are dead to the law — that is, the penalty of death has been paid by another, Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us. So far as the law is concerned, the penalty is paid — we are dead, in Christ — and there is no

further date with death for us, if we continue to live in Christ.

This verse in its way says the law is done away. It merely shows that Christ paid the penalty of the law for us. He died for us. We are dead with him (Rom. 6:3-4). No longer does condemnation await us (Rom. 8:1), because we are also made spiritually alive with Him through His resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5, 11).

No longer, then, are we in a sense married to sin, the way of the flesh, but we are to be "married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead [in newness of life], that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4). □

Would you explain what Paul meant by "the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4)?

Those who attempt to do away with God's law often turn to this verse. In the previous verse Paul explains how the Pharisees were going about trying to establish their own righteousness, apart from God's righteousness. They ignored the sacrifice of Christ and thought that mere commandment keeping would be enough for anyone.

But, as Paul points out in verse 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." What does "the end of the law" mean? It means the aim, the purpose, the fulness or outcome of the law. Christ in us gives us the power to keep God's holy, perfect law, since we lack the spiritual strength, ourselves, (Rom. 8:4).

Apart from Christ, no one can manage to keep God's law in the spirit. By his very nature, man falls far short. But through Christ, we can (Phil. 4:13). The aim or end of the law is to make us like Christ.

This word *end*, used in Romans 10:4, is also found in James 5:11: "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

Now, did James mean that Christ's end had come? Of course not. Rather, James explains it himself. They had seen the purpose or aim of the Lord — "that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." □

Are You a Peacemaker?

By John R. Schroeder



Do you always get along perfectly with everyone? Of course not. No one does.

Strife, unfortunately, is common to all human beings. Jesus said that offenses are bound to occur (Matt. 18:7). He even gave a formula for reconciling Christians who become divided over some unfortunate occurrence (verses 15-20).

Yes, problems between brethren are bound to occur, even in our churches around the world. Converted human beings do fall out with each other from time to time.

When these unfortunate situations occur, do you try to make peace or are you part of the problem? Do you bring offended parties back together or do you fuel the fires of strife?

It is all too easy for us to be part of the rifts instead of being peacemakers and conciliators.

A practiced peacemaker

Let's take a look at the example of one man who practiced peacemaking — who let the Holy Spirit work in him to help bring peace to others: Barnabas.

The first reference to this man is found in the book of Acts: "Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son

of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:36-37, Revised Standard Version throughout, except where noted). Barnabas first came to the apostles' attention because of his liberal support for the Church members at Jerusalem. His example was so outstanding that he is the only person mentioned by name as a positive example of giving. Barnabas' act stands in stark contrast to the poor, example of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

Barnabas surfaces again in Acts 9. Here he encounters Paul for the first time and finds him in a difficult situation.

Paul was relatively new to the Christian faith. Luke picks up the narrative for us: "And when he [Paul] had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple" (verse 26).

Picture the situation. Paul had a

reputation for dragging Christians into prison. The disciples looked upon him as the chief enemy of the Gospel — an archpersecutor of the faith. How could they know he wasn't a wolf in sheep's clothing? Needless to say the Jerusalem brethren did not welcome Paul with open arms.

But Barnabas came to the rescue! The man from Cyprus was willing to step into the gap — to stand up for Paul. "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus" (verse 27). Barnabas recognized Paul's conversion and was willing to support him.

Who knows the difficulties Paul might have had if it hadn't been for Barnabas? This was Paul's first attempt to fellowship with the Church, as far as we know. Only the role of a true peacemaker made a meeting of minds possible. Paul was accepted by the Jerusalem brethren.

Notice the important result: "So he [Paul] went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord" (verses 28-29). By

interceding where suspicion reigned, Barnabas paved the way for Paul to preach the Gospel with exceptional boldness and power. But the story of Barnabas does not end here.

Christian unity at Antioch

Soon we find the Gospel being preached to the gentiles in Antioch of Syria for the first time. That piece of good news reached the church at Jerusalem. The apostles decided to send Barnabas to Antioch to see what was happening. Notice what occurred when he arrived:

"When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord" (Acts 11:23-24).

Barnabas voiced approval of what he saw taking place in Antioch and began to build on the foundation already laid. Racial prejudice (he was a Levite) did not diminish the warm welcome Barnabas extended to gentile Christianity in Antioch. The happy result was that more answered the calling God had given. Barnabas linked Antioch with the mother church in Jerusalem. Once again we find him in the role of a bridgebuilder.

And why was Barnabas able to bring about such positive fruits? Because "he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith." Here was a man who kept himself close to God!

But Barnabas was not fully satisfied with his own efforts at Antioch. Gifts that he himself lacked were needed in the church there. So what did he do? The next verse tells us that "Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch" (verses 25-26). Barnabas brought Paul into the picture when it was obvious a man of his talents was needed. The results were that "For a whole year they [Paul and Barnabas] met with the church, and taught a large company of people" (verse 26). Barnabas' unselfish acts always produced good results; they furthered the teaching of the Gospel message.

The rift

However, Barnabas was a human being. He was not perfect while yet in

the flesh, just as none of us are. A few years later, when Barnabas was ready to join Paul on their second evangelistic tour, not long after the Jerusalem conference, an unfortunate incident took place.

"And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.' And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought it best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work" (Acts 15:36-38). Mark had abandoned an

God wants people of courage in the Church — people who will make peace and reconcile brethren who have misunderstandings, not become a part of the problem. Are you willing to follow the example of Barnabas?

earlier tour for some unstated reason.

"And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (verses 39-41).

The narrative is rather bare here. Not much background is included. We do know, however, that John Mark was a relative of Barnabas' (Col. 4:10). Perhaps this blood relationship influenced Barnabas to insist on giving him another chance, while Paul persisted that to do so would be foolhardy. After all, Mark had abandoned them both during a previous tour. Whatever the details of the dispute, Paul and Barnabas apparently were unable to reconcile their differences.

It is clear that Paul had the blessing of the brethren upon his departure (Acts 15:40).

At any rate, according to the New Testament evidence, this disagreement, though serious, was not permanent. Five years after the parting at Antioch, Paul writes: "Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?" (1 Cor. 9:6). Here Paul is able to refer to Barnabas as a working apostle like himself, and he does so in a sympathetic manner. So it is doubtful that any hard feelings continued far beyond the incident at Antioch.

All was forgiven and forgotten and a spirit of peace restored. Remember Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (King James Version).

Paul spoke well of John Mark in later years (Col. 4:10-11, Philemon 24, II Tim. 4:11). Paul was in Rome just before the final curtain closed on his life. One of his last requests was to ask Timothy to bring John Mark with him to do the Work. He refers to Mark as a profitable servant of the Gospel, an opinion he did not hold at the time of the Antioch incident. Mark obviously proved himself over a period of time.

Follow the example.

In retrospect, Barnabas' decision to stick with Mark turned out for the good in the long run. Would Mark have ever written his gospel if Barnabas had not intervened on his behalf? We do not know. Luke did not record all the details behind this incident.

God wants people of courage in the Church — people who will make peace and reconcile brethren who have misunderstandings, not become a part of the problem.

Are you willing to follow the example of Barnabas? □



STORIES FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT



Chapter 1

An Incredible Plan

The circumstances leading to the human birth of Jesus Christ make an incredible story, showing the divine power of God. With this issue The Good News begins a new series of articles.

By Shirley King Johnson

With this issue, we begin a new series of articles, for children, on the people and events described in the New Testament.

"Stories from the New Testament" is written by Shirley King Johnson, a deaconess, in the Lincoln, Neb., congregation. Mrs. Johnson authored the "Story for Young Readers" series

that appeared in *The Worldwide News*.

The illustrator for this series is Monte Wolverton, a commercial artist and a member of the Portland, Ore., North church. Mr. Wolverton, an Ambassador College graduate, is the son of the late Basil Wolverton, who authored and illustrated *The Bible Story*.

Something tremendous was happening. Something so big, so important, that angels by the thousands gathered to announce it. They alerted shepherds on a Judean hillside. "A Baby has been born in Bethlehem!" they sang joyfully. "Go see him!"

All the angels in heaven had awaited this hour. The Second Person in the God Family had come to earth to be born as a human.

Many people know about the shepherds who found the baby Jesus lying in a manger, and the wise men of the East who came bearing gifts. But let us go back and see some of the preparation and planning that went into this marvelous event.

Mary is Chosen

The archangel, Gabriel, appeared to a Jewish girl in Nazareth as she sorted parched grain in the courtyard of her family dwelling.

"Hello, Mary," greeted the archangel.

"Oh!" She was startled to see someone appear so suddenly beside the bench upon which she sat.

"Don't be afraid," Gabriel continued. "God is very pleased with you. He is going to use you to be the mother of a very special Child. You'll give birth to a Son who'll be given the throne of his father David. He'll reign over the house of Israel forever."

Mary responded submissively. "Yes, sir. It shall be as you say." But there were questions in her mind about this angelic individual who had come to talk to her. And her thoughts turned to the man she had promised to marry. How would Joseph receive the news that he would not be the father of her first child (Luke 1:28-38)?

Mary decided to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, in Judea. When she arrived at the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth, she was surprised to find that Elizabeth was six-months pregnant. A much older woman than Mary, Elizabeth was beyond normal childbearing years.

When Zacharias came into the house later, Mary greeted him with congratulations. He smiled and nodded, but made no reply.

Elizabeth explained to Mary that her hus-

band had been stricken dumb while he was carrying out his priestly duties in the Temple at Jerusalem (Luke 1:9-17). More than six months ago Gabriel had made himself visible to Zacharias and told him that he would have a son who would have God's Holy Spirit with him from birth. This son's task would be that of preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah.

Because Zacharias would not believe the archangel's words, he was stricken dumb until after the birth of his son.

Mary began to realize that she had come to the right home for encouragement and counsel.

She described to them how Gabriel had appeared to her and had made the announcement that she would become the mother of a Child who would reign over Israel. As they listened with wonder, Zacharias and Elizabeth began to put together the two incidents.

The cousins talked for long hours, trying to perceive what the future held for them, realizing that they would have an important part to play in the developments. For three months Mary stayed in Judea and poured out her heart's deepest feelings to her cousin. When she returned to Galilee, she was ready to fulfill the role laid out for her by the Eternal.

Joseph makes a decision

Returning to Nazareth, Mary told Joseph about Gabriel's appearance. She repeated the conversation they had had, adding that already she was bearing this Child of God.

Alarmed and bewildered, Joseph went to his carpentry work with a heavy heart. He wrestled with the new problem hour after hour. Then he reached a decision. He would not wed Mary.

But again there was angelic intervention. One night as Joseph slept, he dreamed that an angel spoke to him. "Don't be afraid to have Mary be your wife," the angel said. "She'll give birth to God's Son. You must name Him Jesus. He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:19-21).

The dream so relieved Joseph's mind that in the morning he arose, dressed and went at once to arrange for his marriage to Mary.

For three months Mary stayed in Judea and poured out her heart's deepest feelings to her cousin. When she returned to Galilee, she was ready to fulfill the role laid out for her by the Eternal.

PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

the Kingdom." What do we mean? We mean making it into God's own FAMILY! We shall be a FAMILY — the GOD FAMILY!

Now to train us to be a part of that divine FAMILY, God made us male and female. God ordained the marriage union and the human FAMILY. God intended us to LEARN HIS KIND OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIP in our own FAMILY LIFE here in this present life! Now keep that in mind. I'm coming back to it. But keep also in mind something else.

Since Adam failed to resist Satan and to restore the GOVERNMENT OF GOD, none of Adam's children could overcome Satan and qualify to replace Satan on that throne over all the earth and to RESTORE the government of God. So finally God sent His OWN Son, His only-begotten Son, to become human as well as divine. Jesus was GOD in human flesh — God as well as MAN. He was the ONLY human ever able to obey God's great spiritual LAW perfectly, resist and conquer Satan and QUALIFY to RESTORE the GOVERNMENT OF GOD on earth!

More than that, He was able to set us an example of living THE WAY of God's spiritual LAW, to die for us, paying for us the penalty of our sins, and to be resurrected by the FATHER, thus making our resurrection and immortal life possible — so that we may become God's CHILDREN in GOD'S FAMILY, and born GOD BEINGS. We together with God and with Christ shall form THE KINGDOM OF GOD, RULING ALL THE EARTH WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD. Satan then shall be banished.

Now Adam cut himself and his family OFF from God and from receiving God's Holy Spirit. God made Adam's decision BINDING on Adam's FAMILY who form the whole world — UNTIL the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is RESTORED and Satan is banished, so Satan cannot lead humanity any longer AWAY FROM GOD! And that means UNTIL the Second Coming of CHRIST and restoration of GOD'S GOVERNMENT by the Kingdom of God.

Meanwhile God made an exception in cutting Adam's FAMILY off

from God. God called Abraham out of Satan's world, and 430 years later Abraham's children to become God's NATION. To them He gave the Old Covenant — a marriage covenant that made them the wife of Yahweh who was to be born as Jesus later. God gave them His spiritual law but they, like the first Adam, refused to obey it. Only the prophets of Israel obeyed, and only they shall be in GOD'S KINGDOM WITH GOD'S CHURCH!

Then when Jesus came and QUALIFIED to depose Satan and RESTORE the GOVERNMENT OF GOD and for Himself to sit on that THRONE with power to rule the whole earth, God the Father called certain ones He chose. He called them to come OUT OF THIS WORLD — out of SATAN'S world — to receive His Holy Spirit. This begat them as His CHILDREN, in His BEGOTTEN FAMILY.

He called us out of the world, to be SEPARATE FROM the world. To live a FAMILY LIFE to prepare us for the FAMILY LIFE that shall be HIS KINGDOM!

NOW UNDERSTAND THIS! I'm afraid many of you have NOT understood it!

The KINGDOM is the divine FAMILY of God. If we cannot live as a FAMILY should live, according to GOD'S SPIRITUAL LAW, now, while in God's Church, we SIMPLY WON'T MAKE IT INTO GOD'S KINGDOM (which is His divine FAMILY!).

NOW PLEASE! PLEASE, dear brethren, HEED THIS! Many of you are NOT living the kind of FAMILY LIFE that is preparing you for God's Kingdom. And if you DON'T repent, and reorder your whole FAMILY life, YOU SIMPLY WON'T MAKE IT INTO THE KINGDOM! I MEAN THAT! It is LIFE AND DEATH for ALL ETERNITY!

We found at the summer SEP camp at Orr, Minn., that in many cases the children DO NOT EAT WITH THEIR PARENTS AT HOME!

It is reported to me that many of you are LAX in child training and in teaching your little children! YOU ARE NEGLECTING YOUR FAMILY LIFE. And you may be NEGLECTING SO GREAT SALVATION.

Listen to what GOD SAYS! "How shall we [we in the Church] escape, if we NEGLECT so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

This entire year or 1981 we plan to

Not Judged?

(Continued from page 4)

wish they might read this and realize the VAST DIFFERENCE between our vaunted "democracy" and GOD'S government, whose basic constitution is the way of LOVE to ALL — "GIVE" instead of selfish "GET." Then they should read my booklet, *Just What Do You Mean Born Again?*

You see, human people must be REALLY "born again" — born very GOD Persons — with the HOLY, RIGHTEOUS, PERFECT SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF GOD actually inherent within them — that is, GOD Beings who CANNOT sin or go contrary to God's way of "GIVE" (1 John 3:9).

Physical and spiritual phases of man!

As mortal Adam failed to reject Satan's "GET" way of life — REJECTED God as Revealer of knowledge of good and evil — took to himself the reasoning out of the knowledge of what constitutes good and what is evil or sin — REJECTED God as Ruler — rejected the government of God — rejected God's WAY OF LIFE — sinned by transgressing GOD'S LAW — as Adam did all that, so Christ rejected Satan and his way of "GET" — conquered Satan, KEPT GOD'S LAW, OBEYED GOD and QUALIFIED to RESTORE the government of God.

So of the two phases of God's MASTER PLAN, the physical and spiritual: 1) The physical stage of God's PURPOSE for man began with Adam, and 2) The spiritual creation of man began with the second Adam, Jesus Christ!

God made MAN'S decision — made by the first man, Adam, for all

put extra emphasis on HOME and FAMILY life — on parents getting closer to their children and children to their parents. Many articles all this year will HELP YOU. TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY, for many of you are NEGLECTING your very salvation!

God says to YOU: "For the time is COME that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if . . . the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17-18). □

his family, which constitutes the world — BINDING-upon Adam's family UNTIL the government of God is RESTORED to earth. Christ the second Adam qualified to do that. But Jesus ascended to God's throne in heaven, there to receive the Kingdom over the whole earth from God the Father.

God made one exception in BINDING Adam's decision upon mankind. God reserved to Himself the prerogative of calling certain individuals to come out of Satan's world — OUT OF Adam's family and be begotten into GOD'S FAMILY. And WHY? To prepare a people who would choose GOD'S WAY and God's government — who would reject Satan and his way of "GET" — who develop in this mortal life the holy, righteous, perfect spiritual CHARACTER of GOD — who shall have REJECTED Satan's way of life. Who, in other words, have REPENTED of SIN, and have chosen to receive God's own righteousness and character. And who, in a word, have overcome Satan and QUALIFIED to reign with and under Christ when He RESTORES the government of God to earth!

Actually, put another way, God is calling those of HIS CHURCH out of this world to be trained in a real Christian life to HELP SAVE ALL THIS WORLD WHEN THE TIME OF THEIR JUDGMENT FINALLY COMES! True Christians are called now to resist and overcome Satan, in order to help save the whole world when God's time comes to judge and save the world!

Jesus affirmed God's decision

The fact that God did make binding Adam's rejection of God — that Adam cut himself and his family (the world as a whole) OFF from God is made plain in Genesis 3:22-24: "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Eternal God sent him forth from the garden of Eden... So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Jesus affirmed man's being cut off — all except the FEW individuals God specially calls when He said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Unless specially

called and drawn by God the Father, no man can come to Christ. All have been CUT OFF from God! WHY? Really two reasons — Adam's decision, and every man's own SINS have cut him off. And none can be reconciled to God the Father except through Christ. Yet none can come to Christ except those called and drawn by the Father! And that narrows it down to the FEW individuals out of earth's billions of today — the comparative FEW who compose God's CHURCH!

Now recount: Satan is still on that THRONE — and Satan is of such great invisible evil spiritual POWER that he has deceived the whole world, which is cut off from God. Satan has made it his world. He is the god of this world. The world is living his way of "GET." And mankind (except the Church) is CUT OFF from God! UNTIL, that is, Satan is banished from earth's throne and CHRIST is ruling on it!

Jesus Christ QUALIFIED to replace Satan on earth's throne, and to RESTORE the government of God (and way of life of "GIVE") to the earth!

But now observe the CHURCH. They are the ones God has called out of this world — out of its way of "GET" — to repent of that way, to believe God and His Word and to receive the GIFT of God's Holy Spirit. Remember at this point, man was created with a spirit in him. I call it a "human" spirit. It empowers him with physical and material intellect, but NOT with comprehension of SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE! Man was made to NEED a second Spirit — the Holy Spirit from GOD — to open his mind to spiritual knowledge and beget him with GOD-life as a son of God to become, by resurrection, an actual GOD Person.

But the CHURCH is composed of those who have turned from sin (the way of "GET") and turned to the law and way of life of GOD. They have received the Holy Spirit, opening their minds to GOD'S WAY — His spiritual LAW.

As Jesus QUALIFIED to replace Satan on the throne ruling the whole earth, so each member of the Church must QUALIFY to sit with Christ on that throne RULING with the RESTORED government of God. When resurrected as very GOD Beings, Children of GOD, they with God and

with Christ shall constitute the KINGDOM (or Family) of GOD!

But the begotten true Christian in the Church must, in this human Christian life, overcome Satan and this world, and develop the holy, righteous, perfect spiritual CHARACTER of God Himself — of a GOD BEING! That is the process of the MASTER PLAN of God working out His PURPOSE!

Meanwhile, unknowingly and invisibly led by Satan, man has formed his own religions — Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Moslemism. Satan led rabbis after the days of Ezra and Nehemiah to pervert Mosaic law (minus God's spiritual law) into the religion of Judaism. And the Babylonian Mystery religion turned into a counterfeit "Christianity," taking the name or title "Christ" as the name of their religion. Nevertheless, it is the Babylonian Mystery religion [grown great, and was ruling over the nations of Europe (Rev. 17:5)] and her "harlot" daughter churches. With this "Christianity" Satan has deceived much of the world. Through it, Satan has done away with Christ's Gospel — the Kingdom of God, turning the "Kingdom" into the church. He has caused this counterfeit to DO AWAY WITH God's basic spiritual LAW — the very foundation of the government of GOD, which Satan rebelled against! They hold doctrines the very antithesis of those of God's Word, the Holy Bible!

Now meanwhile, for this first 6,000 years, mankind has been CUT OFF from God, deceived by the god of this world, Satan.

Meanwhile, mankind, except the very, very few God has specially called, has been CUT OFF from God. Mankind has not been judged — YET! Except those very few specially called in God's Church, that is!

But WHAT ABOUT all the rest? What about the billions and billions of people uncalled — as yet?

THEY SHALL BE!

You've heard about "the JUDGMENT DAYS coming." People have talked about it — but not understood it.

That will be explained in PART 2 of this article, to be published next month. □

(To be continued)

What's the driving force behind your marriage?

What is it that makes people marry . . . or stay married? For some, like the characters illustrated here, it might be the determination of one partner that gets and keeps it together. Others might marry for love or physical attraction, but find they stay married for more mundane reasons—security (financial or emotional), social pressure, moral obligations or "for the children." Increasingly, though, as attitudes change, many are discarding marriage for less permanent arrangements. And in all the furor, it's unlikely that many people have taken the time to discover the real heart of the issue. An important booklet that's yours for the asking can help guide you through the confusion to an understanding of the meaning and purpose of marriage. It's entitled,

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