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Tomorrow's World

..For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.



ARMAGEDDON?

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The Way of Life

Millions of people say they are searching for correct “standards” or “values.” Some are trying out various “new age” religions, or different ideas and theories from pop-psychology. The pollsters tell us that many others are simply “picking and choosing”—putting together various ideas and practices from different religions to create their *own* religion.

Most of these folks want to get “involved” in something. They indicate that the mainstream churches they left did not satisfy that need. They indicate that empty faith and empty rituals were not enough to fulfill their spiritual craving.

Fair enough.

But what they might *not* realize is that the *real* religion of Jesus Christ is a very active religion. It *does* have specific standards and values. It is an entire “way of life.” In fact, in Acts 9:2, the persecuting Saul asked for letters authorizing him to seize any Christians in Damascus “so that if he found any who were of the WAY, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” And the inspired author of the book of Acts tells us about Apollos: “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4). Again, “when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the WAY of God more accurately” (v. 26).

In Acts 19:9, we are told: “But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the WAY before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.” And later, “And about that time there arose a great commotion about the WAY” (v. 23).

When viewing Apostolic Christianity, even outsiders realized that these early followers of Christ had *far more* than an empty faith with redundant rituals. They were “on fire” for a WAY of life! And the

reality of the coming Kingdom of God lent passion and fervor to their lives.

What the modern “seekers” also fail to realize is that a WAY of life helped make America and Canada the great nations they became. And in America’s early years as a nation, the Judeo-Christian ethic—though practiced imperfectly—was a tremendous bulwark against the kind of moral deterioration it has experienced in recent years. In his inspiring and most enlightening book, *America’s Real War* (p. 96), Rabbi Daniel Lapin makes this point:

For almost two hundred years, America functioned, grew, and prospered under this tacit agreement. America was a religious country without demanding allegiance to a specific church. Congress opened with a prayer (and still does), and the Ten Commandments were posted on courtroom and schoolroom walls. God was frequently invoked in presidential speeches and community events; the assumption was that Americans were “one nation under God.” Not only did religion in general have a respected place in our nation’s affairs, but Christianity in particular was a positive undercurrent.

However, Rabbi Lapin can clearly see the “handwriting on the wall” and is concerned for the future of our nation. He states:

It strikes me as unlikely that the Declaration of Independence could ever be adopted today because too many Americans would

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Who Was the God o

WHY?

Why should professing Christian leaders be afraid of the fact that the One who became Jesus Christ pre-existed with God the Father from eternity? That He was the God of the Old Testament—the God who spoke to Abraham and Moses—the God of David, the One who actually spoke the Ten Commandments? *Why* be fearful of these clear biblical teachings?

We will explain the dark origins of this fear later on. But first, we need to understand the genuine origin of Jesus Christ—the One who died for our sins. Who was Jesus Christ, really? *Where* did He come from? Why is *His* life so valuable as to constitute a payment for all of our lives—BILLIONS of us—put together? The *truth* about this topic is *very important* to understand. And it is truly inspiring!

Do you understand the true origins of Jesus Christ? Do you know who *really* spoke the Ten Commandments? Who *really* was the God of the Old Testament?

By Roderick C. Meredith

Steps of Repentance, Mount Sinai

Most religious scholars and commentaries know the clear scriptures we will be discussing in this article. They are aware of what a number of biblical passages make very clear. But most of them *avoid these scriptures like the plague!* Or, on the other hand, they may do a little verbal “dance” around them—touching on them in their technical commentaries—but then gliding on to “safer” subjects without fully explaining them one way or the other.

The Origins of Jesus Christ

The Apostle John makes it clear that the One who became Jesus Christ existed

f the Old Testament?

from eternity: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1–3).

Here John points out that the Word—the Logos or Spokesman—had been with God from the beginning. He was the creative agent—acting for God the Father in making everything that is. Later: “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (vv. 10–12).

In several scriptures the inspired Apostle Paul makes the same point. In Colossians 1:15–16, Paul speaks of Jesus Christ: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” And the book of Hebrews tells us that God, “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2). And again, “But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your

Kingdom” (v. 8). And finally, “You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands” (v. 10).

Note that in verse 8 above, Christ is addressed, “O GOD.” He is described as the One who “made the worlds” (v. 2) and who “laid the foundation of the earth” (v. 10). There is absolutely no indication that any of these verses written by Paul or by John were “poetic” or metaphorical! They simply state the fact that the Personality who became Jesus Christ was “in the beginning” with the Father, that He was the “Word” or Spokesman for the Father and that ALL things were directly created through Him, Jesus Christ!

How did all this come about?

Turning to Genesis 1:1, we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” All scholars know that the Hebrew word here translated God is “Elohim,” a *plural noun*—like church or family—one family, several members. And now notice Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”

Note that God said, “Let US make man in OUR image.” So the Father and the Logos or “Word”—who later was born as Jesus of Nazareth—were both included here. Acting *for* the One we call God the “Father,” the One who became Jesus Christ was

used by the Father *from the beginning* in dealing with mankind.

We see this also in Genesis 18. Here the Logos appeared to Abraham. He did NOT appear in His full glory in dealing with Abraham, Moses and others, but more in human form—yet apparently with a “difference” so that Abraham recognized that he was dealing with the “Lord” (vv. 3, 27). After the Lord had explained to Abraham His desire to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their perverted sins, Abraham asked, “Shall not the JUDGE of all the earth do right?” (v. 25).

Here Abraham was certainly dealing with the One *who became Jesus Christ!* For Christ Himself revealed later, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). Abraham was certainly NOT dealing with God the Father. For the inspired Word also tells us, “NO ONE has seen God at any time” (John 1:18).

Jesus Himself said: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.’ Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:56–58). The Jews recognized that the expression “I AM” referred to the God of Israel. They thought that Jesus was both lying and blaspheming. So “then they took up stones to throw at him” (v. 59). These Jews were BLINDED to the fact that the Personality who became Jesus was, in fact, the God of Abraham,

Isaac and Israel! They were standing right there *talking to* the One who was their God! And they did not know it.

Christ WAS the “God of Israel”

In Matthew 22:42–45, Jesus challenged the religious leaders: “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him

the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual ROCK that followed them, and that ROCK was Christ.” Again, it is clear—as a number of commentaries acknowledge—that the spirit Personality who dealt with ancient Israel was the One who became Christ. For, as we have seen, Jesus said that “no one” had ever seen “God”—obviously meaning the One we call the Father. Yet right after giving the Ten Commandments and some of the statutes to

WHY Is This Truth So Seldom Acknowledged?

When you understand that last sentence in the paragraph above, you can begin to grasp why so many professing priests and ministers shy away from explaining the real origin of Jesus Christ. For they have nearly all been taught that the Ten Commandments were a product of some harsh “God of the Old Testament” and that Jesus somehow “knew better” than His Father. In



Truly His life is worth more than ALL of ours combined, because He created not only the human race, but the entire universe as well. Having *bought and paid* for us by His death on the cross, Christ now *doubly* “owns” us. He is our Maker. He is our God. He is our Master.

“Lord,” saying: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”? ‘If David then calls Him “Lord,” how is He his Son?’” The Pharisees were not able to answer. For they knew that King David of Israel certainly had no *human* “lord.” This scripture had to be describing *two personalities* in God’s Family—one greater than the other. And, as should be obvious to us, David’s *immediate* “Lord”—the one who later became Jesus of Nazareth—was told to sit at the right hand of the Father UNTIL it was time for Him to become King of kings.

Yet the Jews had known that the coming Messiah was to be a literal “son of David.” How could this one also be David’s “Lord” yet having a still “greater” Lord telling Him what to do?

In 1 Corinthians 10:1–4, we read that ancient Israel was baptized into Moses and they all “ate

ancient Israel, we find that the “God of Israel” did indeed appear to some of Israel’s leaders! “Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank” (Exodus 24:9–11). So more than 70 of the leaders of Israel “SAW the God of Israel.” Could anything be more clear?

It was the One who became Jesus Christ who literally walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. *He* was the One who dealt directly with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *He* was the One who spoke “face to face” with Moses (Numbers 12:8). *He* was the One who spoke the Ten Commandments from the top of Mount Sinai!

many cases they say, instead, that somehow the Apostle Paul “knew better” than either Jesus or the Father—and that *he* did away with God’s law, the Ten Commandments.

These misguided men may be sincere. But they are “blinded” (2 Corinthians 4:3–4)—as is the WHOLE world. Remember Jesus’ instruction about most of the religious leaders of His own day: “Let them alone. They are BLIND leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch” (Matthew 15:14).

It is embarrassing—to men who have been taught that the Ten Commandments were “done away”—to admit that it was the One who became Jesus Christ who gave the Ten Commandments in codified form to Moses. He is the One who commanded, as an integral part of God’s great spiritual law: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all

your work, but the SEVENTH day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the SEVENTH day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8–11).

Most ministers understand that God, through Christ, specifically commanded His people to keep *the seventh day*—NOT just any day. They know that during His entire human lifetime Jesus kept the seventh-day Sabbath—*the same day the other Jews were observing!* And they probably also realized that the original Apostles kept the seventh day Sabbath. Along with scores of other respected scholars, mainstream Protestant church Historian Jesse Lyman Hurlbut acknowledges: “As long as the church was mainly Jewish, the Hebrew sabbath was kept” (*The Story of the Christian Church*, p. 45).

Again, most ministers understand that the inspired writer of Hebrews tells us, “Jesus Christ is the SAME yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). And they know that neither Christ nor the Apostles ever attempted to “do away” with the biblical Sabbath. If they had made such an attempt to overthrow such a MAJOR precept coming from the very hand of God, the Jews surrounding them would have rioted, persecuted them unmercifully, NOT allowed them to continue worshipping in the temple as they did for many years, and would quickly have proclaimed them heretics and LAWLESS.

The *enormous* UPHEAVAL that would have ensued from such an action would have made the Jewish upset over circumcision—described in Acts 15—seem like a “tea party” by comparison!

Of course, no such change in God’s great spiritual LAW was ever discussed or instituted by Christ or the Apostles. For a quarter of a century *after* the cross, and *after* the Holy Spirit had come upon the early church to guide it, the original Christians were still “zealous” for the LAW (Acts 21:20). Even the Apostle Paul was still obedient to the spiritual law of God, the Ten Commandments. For notice the inspired account of the instruction given by “headquarters” Apostle James to Paul: “...this will let everyone know there is no truth in the reports they have heard about you, and that you too observe the Law by your way of life” (Acts 21:24, *The New Jerusalem Bible*).

The Logical Consequence of This TRUTH

If all professing Christians were taught the TRUTH that the One who became their Savior is the One who gave the Ten Commandments, perhaps their actions would be quite different. The world would probably be a MUCH safer place! All would realize that true Christianity is a LAW-ABIDING religion—a WAY of life based on the great spiritual law of God. They would learn that—although *no one* is suddenly perfect, and we are commanded to GROW in Christ’s character—it is possible to follow Christ’s inspired example through His Spirit within us.

As the Apostle Paul wrote: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ LIVETH in me: and the life which

I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, KJV). Christians would then understand the beloved Apostle John’s explanation of the very love of God and HOW it functions: “For this is the love of God, that we KEEP His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). They would read with new understanding John’s inspired statement in Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who KEEP the COMMANDMENTS of God and the faith of Jesus.”

The true Christ revealed clearly in the Bible co-existed with the Father from eternity. He and the Father planned *together* the creation of mankind. Speaking for Himself *and the Father*, the Logos—who became Christ—said, “Let US make man in OUR image.” About 4,000 years later, the Logos was willing to give up the indescribable glory, power and majesty He had always shared with the Father.

As correctly translated, Paul tells us that: Christ “emptied” Himself, then “taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:7–11).

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ARMAGEDDON?

By Richard F. Ames

Will the dawn of a new century bring worldwide nuclear devastation, or will it usher in an era of lasting peace? Will the prophesied "Battle of Armageddon" overwhelm the planet? Will humanity survive? What does the Bible say? Is Armageddon really coming?

During the "Cold War" of the 1950s, the threat of nuclear war covered the United States and the Soviet Union like a cloud, and citizens of both countries rushed to build bomb shelters. In 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought a frightened world to the brink of nuclear devastation. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Chinese nuclear tests signaled to rival nations the rise of a new geopolitical superpower.

For most of the last 50 years, humanity has lived under the threat of sudden and violent destruction. In the last decade, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many have become less fearful of nuclear catastrophe. But are we truly safe? Even today, Russia and the United States can launch nuclear missiles within 15 minutes notice. Rogue states continue to develop atomic weapons, and the threat of nuclear terrorism is only increasing, as technology allows ever-smaller devices to be built by the growing number of scientists with the knowledge to create them.

The terror has even moved to outer space. According to General Joseph Ashy, commander in chief of the United States Space Command: "We're going to fight from space and we're going to fight into

space.... That's why the U.S. has development programs in directed energy and hit-to-kill mechanisms.... We will engage terrestrial targets someday—ships, airplanes, land targets—from space” (quoted in “Waging War in Space,” *The Nation*, December 27, 1999).

With these dangers still very real, is another world war around the corner? Bible prophecy gives us the answer. Most Bible students have heard of the great climactic end-time event known as “the Battle of Armageddon.” But what is this battle, and how will it affect you and your family?

The book of Revelation—the last book in the Bible—reveals the location of the gathering place for history's greatest battle: “And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:16). How and why will the armies be gathered there? Just two verses earlier, we read, “For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14).

Notice this! The actual battle is not called the battle of Armageddon. It is called “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” But battle preparations commence at Armageddon. What is this place? The word Armageddon is a transliteration of the original Hebrew *har megiddo* which means the “hill of Megiddo” or “the mountain of Megiddo.”

Megiddo is located about 55 miles north of Jerusalem in Israel. In ancient times it guarded the main trade route between Egypt and Damascus. It also overlooks the largest plain in Israel, called the Valley of Jezreel or the Plain of Esdraelon. The Old Testament records several major battles that took place here. In World War I, British General Allenby defeated Turkish military forces there in what became known as “the Battle of Megiddo.”

With all the historic battles that have taken place at Megiddo, the word “Armageddon” has come to symbolize any large-scale, destructive and decisive battle. Humanity has invented many terrible weapons of mass destruction. Will these weapons bring about *our* Armageddon?

The Nuclear Era Begins

Humanity has been fighting wars for thousands of years. But it was less than 60 years ago that a new weapon of unprecedented capacity was first unleashed, when the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in

Japan on August 4 and 6, 1945. A new era of mass destruction had begun.

At the end of World War II, General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, accepted Japan's unconditional surrender. Aboard the battleship U.S.S. Missouri, General MacArthur summarized the danger and the choice facing humanity in this new era:

Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be the way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blocks out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, our Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

Human beings will continue to seek a way to peace. But without acknowledging the Creator God and His supreme rulership over the earth, nations will ultimately fail. The Apostle Paul nearly 2,000 years ago wrote of humanity's violent and anti-God tendencies: “Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:15–18).

Is there any current danger of nuclear war? Perhaps international treaties have calmed Cold War fears; since 1968, more than 180 nations have signed the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. But several nuclear nations have not signed the treaty, and many that have signed are believed to be violating its terms. Terrorist groups also continue their activities, uncaring of international law.

In addition to nuclear concerns, chemical and biological weapons are a growing threat. And a new threat is on the horizon: along with the feared nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons of mass destruction, a new category—genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (GNR)—promises new horrors for the 21st century.

In his startling essay, “Why the Future Doesn't Need Us” (*Wired Magazine*, April 2000, pp. 238–262), Sun Microsystems founder Bill Joy, an early pioneer of the

minicomputer age, contemplates the effect of these new GNR technologies on warring humanity: “I think it is no exaggeration to say we are on the cusp of the further *perfection of extreme evil*, an evil whose possibility spreads well beyond that which weapons of mass destruction bequeathed to the nation-states, on to a surprising and terrible empowerment of extreme individuals.”

Joy is not alone in this sobering assessment. Journalist Gideon Rose offers the following analysis: “The really difficult problem will be a new kind of proliferation involving the acquisition of chemical, biological and cyber-weapons by subnational actors such as terrorist groups, cults or angry individuals. These weapons are easy to make, hard to track and hard to defend against. This means that even if the U.S. does spend tens of billions of dollars on a system to shoot down North Korean missiles, we will still have to deal with the equally pressing problem of stopping doomsday cults or future Unabombers armed with deadly viruses” (“Will Everyone Have the Bomb?”, *Time Magazine*, May 22, 2000, p. 103).

Amid all of our scientific advances in weaponry, man’s inhumanity to man has not ceased. From Kosovo to Kashmir, from East Timor to Chechnya, wars and massacres continue. Since World War II, atrocities against nations or peoples have continued unabated. According to *Newsweek*: “The Genocide Convention outlawed ‘acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part,’ a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Postwar atrocities [include]: Bosnia: 300,000 dead, 2 million displaced; Cambodia: 1 million dead, 500,000 displaced; Rwanda: 1 million dead, 3.5 million displaced.”

In the face of such evil, we can see why judgment is coming on the earth. Yet there is good news beyond the bad. Jesus Christ, the greatest newscaster and prophet in all of human history, told us that these atrocities would end: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Jesus also prophesied of these dangerous times in which we live: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21–22).

Jesus was not speaking of spiritual salvation. He was speaking of the portent of human annihilation—of *cosmocide*—the death of all life on planet earth! This danger is recognized not just by Bible students, but by respected scientists. *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* monitors the dangers of living in this nuclear age, and expresses that danger with its “Doomsday Clock.” The closer the hands are to midnight, the closer the scientists perceive humanity to be to nuclear devastation. On June 11, 1998, the *Bulletin* moved the minute hand of the clock to nine minutes before midnight, where it remains to this day—a jump of five minutes, reflecting that India and Pakistan had joined the “nuclear club.” The *Bulletin* saw this as a “failure of world diplomacy in the nuclear sphere.”

The *Bulletin* also offered this sobering report: “Between them, Russia and the United States still have upwards of 30,000 nuclear weapons—strategic and tactical—in various states of readiness. Nine years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States and Russia collectively have some 7,000 warheads ready to be fired with less than 15 minutes notice.” Humanity, left to its own devices, has the tools to destroy itself with very little warning. Will we bring about our own destruction? Will Armageddon play a role in humanity’s downfall?

Perhaps we will never know just how close we have come to mistakes that might have precipitated a nuclear conflagration. The *Bulletin* reminds us that at least eight nations today have nuclear weapon capability. What would it be like for your city to be the target of a one-megaton nuclear bomb? A megaton is equivalent to one million tons of TNT. A one-megaton bomb would be five to ten times more explosive than the terrifying atomic bombs that exploded on Hiroshima and Nagasaki! After the explosion’s blast wave, pulse of heat radiation and intense release of X-rays, it triggers powerful firestorms in its wake.

How many people would be killed by just one such bomb? Dr. Alan F. Phillips describes it this way, “The estimates for a city of one million or two million struck by a single one-megaton bomb are that around one third of the inhabitants would be killed instantly or fatally injured, one third seriously injured, and the rest uninjured or only slightly injured. That number of injured, if they could be distributed throughout the



Aerial bombs filled with chemical warfare agents contribute to the spread of dangerous weapons worldwide. ©Presslink Image

hospitals of North America, would occupy something like a third of the total number of beds; and of course no hospital can deal adequately with such an influx of urgent cases within a few days” (*Position Paper*, Physicians for Global Survival, Canada, October 1995).

Armageddon in Prophecy

As mentioned above, Armageddon is the gathering place for the climactic battle of the Great Day of God Almighty! Massive armies will gather in the valley of Megiddo to begin the ultimate conflagration on planet earth. Where does Armageddon fit into the panorama of prophecy? The Apostle John described the famous four horsemen of the Apocalypse. They symbolize, in order, false Christs and false religion, war and its devastating effects, famines that normally follow war and pestilences and disease, which follow after famine.

Look at what the Bible says about the terrible devastation that these four horsemen bring: “So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over *a fourth of the earth*, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6:8).

Even the genocide we have seen since the end of World War II will pale in comparison to the death that will cover the earth. *One-fourth* of all human beings on earth will die, as war, hunger and disease expand over the planet.

Outside the Bible, do any in our modern age see such devastation as possible? Indeed, they do. “My own major concern with genetic engineering is... that it gives the power—whether militarily, accidentally or in a deliberate terrorist act—to create a ‘White Plague’” (Joy, p. 249). Modern scientists know that these horrors may be just over the horizon!

In spite of its inspections of Iraq, the United Nations has failed to destroy all of that country’s weapons of mass destruction. U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen stated in November of 1998 that Iraq might have produced enough of the deadly biological weapon VX, to destroy everyone on earth. In a Department of Defense briefing he said: “Originally they indicated they had just a small quantity of VX. One drop on your finger will produce death in a matter of just a few moments. Now the UN believes that Saddam [Hussein] may have produced as much as 200 tons of VX, and this would, of course, be theoretically enough to kill *every man, woman and child* on the face of the earth.”

Yes, we are facing dangers of human annihilation. The fourth seal of Revelation—or the fourth horseman of the apocalypse—will result in the deaths of at least one and one-half billion men, women and children.

The fifth seal, as we read in Revelation 6:9, reveals a martyrdom of Christians during the tribulation period of about 2 1/2 years. Then we read about the sixth seal introducing the Day of the Lord, the time of God’s wrath and judgment on the nations. The sixth seal is referred to as the heavenly signs: “I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place” (Revelation 6:12–14).

God then seals his servants to protect them throughout the Day of the Lord (Revelation 7), this year of judgment on the nations. Next, Christ opens the seventh seal of Revelation, which consists of seven “trumpet plagues.” The first four include great ecological upheaval and devastation, as we read in chapter 8. The Apostle John then describes, in first century language, the modern warfare that he sees in vision: “The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (Revelation 9:7–11).

John is describing the early phases of World War III. Apollyon and Abaddon mean “destroyer.” The power behind this military force is a great spirit being, described elsewhere as the serpent, Satan the Devil, the great destroyer.

The sixth angel sounds a trumpet introducing a counter-attack by a massive eastern army. We have already seen that the pale horseman, the fourth horseman of the apocalypse, destroyed a fourth of human life. Now we find even more killing on a global scale: “Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads

of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. [Here are descriptions similar to nuclear explosions] By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed; by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths” (Revelation 9:16–18).

One-third of mankind is destroyed! After the previous loss of about 1.5 billion people, now we see at least another 1.5 billion killed! The Apostle John continues with his description: “For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts” (Revelation 9:19–21).

God Will Save Doomed Mankind

But God will step in to save mankind from total annihilation. The seventh trumpet will sound, announcing a new world government—a new world order under the King of kings, Jesus Christ: “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15).

That is the good news, the gospel this sorry world so desperately needs. Yet, amazingly, the nations will still want to fight the conquering King of Heaven’s armies! In the sixteenth chapter of Revelation, the sixth angel symbolically pours out his bowl for the last phase of World War III. “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:12–14).

Satan’s demons—fallen angels—gather those armies that were about to annihilate one another

and all life on earth. These opposing forces now join one another to fight against Christ at His coming. They gather at Megiddo, but they move southward to Jerusalem to fight Christ there. Notice Joel 3:1,

“For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather *all nations*, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there.”

The Valley of Jehoshaphat is between the Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem. It is also known as the Kidron Valley, which extends southward for some distance. Yes, the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty will take place at Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat means “judgment of the Eternal.” God will judge the nations in this climactic battle.

The European superpower, in Revelation called the Beast, will also be judged at that time, and punished. Earth’s armies will try to fight Christ at His coming: “And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword, which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh” (Revelation 19:19–21).

The good news is that the world will not be totally destroyed in a nuclear holocaust. But God will judge the nations, including our western nations who have become hypocritical—who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). We individually need to be spiritually awake, alert and spiritually clothed. As Jesus said: “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame” (Revelation 16:15).

We should all look forward to the return of Christ to this earth. Now is the time to prepare spiritually—to repent and change our lives! Seek God in prayer. Read the Bible. And look forward to a world under the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, when all nations will learn to live by the Bible, the law of God, the government of God and the love of God. TW



Questions & Answers

QUESTION:

Please explain what happened to the resurrected saints mentioned in Matthew 27? Are they in heaven?

ANSWER:

Matthew's was not the first account of people coming back to life after having died. The Bible records eight other supernatural resurrections (1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:32–37; 13:20–21; Matthew 9:23–27; Luke 7:11–15; John 11:43–44; Acts 9:36–40; 20:9–12). In these cases, it is clear that the individuals involved were resurrected back to physical life. However, what about the saints that came out of their graves after Christ's resurrection? Notice the scripture in question:

“...and the graves were opened; and *many* bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves *after* His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 27:52–53).

This extraordinary miracle involved a large group of people who entered the holy city, Jerusalem. They came out of their graves soon *after* Jesus Christ's resurrection. Yet was this a resurrection to eternal life? The Apostle Paul answered this important question in his first letter to the Corinthian Church. Paul began by showing that Jesus Christ has become “the firstfruits”—the first to be resurrected to eternal life—of all those who have died (see 1 Corinthians 15:20–21). Next, Paul described the resurrection to *eternal life* of *all* saints (all true disciples who died in Christ):

“For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:21–23).

These scriptures reveal a definite order; Christ first, then those who are Christ's at His coming. God would not set an order of resurrections and then contradict Himself. He is not the author of confusion and neither can He lie! Thus, true believers “who are Christ's” will be resurrected at Christ's *second coming*. Not until *that* resurrection will mortals “put on immortality” (vv. 51–54). So what purpose did the earlier resurrections serve?

Lazarus' astonishing resurrection strengthened the faith of those standing nearby. Jesus prayed to the Father, “...I thank you that you have heard Me. And I know that you always hear Me, but because of the people standing by I said this, that they may believe that you sent Me” (John 11:41–42). Down through history, physical resurrections were examples of God's great mercy, glory and power. They pointed to and identified God's work and His true servants. Therefore, the resurrected group of saints who entered Jerusalem served as a powerful witness of God's work through His Son—recently resurrected *to immortality*. “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will” (John 5:21).

Yet how do we know for sure that the widow's son, the Shunammite woman's son, Lazarus, and all others with the exception of Jesus Christ, were *resurrected back to mortal life*? Because Jesus “alone has *immortality*, dwelling in unapproachable light” (1 Timothy 6:16). Jesus announced, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3:13). After their physical resurrection, they undoubtedly lived out their mortal lives and died again. Presently, they are resting in their graves—waiting for Christ to return—“that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Hebrews 11:39–40).



By Mark Mendiola

Soaring gasoline, diesel fuel and heating oil prices have jolted many Americans into realizing how beholden the U.S. economy remains to foreign oil-producing nations. Once again, world attention focuses on OPEC's pricing policies and its profound impact on international geopolitics. Have the lessons of the 1973 Arab oil embargo and the petroleum crises of the late '70s and early '80s been forgotten?

A Cru

Just as it did in the 1970s, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) still has much of the world over a barrel. Back then, U.S. President Jimmy Carter called a paralyzing global energy crisis the “moral equivalent of war.” But if this is a war, who is winning it, and why? How does this crisis fit into Bible prophecy? And what can we expect for our future?

Complacent Americans, accustomed to cheap gasoline, faced a rude awakening as prices crept up past \$2 per gallon. In a matter of months, gas prices nearly doubled, bringing about a startling reality check for Americans unaware of world events.

In many other nations, high taxes bring gasoline prices to \$5 per gallon. Most of the world envies the United States' low gas prices. But these prices spiraled when OPEC decided in March 1999 to reduce a worldwide oil glut by cranking down production. Oil producers stuck to this agreement with a 90 percent compliance rate—an impressive feat for a cartel notoriously unable to maintain unity.

After a year of demonstrating surprising discipline in curbing their oil output—causing U.S. oil prices to triple to a March 8 peak of \$34.37 per barrel—OPEC nations agreed this past March to boost total petroleum production by 1.7 million barrels per day. That is more than 7 percent above the ceiling they set a year ago, when oil prices had fallen to 12-year lows.

The Clinton administration aggressively lobbied OPEC countries to ramp up their output by up to 2.5 million barrels per day to lower gas prices as the critical summer driving season approached.

de Awakening

While gas prices initially declined after OPEC boosted output in March, they resumed their climb in May when oil prices once again topped \$30 a barrel. U.S. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson admitted on May 16, "We are nervous about the spikes, about oil at \$30 a barrel, after some initial price stability.... There is perhaps not the stability that we had all hoped for."

The U.S. Commerce Department reported on May 19 that the U.S. trade deficit hit a record \$30.2 billion in March, driven by the highest prices for imported oil since November 1990. In March, the U.S. deficit with OPEC hit a record \$4.2 billion. Higher oil prices—up 157 percent since last year—accounted for half the deterioration in this year's trade balance through March.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency warned on May 11 of another round of retail gas prices hikes in North America and Europe. The U.S. Energy Department predicted in April that summer prices should decline to an average \$1.46 a gallon, 25 percent higher than last summer and 11 cents higher than the 1981 record for the six-month summer driving season. Average motorists are expected to pay about \$170 more for gasoline this summer than last, the Energy Information Administration estimates. Still, they are expected to use an average of 8.72 million barrels per day or 1.5 percent more than last summer.

The price projections assume no problems at refineries operating at 97 percent capacity to produce gasoline at the expense of heating oil supplies in the fall. U.S. oil

stocks in April remained sharply below last year's level at about 192 million barrels as opposed to the normal 200 million to 220 million barrels. It takes five weeks to ship oil via tanker from the Persian Gulf to the U.S., and seven to 10 days to unload the oil, move it to refineries and process it into gasoline and diesel fuel, not to mention time to haul it to retail outlets nationwide.

Richardson's intensive lobbying of OPEC and non-OPEC countries to get their petroleum flowing more freely throughout the world was not met with the most enthusiastic response. Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas, majority whip in the U.S. House of Representatives, accused the Clinton administration of "tin cup diplomacy, running around begging OPEC to open their valves."

In a weekly Republican radio address on April 8, Senate Energy Committee Chairman Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, said a growing reliance on foreign oil imports has allowed OPEC to hold the U.S. consumer hostage at the gas pump.

Murkowski said when President Clinton took office the United States was importing 43 percent of the oil it used, but this has grown to 56 percent. "We are more dependent on OPEC for our oil imports than at any time in our history," he said. "And the administration's energy department warned that if we do nothing, imports could rise to 65 percent in 15 years."

Murkowski said the failure of U.S. energy policy is illustrated by the import of 700,000 barrels of oil a day from Iraq, despite the Persian Gulf War and U.S. mili-

tary efforts to contain Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "We're bombing the guy who is refueling our warplanes," he said. "What kind of an energy policy is that?"

Democrats countered that Republicans blocked energy conservation and more fuel-efficient vehicles, would not consider a ban on Alaskan oil exports to Asia, ruled out a drawdown of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve—where 565 million barrels of crude oil are stored for emergencies—and resisted creating a heating oil reserve in the Northeast because such measures were opposed by the U.S. oil industry.

"It's obvious that the federal government was not prepared. We were caught napping," Richardson admitted in mid-February during a three-hour public meeting in Boston with consumers, business owners and lawmakers clamoring for relief from high fuel prices.

Dwindling U.S. Supplies

Consuming about 20 percent of the world's oil, the United States imports much more than the 35 percent it imported in 1973 when Arab nations retaliated against the U.S. for its support of Israel by imposing an oil embargo, creating long lines at gas stations. In December 1999, OPEC was the source of nearly half of U.S. oil imports, according to the U.S. Energy Information Agency. Saudi Arabia was by far the largest source of those imports, supplying 43,118,000 barrels that month.

OPEC supplies more than 40 percent of the world's oil and owns

about 78 percent of the world's crude oil reserves. It produces about 26.6 million barrels of crude oil daily, with the Saudis accounting for about a third of that total.

U.S. crude oil inventories of 293.3 million barrels in December 1999 were down 9.3 percent from the previous year, the American Petroleum Institute reported. By the end of 1999, Middle East crude oil imports grew by 265,000 barrels per day, a 10.9 percent increase

industry supplies the energy to keep America going strong, but to continue to produce domestic oil and natural gas, we must have improved access to federal and state lands," he testified. Cavaney said the U.S. has sanctions in place against countries comprising more than 10 percent of world oil production and 16 percent of estimated remaining oil resources.

"In short, U.S. policymakers face a dilemma. Growing supplies

using far more gas and oil in this country than we were in the past decade, than in the past five years. In fact, more than we used last year. Yet, we are producing substantially less than we are using."

The Louisiana senator noted U.S. domestic oil production in the last 13 years has fallen by 2.7 million barrels a day. In the past two years, domestic production has fallen about half a million barrels a day. In the last decade, there



"It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that we have a huge problem. We are producing less and less, and we are consuming more and more. We are depending more and more on foreign sources for the energy we need to run America."

—Sen. John Breaux

over 1998, the U.S. Department of Energy said. Meanwhile, 1999 domestic crude oil production continued downward with the average daily output of 5.9 million barrels, 5.6 percent less than during 1998. Alaska's daily production averaged just over one million barrels per day in 1999, a decline of 10.7 percent from 1998.

In testimony before the U.S. Senate Government Affairs Committee on March 24, Red Cavaney, API president and chief executive officer, said, "We now import about 55 percent of our petroleum needs. This large demand on foreign supplies leaves us at the mercy of world supply and demand conditions and open to the volatility that we have experienced over the past year."

Since 1983, access to federal lands in the western United States—where nearly 67 percent of U.S. onshore oil reserves and 40 percent of its natural gas reserves are located—has declined by 60 percent, Cavaney noted. "Our

of crude oil will be required to sustain world economic prosperity, and diverse, ample foreign supplies are needed to help ensure our own country's economic growth," he said.

What Happened?

In remarks made on March 20, Sen. John Breaux, D-La., explained how the U.S. finds itself increasingly addicted to foreign oil, noting Arab countries hobbled the U.S. nearly 30 years ago when they only slightly restricted supplies and when the U.S. was importing much less petroleum percentage-wise.

"Here we are in the year 2000, and basically the problem is very similar to what it was back in 1973. It is interesting to me to see so many people wringing their hands, struggling to find out exactly what is causing this problem," Breaux said. "It is not indeed a mystery at all. The problem is one of supply and demand. We are

has been a 17 percent decline in the production of oil and gas in the U.S. while oil consumption has increased by 14 percent.

"It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that we have a huge problem. We are producing less and less, and we are consuming more and more. We are depending more and more on foreign sources for the energy we need to run America," Breaux said. "We would rather depend on OPEC to be generous and give us all the oil we need at the price we want."

Rather than send the U.S. energy secretary to foreign countries pleading for more oil, the U.S. needs to do more to develop legitimate resources within its own borders, he said.

"With 55 percent of the oil used in the United States being imported, OPEC has the ability, by turning that faucet off just a little bit, to bring this country to its knees. Can you imagine what it would do if they turned a full

turn and really reduced it?” Breaux asked.

“No nation should ever allow itself—certainly not a nation as strong as the United States—to become dependent on foreign sources for things that are critical to our economic well-being and our national security and, indeed, our survival. Yet over the years we have allowed just that to happen with regard to energy.”

Blessings and Curses

The United States of America has been blessed beyond any other nation in history with an abundance of natural resources, but it is starting to see those blessings stripped away. The oil, gas, mineral and agricultural wealth enjoyed in such great abundance in North America and other English-speaking nations has come from Almighty God. The Holy Bible is plain about that.

“Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you” (Deuteronomy 7:12–13).

With those blessings comes an obligation to be obedient to God and a responsibility to use that wealth for good. God warns that when He brings us into a good land “in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you

can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you” (Deuteronomy 8:9–10).

Just as parents discipline children when they go astray and engage in harmful activities, God punishes nations when they refuse to keep His commandments, veer from His ways and no longer fear Him. “So you should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you” (Deuteronomy 8:5–6).

He warns: “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments and His statutes which I command you today... Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish” (Deuteronomy 8:11, 19).

It is no coincidence the western world find itself under what appears to be a worsening economic curse as westerners more blatantly sin by breaking God’s divine law. We are witnessing a dramatic reversal in our fortunes. Cursed are our basket, our store, and our reserves! (Deuteronomy 28:17) Hostile nations are on the rise as we are on the decline.

“The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes

which He commanded you” (Deuteronomy 28:45).

The oil crisis is one of many national curses the U.S. faces as it rejects God, refuses to acknowledge His blessings and flagrantly breaks His law. Yet, it is official federal policy for the nation to prostrate itself before foreign nations that have been antagonistic in the past and allies who easily could turn on it.

Relying On Alliances

Iran is OPEC’s second largest producer. An international crisis was provoked in 1979 when Iranian religious revolutionaries overthrew the Shah of Iran, shut off the Persian nation’s oil spigot and kept 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. An oil price surge peaked at \$39 a barrel in 1981; U.S. interest rates climbed into double digits; the U.S. inflation rate flared up to 9 percent and unemployment approached 8 percent.

Iran opposed, vehemently, OPEC’s decision last March to raise production and ease pressure on the world’s petroleum markets. Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, Iran’s representative to OPEC, said Iran balked at going along with the rest of OPEC to protest American pressure on the cartel. It questioned whether the international oil shortage was extreme and whether production needed to be escalated.

One major disappointment for American officials was Kuwait’s resistance to increasing production. That is despite the massive investment and sacrifice made by western and other allies in Operation Desert Storm to repel Kuwait’s invasion by Iraq. Kuwait aligned with the likes of Algeria, Libya and Iran earlier this year to adopt a hard line against raising

OPEC production levels, but later agreed to ease output after U.S. diplomatic arm twisting.

The Living God who has so richly blessed the U.S. and other western nations frowns upon our policy of buying off friends and enemies in exchange for their favors, turning our backs on Him. Such policy earns the disdain of friend and foe alike. In God's eyes, it is even worse than prostitution and will backfire!

Notice in the Holy Scriptures, God's warnings against trying to earn the affections of our "lovers" and relying on them for our sustenance. "I will not have mercy on her children, for they are the children of harlotry. For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has done shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who gave me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink'" (Hosea 2:5).

"For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine and oil and multiplied her silver and gold—which they prepared for Baal. Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time and My new wine in its season and will take back My wool and My linen, given to cover her nakedness. Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall deliver her from My hands" (vv. 8–10).

The Bible shows that both allies and enemies ultimately will turn against the nations identified in the Bible as modern Jacob. Treaties and alliances will not save them. Only God's divine intervention can save them from the unprecedented national tribulation that looms!

"Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the

time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.... All your lovers have forgotten you; They do not seek you; For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquities, because your sins have increased" (Jeremiah 30:7, 14).

The Prophet Ezekiel gets even more explicit; showing we cannot buy the affection of our allies who will turn against us with our enemies. "Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired (or bribed) them to come to you from all around for your harlotry. You are the opposite of other women in your harlotry, because no one solicited you to be a harlot. In that you gave payment but no payment was given you, there-



Kuwaiti investors, facing weak oil prices, follow news reports on the internal political crisis in their nation. ©Presslink Image

fore you are the opposite.... Surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated; I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness" (Ezekiel 16:33–34, 37).

The United States is leaving itself exposed and precariously vulnerable by increasing its dependence on foreign nations


for vitally important oil, putting itself in a compromising position and revealing a potentially fatal weakness.

As crises in the extremely volatile Middle East have underscored in the past, the western industrialized world cannot rely on that region for a steady, uninterrupted flow of petroleum. Even the European Commission issued a rare plea in February for OPEC to boost output to prevent slowing the world economy.

Should pro-western leadership in oil-rich nations like Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Mexico suddenly turn anti-American, the national and economic security of the U.S. could be severely jeopardized and a dramatic shift in the international balance of power could occur.

The Controversy Will End

As in the past, geopolitical events could turn Islamic countries violently against the U.S., Israel and other western nations, prompting Arabs to take drastic measures and sharply crank down their oil production in retaliation.

Unless there is heartfelt repentance and a return to God in humility and gratitude for all His blessings, our national punishments will intensify and worsen before Jesus Christ returns to liberate us from horrendous suffering and calamity. To learn more about what the future holds, please request a free copy of our booklet *What's Ahead for America and Britain?* There is wonderful news beyond today's troubling world as we approach the dawn of Tomorrow's World! 

Letters to the Editor

BIBLE STUDY COURSE

I just received my first copy of *Tomorrow's World*, and read the article "What is True Christianity?" It really got to my heart. The article was refreshing and heart-rending, and I will send in the form for the *Bible Study Course*. I have been searching and praying to know God's will for me, and have so far only come up with confusion, and enjoyed the forthrightness and outspokenness of that article. I believe that "belief" means not just saying it, but living as He showed the way. Thank you very much for this very encouraging and courageous magazine.

L. P., Montreal, Quebec, Canada

I enjoyed very much the first lesson of the *Bible Study Course*. I believe it is truly up to the high standard set by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong. Well done! I had the opportunity to give a copy of the first lesson to a fellow worker of mine who has expressed a sincere desire to know what the Bible teaches. He is very impressed with the content and quality of the first lesson, and he continues to show an eagerness to learn more. When I told him about modern Jacob and what is ahead, he told me it made complete sense to him. We have had a lot of hearty discussion.

Keep up the good work!

S. F., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

TOMORROW'S WORLD

I read the January-February 2000 *Tomorrow's World* and really enjoyed everything in it. It real-

ly encourages me to see there are other people out there who have faith in a God they cannot see. One letter mentioned a Personal in the July-September 1999 issue against racism. Currently, at school, I am doing research on racism relating to religion. I would really appreciate it if you could send me the July-September 1999 issue, because I believe it could really help me.

D. V., Adelaide, Australia

Editor's Note: We do still have some back issues available, but even after these are gone, readers with access to the Internet can look at all of our back issues by going to www.tomorrowsworld.org and clicking on the "Literature" button. From there, you will find our magazines and booklets in several different formats to read, print or download at your convenience.

Thank you so much for the article "Is There Life After Death?" by Richard Ames, in the March-April 2000 issue. It is so comforting to see, from the Bible, that my unsaved family is not going to burn in eternal hellfire just because they did not have the chance to hear the true Gospel message. Just as I have had a chance now, they too will have their chance. The article showed from Scripture that our God is fair, loving and merciful.

A. R., Chicago, Illinois

Thank you for the wonderful magazine. This is the most understandable information I have heard. I also check it out in my Bible, as the Bereans did, as you suggest.

A. M., Marshfield, Missouri

We encourage you to share with us your reactions to *Tomorrow's World*. Please direct your correspondence to "Letters to the Editor" at our United States address, or send e-mail to letters@tomorrowsworld.org. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. Remember to include your name, address and daytime phone number.



What Is Happening to Our Kids?

By John H. Ogwyn

In the last century, conventional wisdom about child-rearing has undergone a dramatic metamorphosis. Respect for the Bible and family values has given way to the ideas of “social scientists” such as Sigmund Freud, John Dewey and Benjamin Spock. These theorists have turned the family into a laboratory for social experimentation.

But what has been the result of these experiments? Are our children healthier and happier? Is society better off?

We all know the answer. But do educators and child psychologists acknowledge that the very foundation of their new theories is flawed? No! Their experiments continue—on our children—even as problems grow more severe, and affect younger and younger children each year. Rather than address the root cause of these problems, these modern social engineers just redefine “normalcy” as they search for a “magic pill” that will fix everything.

U.S. News & World Report, in its March 6, 2000 cover story “The Perils of Pills,” addressed America’s growing tendency to medicate its children’s behavior. Even a United Nations panel recently lambasted the United States for over-prescribing psychiatric drugs. As *USN&WR* pointed out, America “...consumes 80 percent of the world’s methylphenidate (the generic name for Ritalin)” (p. 47). A March 12 article in *The New York Times Magazine* had a similar focus. Entitled “Generation Rx,” the article observed that although throwing pills at children is bad, it is only a symptom of the real problem.

Some serious problems exist! There is no question that something terrible is happening to our children, yet it appears that the educational and pediatric establishments merely wish to treat the symptoms of these problems rather than the real causes. But what *are* the real causes of the problems that exist in today’s families—and what can be done about them?

A Look at Today's Kids

A *Newsweek* article titled “The Truth About Tweens” (Oct. 18, 1999) discussed the problems facing these children in the awkward transition from childhood to adolescence. Defined as children between the ages of eight and 14, there are currently 27 million of these “tweens” in the United States, and advertisers have identified them as a lucrative market that spends \$14 billion annually.

The *Newsweek* article explained: “They are a generation stuck on fast forward... The girls wear sexy lingerie and provocative makeup created just for tweens in order to complete what some parents call the Lolita look. The boys affect a tough-guy swagger—while fretting about when their voices will change” (*Newsweek*, p. 64). They are a generation whose values have been shaped by television, video games and the Internet.

What is the moral and value content conveyed by these sources? How much are children influenced by them? Make no mistake about it; most children are spending more time interacting with the electronic media than with their parents. Two-thirds of those eight to 18 have televisions in their own rooms, and six out of 10 in this age group say that their parents do not impose limits on their television viewing. In 1979, only 6 percent of sixth graders had television sets in their rooms, compared with 77 percent today (*USN&WR*, Nov. 29, 1999, p. 79). The result, of course, is that children live more isolated lives than ever. Parents are certainly no longer the primary influences for most children.

What values are being promoted to children these days? Certainly they are not values derived from Scripture. Much of the popular entertainment directed at “tweens” and teens celebrates attitudes that are rude, crude, vulgar, disrespectful of authority and rebellious. Violence, promiscuous sexuality, “alternative” lifestyles and crass materialism are vigorously promoted. Objections to the homosexual lifestyle or to premarital sex are presented as old fashioned, intolerant and judgmental. It seems that tolerance is the chief virtue and everything is to be tolerated—except intolerance of sin! The concept that there are no absolute rights and wrongs has been promoted in the West for well over a century—today, the belief in moral absolutes is labeled as bigoted.

Former West Point professor Lt. Col. Dave Grossman has given interesting insight into the burgeoning climate of violence among the young. In his 1996 book, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to*

Kill in War and Society, he explored the dangerous similarities between today's violent movies and video games and the military training programs that help soldiers overcome their reluctance to kill. Commenting about violent television shows and video games, Grossman stated: “It has become increasingly clear that the television industry is using a toxic addictive substance—violence—in order to addict young children... Now the purpose of our play is to inflict horrendous suffering on other human beings... to sit and watch vivid depictions of human death and suffering and to associate that with pleasure—popcorn and candy bars, and laughter and cheers—like the Romans in the Colosseum watching people being butchered” (interview in the *Dallas Morning News*, Sept. 19, 1999).

Grossman points out that video games are one of the tools that the military uses to condition and prepare recruits for combat situations, and break down their natural inhibitions to kill. The Army uses a modified Super Nintendo video game; the Marines use the video game Doom. These are used to train and program infantrymen, like a flight simulator is used to train and program pilots. When children spend hours sitting in front of such games, is it any surprise that they become conditioned to violence?

The factors shaping our young children, the so-called “tweens,” are drastically different from those of decades earlier. Single parents and two-career households represent the vast majority of homes in which young people grow up. More damaging still is the fact that many parents are themselves without a strong moral compass. Shaped by the moral relativism of the 1970s, most of today's parents feel a need to be “open-minded” about contemporary youth culture. Sadly, many are so open-minded that they have become empty-headed!

Nature or Nurture?

Since the 18th century, debates about “nature vs. nurture” have raged in the Western world. French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau believed that children left to themselves would turn out “good.” He believed that civilization is the corrupting factor, and that human nature is intrinsically good. His idea was, that without civilization, man is a “noble savage.” Though most would not go to Rousseau's extreme, most 19th and 20th century liberals and progressives clung to an optimistic view of human nature, believing that it is basically good.

Sigmund Freud and John Dewey further refined and shaped this view. Freud believed that most neu-

roses in later life are the result of repressed sexual desire. Dewey, the father of “progressive education,” did not want to “inhibit” children, and so opposed external structure on their conduct. Dewey encouraged children’s self-expression and self-discovery, favoring personality development over character development. This trend of de-emphasizing character development has continued in child development circles for most of the last century, and the results have grown progressively worse as these wrong-headed theories have gained ground over common sense and traditional wisdom.

In more recent years, some apologists for 20th century child development theories have held that “nurture” matters little, as behavior is all genetically encoded anyway. Judith Harris’ 1998 book *The Nurture Assumption* argued that the way parents treat their children does not really matter. Harris asserts that whatever traits genes do not determine, peers do. While Harris’ thesis may have let parents off the hook, it is fatally flawed.

At the other extreme are those social experimenters who believe that virtually all of mankind’s differences can be erased through education, and who advocate government intrusion into child development at younger and younger ages. Their egalitarian bias has led them to argue that anyone can be anything, because virtually nothing is genetically determined. These theorists have tried to argue that even traditional masculine and feminine differences are socially conditioned, not inborn.

The reality lies between these two extremes. Human beings are the result of both nature and nurture. Each human being is born with a variety of genetic predispositions and limits, but education and family environment can make a big difference in whether children will develop their full potential. To recognize that some are born smarter, stronger or faster is simply to face reality. However, virtually all human beings can improve their levels of performance with training and diligent effort. Helping children to recognize and develop their talents and aptitudes is essential!

A March 27, 2000 *Newsweek* article titled “The Nature of Nurturing” discussed a 12-year study conducted by Dr. David Reiss of George Washington University. Reiss studied 720 pairs of adolescents with various degrees of genetic connection, ranging from identical twins to stepsiblings, and observed the ways that genetic tendencies are either encouraged or stifled by parental response. While there is a whole range of genetic predispositions, Reiss saw

that parental training and influence are essential to bringing out the best in a child.

Few educators or social scientists understand human nature. Is it basically good or is it bad? The answer is provided in the Genesis 3 account of our first parents and the two trees to which they were introduced. Contrary to God’s command, they took the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since then, human nature and civilization have been a blend of that fatal mixture. Human nature is *not* intrinsically good; character training and development is vital. Modern society’s failure to recognize this has led to a generation that is learning to “feel good about itself” without developing those desirable traits that are worth feeling good about!

The Role of Discipline in Character Development

Discipline has become almost a dirty word to many in our society. Some believe, like Dewey, that structure is inherently stifling and that a child should be free to “discover.” Others equate discipline with abuse. Because of some instances of horrible abuse, many in contemporary culture are prepared to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water, showing an aversion to discipline in general and to corporal punishment in particular. This wrong-headed approach has made our children the real losers.

But what is character? Why is it important? How is it developed?

Character has to do with a person’s fundamental pattern of behavior. It must be developed over time and through circumstances. It is what determines the moral worth of an individual.

Self-discipline is one of the most vital aspects of good character. Without a disciplined approach to life, we will habitually take the path of least resistance. We will quit whenever we get tired or lose interest, whether an important job remains left to be done or not. When faced with moral dilemmas, it takes self-discipline to choose the high and noble alternative, rather than to take the easy way.

Part of the problem lies in defining “good character.” In recent decades, the moral consensus in America and in much of the rest of the Western world has collapsed. No longer are such values as honesty, hard work, chastity and modesty universally acclaimed. Having jettisoned the Bible as a moral compass, modern man is adrift in a turbulent sea, and does not know either his desired goal or how to reach it!

To train a child, parents must have a clear sense of the results they seek. Without specific goals in mind, training will be haphazard at best. Using the timeless values of God's word, rather than the trendy ideas of social theorists, is the basis of developing truly good character in children.

With the goals clearly in mind, the next step is to form a strategy for achieving those goals. Parents must persevere and stick to what is right—even though modern society disapproves of many Biblical models of good behavior. Remember, also, that you cannot help someone else to be firmly anchored in life unless you are anchored yourself!

As we look at the great 20th century child-rearing experiment, we must conclude that permissiveness has not simply been a failure; it has been a disaster! The idea that permissive “love” would make discipline unnecessary, was fuzzyheaded, shallow thinking. The reality is that proper discipline is the result of genuine love. After all, God corrects every son whom He loves (Proverbs 3:12).

Increasingly in American society, the little schoolroom terrors are referred for psychiatric evaluation so that they can be medicated into compliance. But the real problem for most is that they have simply never received proper discipline, either at home or at school. They have never learned to inhibit their impulses and to control their behavior. The failure to learn respect for parental authority in the home carries over to the schoolroom and the playground.

How is respect for parental authority established in the home? Too many parents are beside themselves with frustration because their youngsters are defiant and yell and call them names, or perhaps tell them to “shut up” when they try to correct them. Dr. James Dobson, a noted psychologist and author, explained the answer to this dilemma very simply and succinctly in his landmark book, *Dare to Discipline*. Writes Dr. Dobson: “When a youngster tries this kind of stiff-necked rebellion, you had better take it out of him, and pain is a marvelous purifier. When nose-to-nose confrontation occurs between you and your child, it is not the time to have a discussion about the virtues of obedience. It is not the occasion to send him in his room to pout... You have drawn a line in the dirt... Who is going to win? Who

has the most courage? Who is in charge here? If you do not answer these questions conclusively for the child, he will precipitate other battles designed to ask them again and again” (p. 27).

Dr. Dobson is not endorsing—nor are we—the abuse or harming of children. Too many parents nag and threaten their children, yet put off imposing appropriate punishment. Finally, out of frustration and anger, they lash out at their children, perhaps yelling at and shaking them. This is not right! The scripture tells us that a parent who loves his child will discipline him early (Proverbs 13:24). Punishment, to be effective, must be swift and sure. It must be appropriate to the age of the child and to the offense. Most importantly, a loving parent who is fully in control of his or her, own feelings and emotions should administer it.

Children (and all of the rest of us, for that matter) tend to repeat conduct that brings desired results and to avoid conduct that brings unpleasant results. Unfortunately, too many parents reinforce the very behavior that they want to eliminate, by giving in to children when they whine, cry or are defiant. Consistency and persistence are

absolutely necessary to provide proper reinforcement in childrearing.

What is happening to our kids as a result of a century of social experimentation? Tragic consequences, that is what! Millions are over-medicated and under-disciplined. They are growing up with fatally flawed value systems. Seduced by decadence and materialism, they suffer from emptiness at the spiritual core of their being.

The Creator of mankind sent along an instruction book for His creation—the Holy Bible. It offers guidance in instilling right values. The principles of loving discipline, guidance and teaching are illustrated throughout this book of books. Rather than participate in the tragically flawed child development experiments that marked the 20th century, parents can opt for a far better way. By coming to understand and apply the principles revealed by the Creator, our children can be a joy to us and to others. Not only that, they will be equipped to face life with solid values and healthy self-discipline, thereby enabling them to lead happy, productive lives of their own. TW



Senator Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, displays the video game “Doom” as an example of the violent pastimes influencing America’s youth. ©Presslink Image

Have you been sold...

A Different Gospel?

By Douglas S. Winnail



“Progressive” ideas in modern Christianity come from a dangerous source!

Today nearly two billion people profess a belief in Jesus Christ. The Christian religion that began in Jerusalem now girdles the globe and encompasses one-third of mankind. This seems like a remarkable accomplishment—but there is a hitch! Jesus warned that “many will come in My name [claiming to be Christian teachers]... and will *deceive many*” (Matthew 24:5, 11, 24). The Apostle Paul *marveled* that converts in Galatia (modern Turkey) were turning to a “different gospel” built

on a perverted understanding of the truth (Galatians 1:6–9). The Apostle John recorded a prophecy that Satan would deceive *the whole world* (Revelation 12:9). Could this include *you* and the church you attend?

Surprising as it may seem, the Christianity embraced by millions today is *not* the same “faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). From the beginning, numerous false teachers opposed the gospel proclaimed by Jesus and the Apostles. It is common knowledge

among historians that the original faith did not remain uncorrupted (see *The Story of Civilization*, Durant, 1972, vol. 3, p. 595). That is why some churches acknowledge that their beliefs are based on the Bible *and tradition*—which often runs counter to Scripture!

One of the prime opponents of early Apostolic Christianity was Gnosticism—a radical belief system that mixed pagan ideas, Greek philosophy, mysticism and human reasoning with twisted explanations of Scripture. Although Gnosticism faded from view after the

2nd century, many of its subversive and heretical ideas were *absorbed* into mainstream Christianity. Even more remarkable is that numerous scholars acknowledge that Gnostic ideas are *alive and growing* inside Christian churches and seminaries today. New Testament Professor Peter Jones documents the “striking parallels between the ancient heresy of Gnosticism and the spirituality of New Age thinking and the post-modern worldview” (*Spirit Wars*, 1997, p. vii). The dangerously deceptive doctrines battled by Paul, Peter, John and other early Apostolic leaders are being *revived today* with a vengeance—yet the average person is largely unaware of the *real source* of ideas promoted under the guise of *progressive Christianity!* This article will take a brief look at early church history, and will reveal some eye-opening and sobering facts!

Who Were the Gnostics?

Gnosticism “developed in the *same places* as dawning Christianity and the Judaic religions: Palestine, Syria, Samaria and Anatolia [Asia Minor]” (*The Gnostics*, Lacarriere, 1989, p. 43). Gnostic teachers claimed to have *secret knowledge* about the creation of the world and the purpose of life and competed with the Apostles on the same ground. British historian Paul Johnson describes Gnosticism as “a spiritual parasite which used other religions as a carrier... Gnostic groups seized on bits of Christianity, but tended to cut it off from its historical source” (*A History of Christianity*, 1976, p. 45).

Gnostic teaching was a *particular threat* to Christianity because Gnosticism created “the illusion it was a Christian doctrine” by refer-

ring to the Hebrew Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus, while twisting and perverting the original meaning (Lacarriere, p. 44). Many Gnostics also claimed to be Christians. Historian Johnson notes the Apostle Paul “fought hard against Gnosticism, recognizing that it might cannibalize Christianity and destroy it” (p. 45). Johnson also comments “the most dangerous Gnostics were those who had, intellectually, thought their way quite inside Christianity, and then produced a variation which wrecked the system” (Ibid.).

One of the earliest Gnostic teachers was Simon Magus. He is thought to be the Simon (mentioned in Acts 8) who used sorcery to deceive people in Samaria. Simon was attracted by the miracles performed by Philip. Although Simon claimed to be a Christian after displaying a superficial conversion, Peter and John rejected him for being “poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (Acts 8:23). Other translations of this verse describe Simon as “a bitter poison and a pack of evil” (Moffatt), and “a bitter weed and a bundle of crookedness” (Williams). Although Simon continued to follow the Apostles around (Acts 8:13), he and his disciples (Marcion, Valentinus and Basilides) promoted a message that was “*subversive*” and “*radically different* from the Apostolic teaching” (Lacarriere, p. 46).

Gnostic Teachings

The radical and subversive nature of Gnosticism can best be appreciated when contrasted with the teachings of Scripture. The Bible reveals that an all-powerful God created the earth and the universe (Genesis 1:1). This magnificent creation was produced

according to a well-thought-out plan (Psalm 139:14; Proverbs 8:22–31; Job 38). Everything God made was *very good* (Genesis 1:10, 18, 21). God created human beings in His own image (Genesis 1:27). Male and female were created as separate genders for the purpose of marrying and reproducing in a family context (Genesis 1:28, 2:22–25). Satan, in the form of a serpent (Ezekiel 28:13), deceived the first human beings by insinuating that God was a liar and was withholding valuable information from them (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve were banished from the garden paradise for disobedience. Jesus Christ died for the sins of mankind, making it possible to be reconciled to God, receive the Holy Spirit, gain eternal life and participate in the future kingdom of God (John 3:16–17; Acts 2:38; Mark 1:14–15).

Gnostic teaching *totally reverses nearly every detail* of these biblical accounts! Gnostics taught that the real God is unknowable and incomprehensible. This world “is a stupendous mistake, created by a foolish or vicious creator-god” (*Mystery Religions in the Ancient World*, Godwin, 1981, p. 84). Humans are merely “fragments of the universe... sediment from a lost heaven” (Lacarriere, pp. 16, 19). This evil, incompetent god was self-conceived by Sophia (goddess of wisdom) and later seduced Eve, who then gave birth to Cain and Abel. The serpent was actually sent by the true God to teach wisdom to Adam and Eve before they were unmercifully expelled from the garden. This wicked god, the Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures, tricked people into worshiping him as the true God, and the Old Testament “is the story of his tyranny and egotism” (Ibid., p. 85). The villains of the Bible (Cain,

Esau, the Sodomites, etc.) are regarded as heroes by Gnostics for standing up to this evil god!

In Gnostic belief, salvation is obtained not by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins and changing our life, but by learning secret knowledge. For Gnostics, knowledge comes from *within oneself*—not from revealed Scripture, yet the Bible says just the opposite (Proverbs 3:5; John 17:17)! For Gnostics, this world is evil; the body is the evil—a corrupt prison for the soul—from which one must seek to escape. Marriage and procreational sex are also seen as evils dreamed up by the wicked creator-god. The *real hope*, to Gnostics, is not to see the *future* kingdom of God, but to regain an imagined *past*, freed from the fetters of this world (spirit from matter, light from darkness) in a timeless and incorporeal Kingdom of Light. It is not hard to see why the ideas of Simon and his followers “flew in the face of the whole Apostolic doctrine and the teaching of Jesus” (LacARRIERE, p. 47). Gnostics literally turn the Bible upside down!

Gnosticism is anti-Scripture, anti-God, anti-Law and anti-Christ—yet its proponents often claim to be *the true* Christians! Marcion, a highly intelligent man—and originally a member of a Christian community—wrote and traveled widely in the 2nd century promoting deceptive Gnostic ideas. His major work entitled *Antithesis* contains many ideas that *subvert* and *reverse* the meaning of Scripture. Marcion even produced a *canon*—a list of books that he felt should constitute the *real* Bible! Marcion, however, *eliminated* the whole Old Testament because he felt it was a record of Jehovah’s “crimes against humanity” (Godwin, p. 85). He

rejected three gospels (Matthew, Mark and John) because he felt they had been corrupted by Jewish influences and leaned too heavily on the Old Testament. He *discarded* six of Paul’s epistles for the same reasons. Marcion apparently felt he was a better judge of Scripture than the Apostles and Jesus Christ!

Perverted Practices

Some of the most controversial teachings of the Gnostics had to do with the lifestyle they advocated. Marriage and procreational sex were scorned as the distractions of a wicked god. This led to drastic extremes! Certain teachers, such as Marcion and Valentinus, advocated asceticism (self-denial). They forbade marriage and taught that Gnostics should remain celibate. Initiates already married were told to abstain from sexual relations for life (*After Jesus*, Reader’s Digest, 1992, p. 132). Since some Gnostics taught that Adam was created without gender, the ideal state one should aspire to is androgyny—where sexual identity is suppressed or eliminated. The *Gnostic Gospel of Thomas* states, “when you make the male and female into one, so that the male is not male and the female is not female... then you shall enter the kingdom” (*Unearthing the Lost Words of Jesus*, Dart and Riegert, 1998, p. 54). Celibate asceticism—denying one’s sexuality and abhorring marriage—was a way of achieving this androgynous ideal and becoming like the true God.

However, other Gnostic teachers advocated just the opposite! Simon Magus appears to have rejected marriage and promoted *free love*! Gnostics saw laws given by an evil creator-god as restrictive and inhibiting. They taught the “practice of free love must be the

means of *bursting out of the social straight jacket* specifically invented to stifle its [love’s] liberating spontaneity... in the promiscuity of men and women lies the true communion” (LacARRIERE, p. 51). Some Gnostic sects participated in orgiastic rites of almost indescribable perversion. The idea was that to extirpate evil, it must be practiced until it is exhausted! This stood in marked contrast to the biblical admonitions to “flee sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18–20) and avoid all forms of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Gnostic Influences

One might expect that such extreme ideas would have vanished from the Christian community, especially after being labeled as heresy by the early Church. Yet, despite considerable opposition by Church leaders, “this *unusual religion* was to have a *lasting impact* on Christianity” (“After Jesus,” p. 131). Gnosticism was the bridge over which pagan ascetic practices such as celibacy crossed into Christianity. The Gnostic idea that faith needed to be supplemented by philosophy (*The Early Church*, Chadwick, 1993, p. 74) appears in church doctrines based upon the Bible *and tradition*! The idea that the kingdom of God is “within you,” instead of being a definite future event, is a Gnostic twist of Scripture that still influences the belief of many Christians today (compare Luke 17:21; Acts 1:6; Matthew 19:28).

Gnosticism taught that the true God is unknown, unknowable and non-corporeal (without a body). This contrasts sharply with the God of Scripture (see Jones, pp. 168–169, also Exodus 33:17–23; Revelation 1:13–17; 4:1–3). These ideas about God,

which originate from Greek philosophy, have influenced Christian thinkers from Augustine (a former Gnostic) and Aquinas to many modern theologians (see *The Openness of God*, Pinnock, 1994, chap. 2). The ultimate goal of Gnosticism—to be freed from the fetters of this world (spirit from matter, light from darkness) and to return to a Kingdom of Light—is remarkably similar to the belief about going to heaven to behold the beatific vision (look on God) for all eternity. This differs dramatically from biblical promises that the saints will rule with Christ when the kingdom of God is restored to this earth (Daniel 2:44; 7:27; Revelation 5:10; 11:15–18).

Scholars now recognize that when Marcion eliminated entire books of Scripture based on his own reasoning, he was “using historical and critical methods *basically similar* to those of modern scriptural scholars” (Johnson, p. 46). Marcion’s attempt to call into question the inspiration of Scripture by listing supposed contradictions between the Old and New Testaments finds ready listeners today—even among professing Christians! For Gnostics, Bible prophecy was myth or allegory without literal historical meaning—a view that also finds supporters in modern mainstream Christianity (see Chadwick, p. 37).

A Gnostic Revival!

The parallels between ancient Gnostic ideas and modern Christian theology are not accidental. Today we are witnessing “an orchestrated attempt in Christian liberal circles” to present Gnostic writings “as a *valid, alternate, even superior* expression of early Christianity” (Jones, p. viii). Modern

radical scholars are attempting to *rehabilitate* Gnostic texts and are even suggesting that such writings—clearly labeled as heretical in the early centuries of the Church—be added to the New Testament canon! But *why* is there such an interest in Gnosticism on the part of liberal theologians?

The reason is simply that ideas promoted by the Gnostics in the first and second centuries are very popular today! Gnosticism was a *theology of liberation*—*pro-*



Women continue to be ordained as ministers and priests by many denominations as the feminist movement maneuvers to reshape Christianity. ©Presslink Image

moting unlimited human freedom! Gnostic teachers wanted an “adult Christianity” that was “liberated from the everlasting references to Genesis and the Mosaic commandments” (Lacarreire, p. 103). Their goal was to break the “mooring ropes” that tied human conduct to the Bible. Sound familiar? For many Gnostics, “total insubordination was lauded as the road to liberation” (Ibid., p. 74). Their practice of communal sex, attempts to gain a state of spiritual ecstasy, refusal to work, desiring to live as philosophical vagabonds, would blend easily with the hippies of the 1960s. Former rock star John Lennon once commented “It seems to me

that the only true Christians were the Gnostics” (Jones, p. ix).

But that is not all! Gnostic texts “are employed [by liberals] to justify women’s ordination, the goddess character of the Holy Spirit, the moral appropriateness of abortion, the feminist re-interpretation of culture, and much more” (Jones, p. 90). These common interests reveal why New Testament scholar Peter Jones asserts, “Gnosticism was the earliest expression of ‘Christian’ liberalism” and that “modern liberals only imitate their long-lost cousins, the Gnostics” (p. 64).

Many professing Christians do not seem to realize that their progressive ideas are rooted in this ancient heresy!

A Modern Gnostic Agenda

As the 21st century dawns, several powerful social movements are *reviving* Gnostic ideas. Peter Jones states “feminist thinkers have discovered the revolutionary character of Gnosticism as it applies to gender and patriarchal civilization” and that “an egalitarian, non-patriarchal vision constitutes the agenda of *cutting-edge* theology, sociology, and global politics in the West. *Gnosticism and feminism are a match made in heaven*” (Jones, p. 162). He quotes a feminist who states, “Gnosticism is becoming a powerful influence in feminist research into the *overthrow* of the male in the divine” (Ibid.).

Feminists want to change Western society, and they realize that “to change the civilization built on the Bible, *you must change the Bible*” (Jones, p. 81). This is why liberals and radical feminist theologians want to include Gnostic texts as an authentic view of early Christian teaching—

equal with the Bible! Theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether asserts, “Feminist theology must create a new textual base, a *new canon*... Feminist theology *cannot* be done from the existing base of the Christian Bible” (Ibid., p. 82). Asian feminist theologian Chung Hyun Kyung has stated, “femi-

tainers of revelation” and to “correct as we read” (Ibid., p. 120). In other words, everything in the Bible “must be re-interpreted by feminist interpreters” which is just what the Gnostics did (Ibid.).

Many Christians today simply do not grasp the *real intent* of feminist theology. Radical feminist

was also the Gnostic agenda—to denigrate the creation, its laws and its Creator! Catholic educator Leon Podles senses the significance of this assault when he writes, “feminism may be as much of a challenge to Christianity as was Gnosticism (to which it bears a strong resemblance) (*The*

The modern return of Gnosticism—a belief system that rejects b

nists are free to use the ancient Gnostic texts, originally rejected as heretical, because the Christian canon was created by men” and that “women are not obliged to accept a book... they had no part in framing” (Ibid., p. 88). Feminists view the orthodox Bible as a tool “for social control through the patriarchal suppression of women” (Ibid.). They like the Gnostic *Gospel of Mary* because it places Mary Magdalene at the foundation of Christ’s church, rather than the Apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:19–20; Matthew 16:18; Galatians 1:17–19). Women took unprecedented leadership roles in many early Gnostic sects (*After Jesus*, p. 131).

Today’s radical feminist theologians have developed what they call a “ritual of exorcism” to expunge Bible verses that describe different roles for men and women, such as Ephesians 5:22–24 and 1 Peter 3:1–6 (Jones, p. 82). Like the Gnostics, they use verses they like, and discard verses with which they disagree! Feminists create an androgynous deity by their support of sexually inclusive terms in new biblical translations. To understand the Bible, feminist theologians assert, “new rules will require feminist interpreters to assume that Scripture is *not* the word of God... is *not* a con-

Naomi Goldberg has stated, “the feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the *slow execution* of Christ and Jehovah. Yet very few of the women and men now working for sexual equality within Christianity and Judaism realize the extent of their heresy” (Ibid., p. 195). She blames “God the Father of Judeo-Christian Scripture as the architect of the patriarchal society” and states that “like patriarchy, this God will have to go” (Ibid., p. 180). Patriarchy refers to the authority of the father. In her words, “**We women are going to bring an end to God**” (Ibid.). This would include rejecting His laws found in the Bible—which was also the Gnostic mission! Goldberg has predicted, “when feminists succeed in changing the position of women in Christianity and Judaism, they will shake these religions at their roots” (Ibid., p. 181). Remarkably, very few theologians acknowledge that Bible prophecy reveals women will push to dominate society as the end of the age nears (Isaiah 3:12).

In light of such brazen comments, Peter Jones observes, “Christians must realize that the religious feminist movement carries with it a *frontal assault* on the normativity of creational heterosexuality and, beyond that, on God Himself as the Creator” (Ibid., p. 196). This, in essence,

Church Impotent—The Feminization of Christianity, 1999, p. 139).

Retired Episcopal bishop John Shelby Spong has an even larger radical agenda! Spong made headlines a decade ago when he ordained a homosexual priest. The radical bishop has asserted, “Feminism and *homosexuality* lie at the heart and soul of what the Gospel is all about” (Jones, p. 192). Spong feels “the church should bless and encourage same sex marriages” (*The Arizona Daily Star*, Sept. 25, 1999). Spong would agree with radical feminist theologians—and Gnostics—that “the Bible is full of rhetoric and concepts we do not and can not believe” (Ibid.) such as guidelines for sex role differentiation and prohibitions against homosexuality. He also echoes sentiments of early Gnostics who wanted an adult Christianity when he asserts, “I’m anxious to open Christianity so it can be everything it can be... a more enlightened Christianity” (Ibid.). Spong is simply advocating the same goal as the Gnostics—the destruction of *biblical* Christianity!

Today the Christian view of sex and gender roles is under attack. Liberals say biblical guidelines limit human freedom—but the real reason for this attack goes much deeper. Jones quotes a common lesbian assertion that “compulsory [biblical] heterosexuality

is the very backbone that holds patriarchy together,” that *homosexuality will break that backbone* and that “lesbian, bisexual and gay issues... are wedges driven into the superstructure of the heteropatriarchal system” (Ibid., p. 179). The real goal of homosexuals, radical feminists and liberal progressives

24:11–12) and that it would be related to a movement that was “already at work” in the days of the Apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:7–8). The early Gnostics were major antagonists of the Apostles and, just as liberals today, they preached a very deceptive message. This is why Paul warned the

guided minds. Gnosticism—ancient or modern—is a dangerous deception. Social movements built on these perverted ideas will lead to disaster. Societies that reject moral guidelines in favor of unfettered human desires are headed for trouble! The God of the Bible thunders: “Because you have rejected [My] knowledge, I also will reject you... Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children” (Hosea 4:6). The revival and embrace of Gnostic ideas by liberal professing Christians is a case of *history repeating itself*. To remain ignorant of the past is to risk being deceived by a different gospel. Do not be deceived! Open your eyes! Believe the *real* word of God and the message of *true* Apostolic Christianity! FW

Both God and His laws—is no coincidence.

is to change the way Western society operates by *eliminating its biblical foundation!* Their tool is the Gnostic tool of sexual liberation!

The modern return of Gnosticism—a belief system that rejects both God and His laws—is no coincidence. It was actually prophesied! The Bible warns that the end of the age would be marked by *lawlessness* (Matthew

Galatians against believing a *different gospel* (Galatians 1:6–9), and why he instructed Timothy to “guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is *falsely called knowledge* [gnosis]” (1 Timothy 6:20).

Gnostic ideas are the product of intelligent yet profoundly mis-

WHO WAS THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT? (continued from page 7)

Jesus said, “I and My Father are ONE” (John 10:30). So the One who had been totally “one” with God—and who *was* GOD—“emptied Himself” to become our Savior. Truly His life is worth more than ALL of ours combined, because He created not only the human race, but the entire universe as well. Having *bought* and *paid* for us by His death on the cross, Christ now *doubly* “owns” us. He is our Maker. He is our God. He is our Master.

Yet after the death of the original Apostles, a great apostasy took over the name of “Christianity.” The clear teachings and examples of Christ and the Apostles began to be altered. The very concept of Christ being a real “Master” began to be undone and permanently altered. He came to be considered a “Lord” who demanded *no obedience* to the very spiritual LAW—the Ten Commandments—that He had given mankind. His clear and persistent teaching, “If you want to enter into life, KEEP the commandments” (Matthew 19:17), was now explained away as instruction only for the Jews. So also were dismissed the powerful statements of the Apostle John such as, “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His

commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). These clear statements were explained away as applying only to the “spirit” of the law or to some “new” commandments of Jesus. But when you study these new commandments, they are only magnifications of the Ten Commandments, which Jesus Himself gave on Mount Sinai! And again, “Jesus Christ is the SAME yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

May God help *all* of you who read this to UNDERSTAND and to respond to the true Jesus Christ of the Bible. As He said, “WHY do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). If you really want to obey the Christ of the Bible, write us today and request your FREE copy of our very revealing and fully documented booklet entitled, *Which Day is the Christian Sabbath?*

We, in this publication, are involved in *restoring Apostolic Christianity*, the religion which Jesus and the Apostles actually taught and practiced. The Living Jesus Christ—the One who existed with the Father from eternity—is the One who will *guide* you, *strengthen* you and *bless* you IF you determine to *do what He says* and worship Him not only as Savior, but as Lord and Master now and forever. FW

THE WAY OF LIFE (continued from page 3)

protest the use of the word “Creator.” It probably would be bemoaned by liberals as the endorsement of religion by government, a suggestion that humans did not evolve in an unaided, materialistic manner from primeval sludge to Bach or Beethoven. On July 4, 1776, however, there was no debate over the phrase “endowed by their Creator” (with an upper-case C). That America was founded as a Christian nation is beyond debate. We were a Christian nation with a constitutional government rather than a theocracy, but a Christian nation nonetheless. What is more, we were founded as a Christian nation that took Judeo-Christian principles so much for granted that the founding fathers saw little reason to state the obvious (Ibid., p. 93).

Now, we seem to be in a headlong rush to forsake even the limited spiritual understanding we used to have as a nation and the basically decent way of life we used to practice. As one who grew up in the American Midwest in the 1930s and 1940s, I well remember the almost total safety of our city and our neighborhood. Elderly ladies went out walking at night with no fear. Little boys and little girls played “hide and seek” and “kick the can” in almost total darkness in neighborhoods all over the city. Murder and rape were virtually unheard of. And many folks did not even bother to lock their doors at night!

Back then, *respect for authority* was taught and basically practiced. The Ten Commandments were posted in many schools and public places.

But, today, we have LOST our way!

That is one reason for the existence of this magazine, *Tomorrow's World*. We want to help all sincere people on the way to recapturing *Apostolic Christianity*—the Christianity actually taught and practiced by Christ and the original Apostles. That kind of Christianity has been forsaken by most of humanity. But it is the only *true* Christianity.

The Apostle Jude was inspired to write: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Note that the true faith was delivered “once for all.” It was NOT to be altered, changed, done away, watered down or tampered with. And Jude continued, “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 4). Wicked men were able, during the Dark Ages, to change and to pervert the entire *WAY of life* delivered to us by Christ and the Apostles.

America and Canada will not continue to exist, as we have known them, unless there is a *genuine reformation*—a national REPENTANCE and a return to the *WAY of God*. But each of us individually may be blessed and protected during the traumatic times ahead IF we are willing to fight—to “contend earnestly”—for the faith which was “once for all” delivered to the saints.

Robert Meredith



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FRI 2:00 pm
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HI, Lanai: *Akaku*—Ch 3, 12 & 13, SAT 9:30 pm
HI, Maui: *Akaku*—Ch 44, SAT 9:30 pm
HI, Molokai: *Akaku*—Ch 3, 12 & 13 SAT 9:30 pm
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& 3:00 pm; SUN 3:00 am & 3:00 pm
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SAT 1:00 pm; SUN 11:00 am
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VT, Barre: Ch 7, SAT 9:00 pm; SUN 2:00 pm & 11:00 pm
WA, Bellingham: *TCI*—Ch 10, SAT 8:00 pm; SUN 8:00 am
WA, Seattle: *TCI*—Ch 29, SAT 12:00 pm
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