

Can You Sanctify the Pagan?

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SEVEN LETTERS TO

Seven Churches

Not Yet “My Father’s World”

“**T**his Is My Father’s World” is a popular hymn written by Maltbie Davenport Babcock and first published in 1901. There is little doubt that it came from a heart that was grateful for the beauty he saw on his walks along the Niagara Escarpment and on the shores of Lake Ontario in upstate New York. Whether sung *a cappella* by children or by more polished voices with accompanied instrumentation, it has a captivating melody with words declaring God’s glorious creation.

Who can dismiss such phrases as, “I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas—His hand the wonders wrought”? Or, “And to my listening ears all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres”? King David of Israel shared similar thoughts when he wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.... There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1, 3).

Never in the history of man have we had so little excuse to *not* believe in a divine Creator. We can now see further into the universe than ever before imagined, and we can also turn the lens around to peer into the intricacies of the tiniest of life’s structures. We can dive into ocean depths to discover strange and marvelous creatures. In the last hundred years, we have explored a world of wonders totally unknown to previous generations—birds, insects, fish, amphibians, and primates.

There seems to be no end to the creations of God we can see in living color on our televisions. Yet almost every nature documentary gives credit to a blind evolutionary process. For sure, *microevolution* is at work. New dog breeds are constantly being developed, for example—but they still remain dogs. The same can be said for cats, cattle, fish, and birds—new breeds, but always the same kind. And the gap between dead dirt and vibrant life is so great as to be mathematically and logistically impossible to bridge. Life is infinitely more complex than science once thought, and men who are honest with the facts must either admit this to themselves or continue to be blinded by an irrational, anti-God ideology.

Babcock looked at the world as he saw it in nature. But he wasn’t unaware that there were problems: “Oh, let me ne’er forget that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.” With that we most certainly agree—God is the ultimate ruler of the universe.

What Is the Problem?

Each stanza of Babcock’s hymn begins, “This is my Father’s world.” In one sense, he was right—God created this planet and all the marvelous creatures in it. He is in charge, overall. But in another sense, this idea

obscures a vital truth that most miss—even those calling themselves “Christian.”

That truth is that Satan, the devil, is currently the ruler of this world.



Now, please don’t take my word for that without proving it for yourself.

Look up and read how Jesus three times referred to His adversary as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31;

14:30; 16:11). This truth is further shown by the Apostle Paul: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds *the god of this age* has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:3–4).

Paul wrote of Satan in a manner that should be a serious warning for all of us, describing the Ephesians’ past conduct “in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now

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works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh” (Ephesians 2:2–3). Yes, the devil truly has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). This is currently *his* world. This explains why we see so many troubles throughout history and why we are no closer today to peace than we were thousands of years ago. We have brought this truth out more than once to *Tomorrow’s World* subscribers—so, what is the point? Why is this so important?

Few areas of life direct the course of our world more than how we entertain ourselves. As an example, this past summer, the wildly popular *Barbie* movie raked in more than a billion dollars in box office sales the first three weeks after its release. But this was hardly a harmless escape into fantasy. As many reviewers recognized, an agenda behind it was intent on slamming the unique biblical roles given to men and women.

Agendas have always been pervasive in entertainment. I grew up watching Popeye the Sailor cartoons, not knowing at a young age that they contained promotional messages to get children, especially boys who wanted to sprout big muscles, to eat more spinach. Tobacco companies donated their products or paid for placement so that millions of viewers would see cool and sophisticated actors and actresses smoking on camera. Millions bought the image—and millions have died from heart disease, COPD, lung cancer, and other maladies as a result. “Reality” shows are hardly more than infomercials for products—and for “lifestyles” that were taboo not long ago.

Adults may see through this, though many are clearly persuaded by the not-always-so-subtle pitches. But what about our children and grandchildren? Do they recognize that adults—who themselves are deceived by the spirit ruler of this world—are shaping their malleable minds, baking into them various anti-Bible agendas?

Behind it all is that “prince of the power of the air” who hates God and His institution of the family. Only a very few recognize that Satan has directed the course and path of human culture and trends. Consider how successful he has been in promoting

tattoos to the minds of those who accept his propaganda—contrary to God’s explicit prohibition (Leviticus 19:28). How many comprehend this and make decisions accordingly?

If God Is All-Powerful...

Clearly, great dangers in our culture come from entertainment promoting anti-God agendas, gory and sexual video games, pornography, politics, and so many other aspects of “the course of this world” directed by “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” But if God is all-powerful, why does He allow this rebellious being to corrupt the world? Why doesn’t He stop him? The answer is found in understanding God’s overall purpose for man, which He reveals in the opening chapters of the Bible.

Man was not made like any animal. It is God’s purpose to make mankind in His image, after His likeness (Genesis 1:26–27). We were made to be born into His family as His children (Romans 8:12–17; Hebrews 2:12–18; 2 Corinthians 6:16–18). But Adam and Eve rejected God’s command on how to live, determining right and wrong for themselves with the devil’s encouragement. Though He had warned them not to, God gave them free rein to do exactly that, and He has given this same free moral agency to all people since. We want it our way, and God essentially says in response, *I won’t stop you—but understand that there will be consequences.*

God is testing all of us to see which way we will choose. We must learn to resist the wrong and choose what is right. Doing so builds holy and righteous character within us. But time is running out for mankind’s experiment in self-rule.

Jesus prophesied that the course of this world, left to ourselves, will lead to human extinction (Matthew 24:21–22). Only at the brink will God step in to stop mankind’s madness. Only after Christ’s return will we be able to rightfully sing, “This is my Father’s world; why should my heart be sad? The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!”



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Why Are You Alive?

By **Richard F. Ames**

About a year ago, on November 15, 2022, the United Nations announced a historic milestone: The world's population reached 8 billion human beings. What is the future of these 8 billion people? How many have the attitude the Apostle Paul derided in 1 Corinthians 15:32—"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"?

Are you among the millions who think your life's purpose is just to enjoy physical pleasure before you die and disappear into oblivion? Are you just a clump of cells thrown together by a materialistic evolutionary process? Evolutionists will say that the ultimate goal of life is self-determination, self-preservation, and self-perpetuation. Certainly, the desire to survive and to have a family and children is part of human nature. But is that *all* there is?

Frankly, there is no more important question than "Why are you alive?" If you don't know why you are alive and the meaning of your life, you won't be able to know your purpose and your destiny.

For thousands of years, philosophers have proposed answers to the question "What is the meaning of life?" And that is a question we all should be able to

answer. In this article, we will discuss the awesome and amazing purpose for human life, from the pages of your Bible.

Meaning and Purpose?

Much of today's world has embraced an evolutionary worldview, and many materialists and evolutionists say there is no transcendental purpose of life. For example, the famous American astronomer and cosmologist Carl Sagan thought that humans, in the grand scheme of the universe, are almost insignificant. When the space probe Voyager 1 photographed an image of planet Earth in our solar system, Carl Sagan, considering this "pale blue dot" as he called it, made a striking comment: "Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves" (*Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*, 1994, p. 7).

Sagan wrote that planet earth is a "lonely speck" in the cosmic dark. Must we then conclude that we

are so insignificant as to be meaningless? Then why does the universe exist? Has it no purpose? Is the universe—as well as our part in it—meaningless? So, this atheistic philosophy admits that it cannot and will not answer the question “What is the purpose and meaning of life?”

On the other hand, Nobel Prize winner Sir John Eccles clearly saw significant meaning in the creation. Sir John Eccles was, in his time, perhaps the world’s foremost authority on the mind and brain. The observations of this distinguished scientist about the meaning and purpose of life are profound. He was interviewed for a *World Tomorrow* telecast back in the 1980s, in which he said the following:

I would say that the meaning... has to come back to the Creator.... One has to believe that there’s more behind all this, from our very existence as creating selves to what we do and how we live in what I like to think, in an altruistic society—caring and loving one another, living for one another, building a new world of love and inspiration and dedication and sacrifice—building such a world. The meaning of all this, I think, is in the mind of the Creator. You see... as soon as you get away from materialism, you have wonderful opportunities. You’ve left being tied down in materialism, stuck in materialism.

Sir John Eccles could clearly see the strong limitations of materialism. One definition of materialism is “a theory that physical matter is the only or fundamental reality and that all being and processes and phenomena can be explained as manifestations or results of matter” (*Merriam-Webster.com*). But physical matter is *not* the only reality, and materialism cannot and will not answer the question “What is the purpose and meaning of life?” By definition, it is a philosophy of meaninglessness.

The Creator of the universe has a sober warning to atheists, which He gave through the Apostle Paul:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of

God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1:18–21).

Some who embrace the materialist worldview even admit that embracing the philosophy of meaninglessness gives them freedom to practice all forms of immorality! However, for thousands of years, some philosophers gave a more transcendental meaning to life, even though many of their philosophies were insufficient and even promoted serious errors.

Paul and the Philosophers

The ancient Greek philosophers came up with a wide range of answers to questions about life’s meaning and purpose. The Apostle Paul was quite familiar with these ancient schools of thought. He visited Athens around AD 50: “Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this babbler want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?’” (Acts 17:18–19).

Paul then proclaimed to them the Creator God who made the world and everything in it. And he made the fundamental yet astounding observation that “in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (v. 28).

“*In Him we live and move and have our being.*” Our entire existence, Paul tells us, is intimately tied to the Creator God! Even the Greek poets knew we are God’s “offspring,” His children. Paul knew that human life can have no real meaning or purpose apart from God. Yes, we were created to have a special relationship with our Creator. It’s the *very foundation* of a meaningful life. The Savior, Jesus Christ, also affirmed this highest purpose in life. A lawyer asked Him, “Teacher,

which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:36–40).

YOUR BIBLE REVEALS THE REAL PURPOSE AND MEANING OF LIFE. BIBLE PROPHECY OUTLINES THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY. THAT FUTURE REVEALS YOUR PURPOSE AND MEANING IN LIFE.

That relationship leads to a change—from selfish human nature to a loving spiritual nature. God wants us to be *born* into His immortal family. That ultimate transformation takes place at the resurrection from the dead, as your Bible explains. The Savior, Jesus Christ, is the firstborn from the dead (Revelation 1:5). He is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29). God’s children will be transformed from mortal to immortal at the resurrection, as is stated in 1 Corinthians 15:53. Yes, you have an opportunity to belong to an immortal family, to be a part of God’s government and royal family. Remember, Jesus taught us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).

Yes, your Bible reveals the real purpose and meaning of life. Bible prophecy outlines the future of the world and the future of humanity. That future reveals your purpose and meaning in life. Jesus Christ came with a message called the Gospel, which means “good news.” That message is emphasized in a heavenly announcement: “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).

A New Age Ahead

Thank God that He has a plan to save mankind from *total extinction*. We are headed toward *World War III and Armageddon* if we as individuals and nations do not change our way of life. Beyond Armageddon, God has promised a new age to come. That new age will begin with the return of Jesus Christ to this

earth and the establishment of His kingdom over *all nations*. Revelation 5:10 and Revelation 20:6 reveal that our calling and purpose in that kingdom is to rule as kings and priests with the King of kings, Jesus Christ. What else has God promised faithful Christians? What is your destiny beyond death? Notice this: “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 25:34).

Yes, faithful Christians—and that could include you—will inherit the *Kingdom of God*. The prophet Daniel also confirms that promise: “But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (Daniel 7:18). Notice, “forever and ever.” Yes, faithful Christians will inherit *eternal life*. Dear reader, that is just a small part of the *glorious destiny* God has planned for His faithful people.

The amazing truth is that your potential future is grand, magnificent, and transcendent beyond what you can *imagine*. We get a hint of this plan by reading of when Jesus’ mother and brothers came to visit Him while He was talking with a large group of people.

While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven

is My brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:46–50).

Will you do your Father’s will? Will you fulfill your destiny as a potential member of His Family?

The Family of God

When Paul confronted the Greek philosophers in Athens, he declared that our purpose in life is intimately connected to the Creator of heaven and earth. He said, “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (Acts 17:28).

We also saw Jesus’ amazing statement that He considers His faithful disciples as His family! “He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother’” (Matthew 12:49–50).

Jesus described those who obey our Father in heaven as His spiritual family. Yes, God is inviting you to be part of His family! The Apostle Paul wrote that he bows his knees to our Father in heaven: “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*” (Ephesians 3:14–15).

Yes, God is the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named! God is producing a family. He wants us to voluntarily choose to become His sons and daughters! God wants us to come out of the carnal, sinful ways of the world: “‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ ‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty’” (2 Corinthians 6:17–18).

God is *love* (1 John 4:8, 16). He loves you so much that He wants *you* as His son or daughter! Remember what Jesus taught us to pray in the outline, or model, prayer. How do you begin your prayer? “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9). How do you become a son or daughter of your Father in heaven? We must first acknowledge God Almighty as the Creator of heaven and earth. Notice this in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that

He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Repentance and Baptism

Some of you longtime readers of *Tomorrow’s World* have had wonderful answers to your prayers because you have humbled yourself to pray to your Father in heaven. But there’s another step that Jesus made clear when He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Notice: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14–15).

Jesus called all His audience to repentance. What do we do when we repent? We turn away from sin, which is *breaking God’s law*, His Ten Commandments. To repent means to change our minds and express deep and sincere sorrow for our sins, behaviors, and attitudes. But we are not just to think differently—we must turn our lives around and go God’s way, rather than the carnal way of selfishness, greed, lust, jealousy, and other sin.

Remember that when the New Testament Church began on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter gave instructions to his audience: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call’” (Acts 2:38–39).

If you have deeply repented of your sins, and if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your living Savior, you need to be baptized. If you wish further counseling, we have representatives in many regions around the world. Just contact us at TomorrowsWorld.org or at one of our regional offices (listed on page 4 of this magazine). Now is the time to seek God (Isaiah 55:6–7). God will abundantly pardon, as He promises, if you follow through on Christ’s instructions.

After genuine repentance, faith, and baptism, God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is the beginning of a truly spiritual life. We become the very heirs of God, co-heirs, or joint heirs, with Christ. Read it for yourself in Romans 8:14–17. Here is the passage in the *King James Version*: “For as many as are led

by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

We’ve already seen a glimpse of our inheritance: We will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5), we will inherit the Kingdom (Matthew 25:34; Daniel 7:18), and we will inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:29).

Let’s understand—we are now heirs of God, not yet inheritors. That takes place at the resurrection! As God’s *begotten* children, we need to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). As we learn and practice God’s way of life, we grow in godly character. And that takes a lifetime.

Sadly, the world’s view of the future is very limited and often not very encouraging. But the greatest reality is that God is omnipotent—all-powerful. We read the inspiring words of the Apostle John: “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” (Revelation 19:6). Yes, God rules supreme. And His kingdom is the *family* of God and the *government* of God.

And *you* can be a part of that loving, divine, royal family. The Apostle Paul wrote that “as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Fulfill Your Purpose

Most of the 8 billion people living today will have their one opportunity for salvation at the coming White Throne Judgment after the Millennium. Long-time readers of *Tomorrow’s World* have read about God’s plan for all of mankind. Most people in this present age live and die without having had a genuine opportunity to hear Christ’s name and message, but a just and loving God will not leave them without hope.


But God is calling only a handful today to be His firstfruits. If God is calling you, please do not resist His call to become a member of that body, the true Church of God. Despite so much religious confusion

in the world around us, we have God’s assurance that His Church will not die. Jesus promised, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Truly, His Church *will not die*.

One purpose of His Church is to gather believers together to worship on His prescribed day of worship, the seventh-day Sabbath. We are told not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

To help introduce the wider public to God’s Church, we sponsor what we are calling *Tomorrow’s World* Presentations at various locations around the world. If you are a subscriber to the *Tomorrow’s World* magazine, you will receive an invitation to any presentation near you. And if you want to find a presentation for yourself—maybe near a friend or relative—you can go to the *TomorrowsWorld.org* website and click on “Presentations” to see a list of cities and dates of upcoming presentations. I and my fellow *Tomorrow’s World* telecast presenters speak at some of these, and many other presentations are given by our fellow ministers in the Living Church of God.

As you and your family fellowship with loving and faithful Christians, you will grow spiritually in God’s love. Our teenagers enjoy the annual Living Youth Camps, where they participate in sports, other outdoor activities, and Christian Living classes that challenge them to experience for themselves the values of abundant living that will last a lifetime and beyond. Brethren attend the eight-day annual Feast of Tabernacles in various locations around the world. They are preparing for tomorrow’s world, when all nations will observe God’s biblical festivals (Zechariah 14:16).

You are alive for a reason. God is preparing a glorious future for you and your family if you seek Him with your whole heart (Isaiah 55:6–7). The Savior, Jesus Christ, declares our purpose in life: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). 

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SUGGEST?**

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No Country for Christians



The world is becoming an increasingly hostile place for those who choose to live according to a Bible-based value system. Many of these individuals may call themselves “Christian” and they identify with many moral values that were once considered the norm in Western nations. Yet Britain, the nation that brought biblical morality and the Bible itself to countless cultures around the globe—the nation whose British common law undergirds the judicial fabric of many modern societies—is now, ironically, running headlong in the opposite social and moral direction.

According to a recent report by the Policy Institute at Kings College London, “Britain is now one of the most socially liberal countries in the world” (*The Times*, 7 March 2023). In recent years, the nation has undergone a colossal shift in moral values related to abortion, extra-marital sex, divorce, and euthanasia. And Generation Z (people aged 11–26) maintains the most dubious values of any age group. Research findings show that a sizable proportion of Gen Z in Britain feel that “fare-dodging on public transport... cheating on taxes... and people claiming benefits they were not entitled to were justifiable.” Members of the oldest generations, those born before 1945, have changed little in their social and moral values—though they have clearly failed to instill those values in their children. The sobering question is, what will happen as that generation fades completely and younger generations become predominant?

Old Values Fading

This moral sea change is transforming British society in many ways. In a recent article in the *Telegraph* (18 July

2023), journalist Emma Webb observed that, based on a host of recent faith-based incidents, many who hold a value system based on the Bible feel that Britain is no longer a place for them. She cited the following episodes as examples of such incidents:

- A Tory member of a district council who recently tweeted the message “Pride is not a virtue but a sin,” was ejected from the council. The man later explained that “pride” is a sinful character trait, despite the modern use of the term positively in approval of biblically sinful behaviours. His fellow council members were completely intolerant of his differing viewpoint.
- A charity worker was arrested twice and charged with “protesting and engaging in an act that is intimidating to service users” because she had been *praying* outside an abortion facility (*BBC News*, 16 February, 2023). Nothing was said aloud by this person; she was just observed standing with a bowed head, which suggested prayer.
- A doctor who calls himself a Christian was fired for what was called “misgendering” patients because he said his conscience was violated by calling them their preferred gender, as opposed to their God-given birth gender.
- And more recently, *The Guardian* cited a leader in the Church of England, the Archbishop of York, reporting his claim that the “opening words of the Lord’s Prayer, recited by Christians all over

the world for 2,000 years, may be ‘problematic’ because of their patriarchal association” (7 July 2023).

One archbishop’s discomfort at Christ’s instruction to pray to God the *Father* does not represent the perspective of all leaders in the Church of England, but it does reflect the social sea change occurring within this *national* church—a church that, historically, has largely sought to tie its moral tradition to biblical roots.

Those whose moral values are based on a biblical foundation and who identify with the “Christian” label are increasingly ostracized and shamed, or “cancelled,” by the same society that criticized these moral failures just a decade or two ago. As the *Telegraph* headline profoundly noted, “Britain is no country for Christians.”

Leading the Wrong Charge

When we look around the globe, it is instructive to observe that the nations leading the charge of moral decline are none other than the modern Israelite-descended nations of Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and other Western European countries like France and Sweden. (To learn more about the historical connection between these nations and the nation of ancient Israel, you can request our free booklet *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*, or read it online at TomorrowsWorld.org.) Ironically, the nations with the most biblically aligned moral values today are those that the Western, so-called Christian world historically viewed as *pagan*—nations including South Korea and Iran (*The Times*, 7 March 2023).

For students of Bible prophecy, the moral decline and social inversion we are witnessing in Britain and many other Western nations should not be surprising. Wise King Solomon offered up a prayer as he dedicated the newly built temple to God, and in this prayer, he repeatedly asked God to forgive Israel’s future sins against God and His commands (1 Kings 8). The prophet Hosea warned that Ephraim (i.e., the modern-day British-descended peoples) would, in the future, commit spiritual harlotry against God (Hosea 5:3). Hosea went on to observe that these people would fail to “direct their deeds toward turning to

their God” (v. 4). These British-descended peoples would “stumble in their iniquity” (v. 5) and would beget “pagan children” (v. 7) who would have nothing to do with the God of the Bible or His laws.

The prophet Isaiah also warned that “the leaders of this people cause them to err” and that “everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly” (Isaiah 9:16–17). And the prophet Malachi directed that the responsibility of God’s true religious leaders is to “keep knowledge,” not lose or reject it (Malachi 2:7)—something today’s so-called Christian leaders often fail to do. God’s true servants should point people to His holy law, not push them away from it in favor of what is socially convenient (vv. 7–9).

As we reflect on the moral upheaval in Britain and all the other Western, so-called Christian nations, we should be deeply saddened—but not surprised. The prophet Jeremiah was moved to express this sadness in the book of Lamentations. Christ Himself lamented over His rejection by His people (Matthew 23:37). The Israelite nations’ rejection of God and His laws has long been prophesied, but we are seeing it on a scale and at a speed that are unprecedented. This massive moral decline will result in the removal of God’s protection of and blessing upon these nations, and eventually these same nations will go into prophesied captivity as a result of their sins.

However, their punishment and captivity will be short-lived. As they recognize their sins and repent, God will hear, as King Solomon prayed He would. God will send His Son as the King of kings to establish His government on the earth and lead the British—and all peoples—in their turn to Him and His ways. Jesus Christ, the perfect leader and high priest, will come “judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness” (Isaiah 16:5). He and His saints will quickly work to help people turn to obeying His laws, which are the key to true freedom (James 1:25).

Britain today is rejecting biblical values and becoming *intolerant* of those who hold them. And Britain is not alone. But this hostility toward biblical morality will change when, one day soon, the Saviour of mankind returns to establish His kingdom on the earth. That kingdom will reintroduce biblical morality to the world and create an environment that true Christians can call home.

—Scott D. Winnail



Jerusalem: The Way Forward

By **Peter G. Nathan**

In April of 2023, Israel celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary as an independent modern nation. On its fiftieth anniversary in 1998, it was acclaimed by the late Paul Johnson, British writer and commentator, as the most significant of the 100 nations that had been formed in the twentieth century—the formation of Israel as a nation was a miracle, whereas the others were not. To put it in perspective, Israel has survived 75 years, while the Soviet Union collapsed at 74 years.

But the seventy-fifth anniversary was not greeted with the exuberance of the fiftieth. Since January, regular protests have been staged in various Israeli cities both for and against the direction of the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with the media giving those against the government more coverage. As of the end of September, protests by both sides have continued for nine months. Remarkably, the protests have been without marked violence or damage to property and highlighted by the profuse number of Israeli flags used by protestors on both sides. The basis of the protests is linked to where Israel will be within the next 75 years.

The cause of the protests is a legal reform sought by Netanyahu's coalition government. Since 1994 and the appointment of Aharon Barak as Chief Justice, the Supreme Court of Israel has become activist to the point of declaring legislation from the Knesset unlawful. Netanyahu has sought judicial reforms that

would give the Knesset veto power over Supreme Court decisions and would curb the influence of unelected judges and lawyers on the appointment of new Justices.

But if it has worked for decades, why the urge to change the arrangement now? While many other nations throughout the world have sought to emulate that role of the Supreme Court, the religious of Israel feel aggrieved by the way they have been treated by the Supreme Court and the secular elite. Netanyahu's reforms seek to enshrine Knesset authority to override Supreme Court decisions and exercise more influence in appointing Justices to serve on that Court.

A Crisis of Political and Religious Identities

To appreciate Netanyahu's desire for change, we need to back up to the beginning of the State of Israel in 1948. Israel was established as a nation based on modern European concepts of statehood. It was to be a secular state, governed by the Knesset, rather than a religious state. Religion was to be subject to the government, just as the government in the United Kingdom oversees the Church of England. The UK Prime Minister approves all major appointments in that church before they are ratified by the monarch as the head of the Church of England.

David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, wanted Israeli citizens to follow the example of the *sabras*—those rugged native-born Israelis who worked the land and contributed to its industry—rather than emulate the religious Jews devoted to

studying, like so many who had died in the Holocaust in Europe. Religion was nevertheless allowed, and provision was made for the Rabbinate to oversee immigration and marriages.

While that may have been acceptable to most in the early years of the state, changes have come along that have profoundly affected the nation. Israelis have largely deserted the left-wing Labour party Ben-Gurion founded and moved to the right of the political spectrum. If an election were to be held in Israel today, some postulate that the Labour Party would not win any seats. Current prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, of the conservative Likud, is the longest-serving Israeli prime minister, having held the role three times since Likud first formed a government under Menachem Begin in 1977. Yet, conservative or leftist, all of Israel's prime ministers, from David Ben-Gurion to Benjamin Netanyahu, have been in the secular mold.

While the shift right in Israeli politics can be attributed in part to the economic success of Likud policies, an even greater change is transforming the nation's demographics, as the numbers of largely religious Mizrahi Jews—those with roots in neighboring Muslim nations rather than in Europe—are growing and becoming a force to be reckoned with electorally, along with the Falasha from Ethiopia and the Haredi (Orthodox).

We should also note that the term *secular* has a nuanced meaning in Israel that is not entirely *irreligious*, as it is in the West. Though politics and philosophy rule the lives of the secular, many secular Israelis observe religious holidays such as Passover or Yom Kippur, though for remembrance rather than as a way of life. We can see this in how the city of Tel Aviv has embraced sexual- and gender-identity politics. Noted writer and academic Yossi Klein Halevi summed up this *secular* position when he wrote:

My Jewish life is religious; my Israeli life is secular. I celebrate the secular state that brought us home and taught us how to protect ourselves, that helped us heal as a people after the Holocaust and retrieved Jewish communities from an increasingly dangerous and dysfunctional Middle East (*Times of Israel*, July 28, 2023).

By contrast, for most of the Mizrahi Jews, and for the entire Hasidic community within Israel, religion controls their lives in a profound way. The secular philosophies of the day are a passing fad and of no consequence to them.

In recent years, the small religious political parties, which tend to be right-wing on the political spectrum, have become kingmakers in the formation of Israeli governments. Like other recent prime ministers, Netanyahu relies on them for his majority in the Knesset. Thus, Netanyahu—a secularist—today leads what some consider Israel's first Orthodox parliament.

This makes the judicial reforms, the first of which was passed on July 24, a litmus test of where Israel is going politically: Should Israel be secular or religious? That battle is being waged on the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but will soon be played out in the Supreme Court, which on July 28 agreed to consider a legal challenge as to whether it deems the new legislation recently passed by the Knesset as reasonable.

This is setting Israel up for a constitutional crisis. Will the actions on the streets and in the Supreme Court rend the nation apart and cause it to fall? The crisis is serious, and the rhetoric opposing the change is heated—to the point that some reservists in the Israel Defense Force have publicly avowed not to turn up for service training.

But will this mark the end of Israel? As students of prophecy, we understand the 1948 establishment of the modern state of Israel from the pages of an ancient book—the Holy Bible. It makes clear that a Jewish state will be a considerable fighting force at the time of the return of Jesus Christ (Zechariah 12:1–14), and Jerusalem a flashpoint in the times just ahead of us.

The Temple Mount

At the time the modern, secular State of Israel was established, the Temple Mount was of no immediate interest. It was in the hands of the Jordanians. Jewish concern over the Temple Mount involved the location of the Holy of Holies and the desire to stop people from walking onto (and hence defiling) the sacred ground where it once stood. Ben-Gurion, as Prime Minister, was content to know that it was under the control of the Jordanian government. Israel had enough problems on its hands simply related to survival.

Scroll forward to June 1967 and the Six-Day War, when Jewish forces recaptured Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli forces' leader and a formidable figure in Israeli society, seeing an Israeli flag raised over the Dome of the

Orthodox Jews ("The History of the Temple Mount Status Quo, Which Prohibits Jews from Praying at Their Holiest Site," *Mosaic*, August 11, 2022).

Israeli police patrol the Temple Mount armed with camcorders to catch Jews who pray. They can impose on-the-spot judgment on any Jew found so doing. Despite that, increasing numbers of Jews ignore the restrictions and visit the Temple Mount to pray. Jerusalem Day, which annually commemorates the capture of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount in 1967, brings thousands of Jews to the site for prayer. The desire to pray as close as possible to the Temple's location is a powerful drive for religious Jews. Archaeologists largely agree as to

THE BIBLE IS EXPLICIT ABOUT SACRIFICES BEING REINTRODUCED. IT EVEN USES THE ENFORCED STOPPING OF SACRIFICES AS A TIME MARKER FOR THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

Rock after his forces captured the Temple Mount, ordered it lowered, commenting, "What do I need this Vatican for?" His comments reflected his secular outlook, especially his dismissal of any form of ritual religion, giving no thought to the importance of the Temple Mount in the prayers of observant Jewish people around the globe. As one observer wrote:

Dayan thought at the time, and years later committed his thoughts to writing, that since the Mount was a "Muslim prayer mosque," while for Jews it was no more than "a historical site of commemoration of the past... one should not hinder the Arabs behaving there as they do now and one should recognise their right as Muslims to control the site." ("Moshe Dayan's Tragic Blunder," *Commentary*, February 2023).

Dayan's statement played into the hands of the Palestinian notion of "Temple denial"—that Jews had never lived in Israel and that a temple had never existed there. By so ruling, Dayan also gave legitimacy to a *status quo* on holy sites that dated back to Mameluke rule in the thirteenth century. Today, the Temple Mount remains under the control of the Jordanian Waqf. Yet the idea of Israelis being restricted from the Temple Mount, and, above all, from praying on the Temple Mount—prayer is currently only allowed at the Western Wall—is being questioned by

where the Temple was located on the 37 acres of the Temple Mount, and many have no fear of trespassing the purity rules evoked by the rabbis at the formation of the state. Today, we find Jews posting offers on social media to add prayer requests for others to their own prayers on the Temple Mount. This reflects the increase in Jewish spirituality that has been noted over the past few years.

A Call to Prayer—Or a Call to War?

If regular prayer is openly undertaken on the Temple Mount by Jews despite the prospect of on-the-spot fines, what will the future hold? Visiting the Temple Mount to commemorate the fast of Tisha B'Av and the destruction of the first and second Temples, Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel's minister of national security, stated that his nation needs to "display governance" on the site ("Muslim countries condemn Ben-Gvir's 'storming' of Temple Mount," *Jewish News*, July 27, 2023). Under a headline highlighting Muslim opposition to his visit, Ben-Gvir was quoted as saying that the site of the Temple is "the most important place for the people of Israel. We need to return and display our governance."

Why is this important to us in terms of prophecy? Because the Bible indicates that, while not necessarily today, next week, or next year, the religious parties will ultimately win the battle.

Why can we be so sure of that victory? Because secular leaders would never allow sacrifices to take



Jerusalem and the Temple Mount as viewed from the Mount of Olives

place on the Temple Mount, and the Bible tells us that sacrifices will be reintroduced for a short period before the end of the age.

If you wonder about this view of the secular world, consider European sensitivities to the kosher and halal slaughter of animals. Secular governments often seek to outlaw such practices. Local authorities in some European countries already have the power to outlaw them. Once that battle is won, male circumcision will likely be next; Iceland already tried to outlaw the practice in 2018. Religious symbols, whether kosher killing, circumcision or—above all—sacrifices, are not acceptable in secular society. Successive governments of Israel have allowed circumcision and kosher slaughter as essential parts of Jewish identity, but have consistently blocked moves toward the reintroduction of sacrifices.

Yet the Bible is explicit about sacrifices being reintroduced. It even uses the enforced stopping of sacrifices as a time marker for the return of Jesus Christ to the Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem and faces the Temple Mount (Daniel 8:8–14; 12:11). The book of Daniel describes the reintroduction of sacrifices and establishes that they will be stopped by the King of the North, a major end-time figure who wages war against the King of the South in the area of Israel and surrounding nations (Daniel 11:29–40).

Daniel tells us it is going to be a time of great trouble. The turmoil in Israel today is just a shadow of what is coming. Following those events, Jesus Christ

will return to establish His government over all the world's nations.

A Stumbling Block for All Nations, Soon to Be Revealed

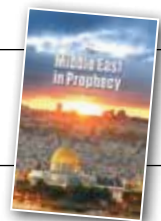
An Israeli government that allows sacrifices on the Temple Mount will not be one controlled by secular forces. It will be deeply religious. Israel is presently deciding what sort of nation it wishes to be. The fact that doctors and other professionals are openly talking about leaving the state of Israel shows that they understand the depth of changes taking place within their country.

Presently within Israel are groups who are preparing for the reintroduction of sacrifices. They have the necessary materials with which to build an altar, as well as clothes and utensils for the priesthood to go about the sacrificial process. They eagerly await the availability of a red heifer to be sacrificed for the purification of the priesthood and those sacrificing (Numbers 19).

Israel today shows us a sharp contrast of lifestyles. Its current battle is ultimately over what sort of nation it will be: secular versus religious, pious biblical conduct versus postmodern lifestyles of unrestrained sexual and gender expression. Neither is accepting of the other. A conflict is inevitable. Keep reading this magazine and watching the *Tomorrow's World* telecast to learn more about what the Bible warns will happen to the Middle East nations—and Israel in particular. TW

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3. Pergamos

Did not deny Christ in difficult circumstances, but contained some who were compromising.

4. Thyatira

Praised for their faith and service, but strongly admonished to repent and reject false teaching.

5. Sardis

Told that they were a "dead" church, not living up to their name, though some were faithful.

6. Philadelphia

Praised for keeping God's word, given an open door, and protected from coming worldwide trial.

7. Laodicea

Criticized for being lukewarm and blind to their faults, to be sent into tribulation to encourage repentance.

2. Smyrna

Suffered at the hands of false believers and faced imprisonment, but encouraged to endure.

1. Ephesus

Resisted false ministers and persevered through persecution, but left their "first love."

The Seven Churches

The churches in Asia Minor mentioned in Revelation 2-3 existed along a mail route and were addressed by Jesus Christ in the same order they would be encountered on that route. While many consider the seven letters to these churches to be merely a matter of history, in reality there is much more to these messages than meets the eye!

Seven Letters to Seven Churches

By **Gerald E. Weston**

The book of Revelation—the very last book in your Bible—is a mystery to most people. Many are at least somewhat familiar with its famous “four horsemen.” But few are even aware of its seven letters to the seven churches in Asia, recorded in the book’s second and third chapters. And even fewer understand what those letters mean for us today.

The word *revelation* refers to revealing—making known something that before was unknown. Yet many are intimidated by the book of Revelation, thinking it impossible to understand and preferring to put it on the proverbial shelf. Are you one of those who has been mystified by this important book? If so, this article is for you.

For more than 1,900 years, scholars and laymen alike have puzzled over the book of Revelation. What is its source? Who is its intended audience? When do its prophecies begin? Who can open our understanding to its message? And who is to take the message to its intended audience?

Let’s begin at the beginning. The very first verse of Revelation answers these questions: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John” (Revelation 1:1).

Here we see that Jesus Christ is the One who unveils the message, that the message comes from God the Father, that the message is intended for God’s servants, and that John is given the responsibility to carry the message to those servants.

The Lord’s Day

Though the book’s first verse is rich in meaning, and it sets the stage for what follows, it doesn’t yet reveal

the theme of the book. For that, we must look ahead nine verses, where John writes, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet” (v. 10).

Nearly all translators and commentaries promote the mistaken idea that being “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” means that John was worshipping on a Sunday. But there is a huge problem with this interpretation, which is flawed on multiple fronts. If the passage were talking about a day of the week—which it is not—this could not be a Sunday. If we trust the Bible as our source for the truth, including the truth about worship, we find that it never identifies Sunday, the first day of the week, as belonging to the Lord. On the contrary, we find three clear references proclaiming that Jesus is “Lord of the Sabbath.” Notice: “For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.... Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.... The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5).

So, we see that if the “Lord’s day” is a day of the week, the Bible reveals that this day is not the first day of the week, Sunday, but rather the seventh day, beginning at sunset on Friday. But the truth is that John’s reference to the “Lord’s day” has nothing to do with a day of the week. Rather, we see that John was projected forward in vision to a time known in Scripture as the Day of the Lord, a time referenced in more than 30 passages in the Old and New Testaments.

The first six chapters of Revelation set the stage for the theme. John sees a vision of God, the Originator of the book of Revelation, sitting on His heavenly throne. Chapter 5 describes the book’s message as written on a scroll locked with seven seals—seals that only Jesus Christ is able to open. Chapter 6 describes Christ opening six of those seven seals. The first four are the famous four horsemen. The fifth pictures a martyrdom of some of God’s servants.

Then comes the sixth: a series of terrifying heavenly signs:

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

You may be surprised to learn that those servants are defined by the seven churches described in chapters 2–3. Indeed, many scholars entirely miss the importance of these two vital chapters. Typical of this is the scholar William Ramsay, who wrote a highly respected book titled *The Letters to the Seven Churches*.

The book contains a great deal of excellent information, but Ramsay missed the key element regarding those letters. He wrote the following:

In this work, Jewish in origin and general plan... there is inserted this episode of the Seven Letters, which appears to be almost entirely non-Jewish in character.... The reason was

that the form of letters had already established itself as the most characteristic expression of the Christian mind, and as almost obligatory on a Christian writer (pp. 35–36).

Ramsay speculates that the letters were an afterthought in John's composition, rather than an element vital for understanding the book:

In the subsequent development of St. John's thought it is plain that he had recognized the inadequacy and insufficiency of the fashionable Jewish literary forms. It seems highly probable that the perception of that fact came to him during the composition of the Revelation, and that the Seven Letters, though placed near the beginning and fitted carefully into that position, were the last part of the work to be conceived (p. 36).

Wow! Ramsay then makes this incredible statement: "The Apocalypse [Revelation] would be quite complete without the Seven Letters" (p. 37). Ramsay would have us believe that John used the form of letters as a "Christian" way of conveying information, as the New Testament epistles were conveyed. Reading his speculations, it is easy to appreciate what Jesus told us in the gospel of Matthew: "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these

JOHN'S VISION REVEALED CHRIST WALKING AMONGST THE SYMBOLS OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES, WHICH ARE SYNONYMOUS WITH THE SERVANTS OF GOD. MYSTERIOUS? YES. IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPREHEND? NO.

scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (vv. 13–17).

These six seals, all opened within one short chapter, are preludes to the theme of the book of Revelation: the coming "day" or "time" of God's wrath on rebellious mankind. This wrath is explained by the seventh seal, which is made up of seven plagues announced by trumpets.

Letters to Servants

Chapter 4 describes God on His throne, showing that He is the source of the revelation. Chapter 5 shows that Christ is the Revelator who opens the scroll with seven seals. And Chapter 6 gives us the lead-up to the Day of the Lord—the time of God's wrath—when Christ opens six of those seals. This shows us the theme of John's book, but what about the servants of God to whom the book is addressed? Who are those servants?

things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes” (11:25).

Turning to the Bible instead of scholarly speculations, let’s review four vital keys that solve the mystery of Revelation’s seven letters—a mystery scholars do not and cannot solve unless Christ opens their minds.

The Seven Churches Define the Servants of God

We saw that the first verse of Revelation 1 reveals John’s commission to send a message to “His servants.” So, where does John direct that message? To “the seven churches which are in Asia” (v. 4). That message is to the churches, but it is a message comprising the whole of the book of Revelation, not just the letters:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea” (Revelation 1:11).

Can there be any doubt that the seven churches and the servants of God are the same people? This is confirmed in the very last chapter of Revelation—in a sense, the connection between the seven churches and the servants of God is bookended by the first and last chapters. We read:

Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show *His servants* the things which must shortly take place.... I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in *the churches* (Revelation 22:6, 16).

We should notice that while servants and churches are used interchangeably—they are synonymous—John doesn’t mention all the Christian congregations in Asia. Obviously there is something special or significant about the seven he mentions. So, why does he mention these churches? Why only seven, if they represent the servants of God? Does

that mean that none of the other first-century Christian congregations were God’s servants? And are we today left on the outside of being God’s servants? *Not at all.* This brings us to our second key.

The Special Relationship Between Christ and These Seven Churches

After a trumpet blast and a list of the seven churches, John recounts a remarkable vision:

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.... He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength (Revelation 1:12–13, 16).

Can we understand the meaning of this vision? We can be thankful that the Bible interprets itself, so we don’t need to speculate. John explains:

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels [messengers] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches (v. 20).

John’s vision revealed Christ walking amongst the symbols of the seven churches, which are synonymous with the servants of God. Mysterious? Yes. Impossible to comprehend? No. And this mystery leads us to a third key that should be obvious by now, though scholars like Ramsay are unable to see it.

The Entire Book of Revelation is to the Seven Churches

In vision, John is told to take the book’s message to the servants of God, the seven churches, as we have seen (Revelation 22). These churches were real church congregations, and the messenger to each congregation gave a message appropriate to conditions existing in that congregation at that time.

Ephesus was an actual congregation, composed of God's servants, but had lost its "first love"—a common problem among those who have been Christians for some time and have lost the zeal they had when they were baptized.

And there is a vital admonition addressed to each of the seven churches: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2:7). Notice that the Spirit was speaking to *churches*, in the plural. A problem predominant in one congregation could also affect individual members in any of the others. In the example of the church at Laodicea, a lukewarm spirit prevailed, but the admonition to "hear what the Spirit says to the churches," indicates that this same lukewarm attitude could be found among some in the other congregations.

But there is more to the churches than a catalog of problems. We note, for instance, that the church at Philadelphia receives only encouragement, not correction. This leads us to our fourth vital key for understanding the seven letters of Revelation.

The Letters to the Seven Churches Are Prophetic

If you have a red-letter Bible handy—a Bible that highlights Jesus Christ's own words in red text—one feature of the book of Revelation becomes clear: The overwhelming majority of the words *spoken from Christ's own mouth* in Revelation are found in the letters to the seven churches.

We have seen that John was commanded in Revelation 1 to record the testimony of Jesus Christ. And we read that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). So, whatever we find coming from Jesus' mouth in Revelation is *prophetic* in nature.

In studying Revelation, we can see that its subject matter began in John's lifetime—scholars date the book's composition to sometime around AD 95—yet it extends to our future. The warnings that John recorded, the conditions of the seven churches, can apply to any of us today. And there is another dimension to this account of God's servants from John's day to our future. If you haven't already requested a copy

of our informative study guide *God's Church Through the Ages*, I urge you to do so. In it, the late evangelist John Ogwyn explained:

When we look at the context of the book of Revelation, we must recognize that it is primarily intended as a prophecy.


Revelation 1:1 shows that the book's purpose is to show to God's servants things that would soon begin to happen. Thus the seven churches should primarily be understood as representing the entire history of God's Church in seven successive *eras* (pp. 20–21).

Yes, the seven churches of Revelation represent attitudes that would predominate in the Church of God throughout its history. Mainstream "Christians" and secular scholars try to shoehorn into these letters the apostate church described later in chapter 17—but that church simply does not fit, and neither do her harlot daughters.

God's Revelation for Us

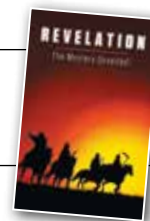
Thankfully, God has revealed to His true Church the pattern of prophecy, including the eras through which that Church would pass, as described in the book of Revelation. Notice that when Christ returns, the Church will have entered the era typified by the first-century congregation at Laodicea. A lukewarm spirit will prevail, and those with that spirit are blind to how lukewarm and self-satisfied they have become.

But, even at that time, there will be Christians whose zealous attitude is typified by the first-century congregation at Philadelphia. While lukewarm Christians—well-meaning, faithful, but blind—are hurled into the prophesied Great Tribulation, those Christians who retain a Philadelphian attitude will receive God's protection from the coming time of trouble.

So, as we can see, understanding the meaning of the seven letters to the seven churches is not just an academic study; it is vital for us as Christians. Let's heed the admonitions in those letters, and draw closer to our Savior in zeal for His message as we persevere in faith. 

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Some common phrases reveal false ideas about death and the afterlife.

Question: I've heard people refer to death by various euphemisms, saying things like "may they rest in peace," "they passed away," and "they went to sleep." Do these terms come from the Bible?

Answer: Over the centuries, there have been many different euphemisms for the word *death*. Even Jesus Christ used one when He told His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.'... Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead'" (John 11:11, 14).

From Christ's example, we see that it isn't wrong to call death a sleep—in fact, Scripture endorses this particular euphemism in several places. However, some other popular phrases associated with death carry *unbiblical* meanings, and we should avoid them.

One such phrase is used when people express their desire for a deceased person to "rest in peace," often abbreviated "RIP." While this phrase may seem similar to the phrase Jesus Himself used in John 11, the words "rest in peace" allude to its unbiblical meaning and origin. The phrase comes to us from the Latin *requiescat in pace*, which is actually a prayer that the deceased may rest in heaven with God, rather than suffer torment in hell ("Meaning of Requiescat in Pace," *ThoughtCo.com*, January 21, 2020).

Such hope, we should understand, results from a false teaching that eternal life begins at death. This doctrine is simply not supported by the Bible, which clearly states that the dead have no choice *but* to rest. As we read, "the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). The Bible reveals that there is no consciousness in the grave—all who have died are simply waiting for the resurrection, when they will be brought back to life (Job 14:12–15; see also Ezekiel 37). There is neither peace nor discomfort for anyone who now sleeps in death.

Formed on False Foundations


Another common euphemism for death is the term "passed away" or simply "passed." This term was also derived from the false belief that when people die, the soul immediately "passes on" to the afterlife. The term was in use in England during the fifteenth

century by those who believed a person's soul lingers after the body's death.

When wakes were held for recently deceased people the attendees believed that the dead person could hear and comprehend everything that was being said: it was only later, when the funeral rites were complete, that the dead person "passed away" and began the journey toward either Heaven or Hell. As such, "pass away" wouldn't have been considered euphemistic but merely a literal description of events (*Phrases.org.uk*).

A related phrase says that "he/she has transitioned," implying a change from one state of life to another as the result of death. The concept behind this term likely originated in Greek mythology. "The Greeks believed that after the burial, Hermes... led the soul to the entrance of the underworld to a ferry that carried the spirit across the Acheron (river of woe) and/or Styx (river of hate), depending on the source. These two rivers divided the world of the living from that of the dead. Charon, sometimes called the Ferryman, rowed the boat" ("Greek Mythology and Life After Death," *The Collector*, March 8, 2023). Like some other false ideas, concepts, and terms we find in Greek mythology, these eventually made their way into "Christianity."

Knowing the origin and meaning of these phrases, should Christians use them? We each have a responsibility to carefully evaluate our speech, as we will be held accountable for what we say. "I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

Phrases such as "rest in peace" and "passed away" have their foundation in false, misleading doctrines that are at odds with what the Bible teaches. They represent a false hope in a pagan-derived idea of the future that is incomparably inferior to the real plan and purpose for which God created us. What a blessing it is to be called out of that darkness and into the light of truth! For detailed information on this truth, you can request a free copy of *What Happens When You Die?* or read it online at TomorrowsWorld.org. 



Can You Sanctify the Pagan?

By **Dexter B. Wakefield**

It seems to happen every year as sure as winter rolls around. Amid the intense marketing of Christmas gifts by retailers in November and December, a sobering counterpoint appears. We begin seeing articles in print and online about the non-Christian origins of many aspects of Christmas celebrations. The articles often quote encyclopedias and books that detail the transition of the Roman pagan holiday of the winter solstice, called Saturnalia, and the birth of the sun-god, called Mithras, into the observances of the Roman church in the third and fourth centuries. Consider:

Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church.... Christmas customs are an evolution from the times that long antedated the Christian period—a descent from seasonal, pagan, religious and national practices, hedged about with legend and tradition (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1959, vol. 5, “Christmas,” p. 642).

Does the Bible prohibit some of your traditional practices? In the first century, the Pharisees had traditions that violated God’s commandments. They claimed to have a rationale for their mistakes, and today’s theologians do as well. For instance, most professing Christians know that the observance of Christmas isn’t biblical—but do you know how theologians try to justify it?

From the God of the Sun to the Son of God?

When Roman Emperor Constantine declared his empire to be Christian, he had to begin the difficult process of adjusting the pagans to Roman church practices. He did this through what historians and theologians call *syncretism*, the mixing together of disparate religious practices.

The Romans, like many other pagan cultures, had a winter solstice celebration. What purpose did it serve? Noted cultural anthropologists Anne Baring and Jules Cashford observe, “All over the world, for countless millennia, people have participated in a religious ritual at the winter solstice, when the sun’s downward course is arrested and it turns back, it seems, to earth. This change of state in the bleak mid-winter of the year was experienced as the rebirth of the sun and commemorated as the birth day of the sun god, the luminous divine child” (*The Myth of the Goddess*, 1993, p. 561).

Most people who read the Bible know that Christmas is not a biblical observance. Nowhere in either the Old Testament or the New Testament are we instructed to keep an observance of Christ’s birth-day—and, in any case, most understand that He could not have been born in December. The shepherds would not have been in the field at that time of year (Luke 2:8) because their sheep would have long since been brought into their folds for the winter months. Other biblical indications are that Christ was most likely born in the autumn.

These days, Christmas is largely a secular winter festival driven by commercial interests. As a result,

people are fond of saying, “We need to put Christ back into Christmas!” But He was never really there—so how do theologians justify putting Him there? One of the main ways is the idea of “*sanctifying the pagan*.”

So, can pagan practices ever be sanctified for the worship of the Almighty God of the Bible? The world’s churches say they can, but God Himself gives a very different answer in His word.

Some Clear Examples

The Story of Civilization is an eleven-volume history written by noted historian Will Durant and his wife, Ariel. In Volume III, titled *Caesar and Christ*, he provides a frank discussion of pagan influence on the later development of “mainstream” Christianity and gives some examples of Rome’s sanctifying of pagan practices. He wrote the following:

Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it.... [T]he Greek mysteries passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass. Other pagan cultures contributed to the syncretist result. From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity, the Last Judgment, and a personal immortality of reward and punishment; from Egypt the adoration of the Mother and Child.... From Phrygia came the worship of the Great Mother; from Syria the resurrection drama of Adonis.... The Mithraic ritual so closely resembled the eucharistic sacrifice of the mass that Christian fathers charged the Devil with inventing these similarities to mislead frail minds. [Nicæan] Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world (1944, p. 595, emphasis added).

Pagan temples were converted to churches—there were at least eleven such conversions in Rome alone. Statues of pagan gods were repurposed to represent Christian saints. In art, the halo (or nimbus) that had adorned pictures of pagan gods and emperors was transferred to depictions of Jesus and various supposed Christians. The solar calendar and its festivals replaced the biblical calendar and its Festivals. And the list goes on.

Cardinal John Henry Newman, an influential Roman Catholic prelate in the nineteenth century,

rationalized this practice theologically when he wrote the following:

We are told in various ways by Eusebius [an early church historian], that Constantine, in order to recommend the new religion to the heathen, transferred into it the outward ornaments to which they had been accustomed in their own.... The use of temples, and these dedicated to particular saints... holidays and seasons... turning to the East, images at a later date... are all of pagan origin, and *sanctified by their adoption in the Church* (*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 1845, chapter 8:6, emphasis added).

Twentieth-century Catholic theologian Christopher Dawson typified an even more extreme approach, writing, “The complete *sanctification of the pagan* is the end result of the Christianization of the world” (*The Leavening Process in Christian Culture*, August 7, 1955, emphasis added).

But we should ask, *If Dawson’s scenario takes place, will paganism actually be Christianized, or will “Christianity” be paganized?*

Has God Changed His Mind?

Some people assume that they can use pagan practices in their worship as long as they do so to honor God. But has God changed His mind about this matter? He has told us, “I am the LORD, I do not change” (Malachi 3:6), and “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah, who said, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:8–9). God has not changed His mind about how He is to be worshipped, and Christ warns us that it is possible to worship Him in vain.

God tells us that He is holy, and that He set Israel apart to worship Him without pagan practices (Leviticus 20:6). The Apostle Peter had this in mind when he reminded Christians, “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15–16). Peter was quoting from Leviticus 20:7 when he wrote

this, remembering that ancient Israel had at times included pagan practices in its worship of the Most High God—practices taken from the worship of pagan deities such as Baal, Ashtoreth, and Molech. God forbade that in the first commandment He gave at Mt. Sinai, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. *You shall have no other gods before Me*” (Exodus 20:2–3).

Ancient Israel displayed—as do many people today—a propensity toward syncretism, adapting pagan religious forms into their worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet God warned Israel, “You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. *You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things*” (Deuteronomy 12:2–4). That warning applies to us today. The elements of paganism cannot be transformed for the worship of the Most High God.

Some say that since our culture shares so much with the ancient pagans, we might as well sanctify those pagan connections. For example, our names for the days of the week are generally of pagan origin. For instance, the etymology of Wednesday comes from the Teutonic god Woden, and Thursday is named for the Teutonic god Thor. Therefore, some reason, sanctifying pagan practices for the worship of God should not be a problem, since if one is not a sin, the other must not be either.

But that is bad reasoning. Christians and pagans also eat bread, drink water, breathe air, laugh, and cry. God didn’t say that we must not do *anything at all* that the pagans do. His specific command is that we must not worship pagan deities, nor mix pagan worship with His!

God gave us a very clear instruction when He inspired these words:

When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dis-

possess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ *You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way*; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods (Deuteronomy 12:29–31).

Then He gave an explicit prescription and prescription: “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (v. 32). God has not changed His mind about this, and it is not something we can ignore!

Traditions of Men or Commandments of God?

Many understand that Christmas is one of several festivals of mainstream Christianity that were “Christianized” from pagan religious traditions. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day often let their own traditions supersede God’s clear commands, just as today’s religious leaders often do. But Jesus Christ had an admonition for them—and for us.

He said plainly, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. *And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” He said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:6–9).

As we have seen, the changes made by Constantine and the Roman church in the second and third centuries went far beyond “the washing of pitchers and cups.” God makes it clear that the practices associated with other gods are not to be used in His worship, and that He does not accept them. TW

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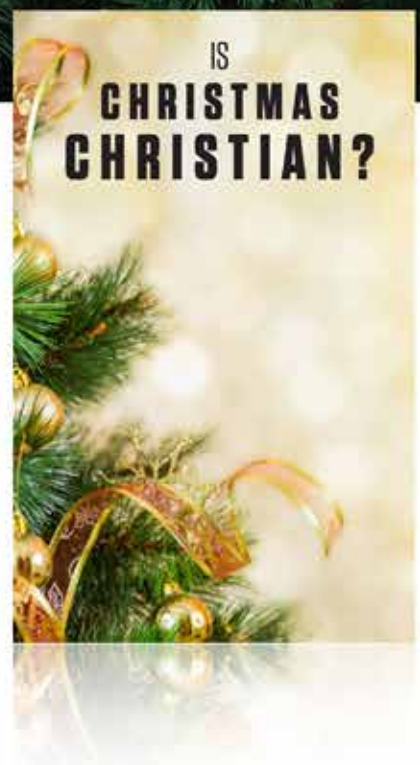
Is Christmas Christian?

How does God want us to worship Him?

- Does it matter that Christmas came from paganism?
- Does Christ really think we can keep any day to honor Him?
- Does He want us to celebrate His birth at all?



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Joining the Family Business

The meek inheriting the earth, ruling as kings and priests, serving forever as “pillars” in the house of God—the Bible speaks of Christians doing all of these things. But what do they really mean for the future of God’s called, chosen, and faithful followers?

When God created man and woman, He created them “in His own image” (Genesis 1:27). While the animals were made after the animal kind, human beings were made after the “God” kind! All members of the human family, created by God, are rightly called His children. More remarkably, thanks to the indwelling of God’s Spirit, faithful Christians are destined to become part of God’s spiritual Family. But first we must be “born again.” As Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

When we are born again, we enter the very Family of God. But when does this “second birth” occur? Jesus Christ became the “firstborn” from the dead at His resurrection (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5; Romans 8:29). Since He is the “first,” this implies that others will follow! The Apostle Paul explained that Christ is “declared to be the Son of God with power... by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

Eternal Life Has a Purpose

But what will happen to us after the resurrection? In 1336, Pope Benedict XII described the Roman Catholic idea of the afterlife: “And after such intuitive and face-to-face vision and enjoyment has or will have begun for these souls, the same vision and enjoyment has continued and will continue without any interruption

and without end until the last Judgment and from then on forever” (“Benedictus Deus: On the Beatific Vision of God,” *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*).

Certainly, actually seeing God will be an awesome and thrilling experience, as the Apostle John explained: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). To see God the Father on His throne, and to see Jesus Christ—both of whom shine like the sun—will definitely be exhilarating!

But will the saints simply gaze at the Father and Christ, unendingly, for all eternity? Eternal life—the greatest gift God could bestow on His children—will have a great and awesome *purpose*! Eternal life is not just the indefinite extension of a life like we now lead. It is not, as some Eastern religions teach, the time when we join the “world soul.” And while it will certainly involve joy and happiness, it will be an eternity filled not just with joy, but with *purpose*.

Human beings’ destiny is to be born into the family of God, as the “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). But what does it mean to be such an heir? The amazing truth revealed in your Bible is that God wants to share the “family business”—rulership over the entire universe—with His children! As members of the very Family of God, resurrected Christians will actually share in the Work of God, assisting our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, in teaching others, beautifying His creation, and governing the entire universe in peace and righteousness forever!

Created for Work

To understand our spiritual destiny, we must recall the commission God gave when human beings were first placed on the earth. God gave Adam and Eve “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” (Genesis 1:26). The human family was given responsibility to govern—to rule—over God’s creation. In turn, Adam was to dress it and cultivate it. He and his descendants were to help in God’s creative work of enhancing and beautifying the earth!

Adam failed the test of obedience, and Satan,

Adam failed the test of obedience, and Satan, the devil, was able to ensnare and entrap all of humanity. But through the work of the Messiah—Jesus’ life, sacrifice, resurrection, and second coming—the devil will ultimately be overthrown.

the devil, was able to ensnare and entrap all of humanity (Revelation 12:9). But through the work of the Messiah—Jesus’ life, sacrifice, resurrection, and second coming—the devil will ultimately be overthrown (Revelation 20:2, 10). After Christ’s second coming, the earth will be returned to a millennial, Eden-like state (Isaiah 51:3).

But whom will God use to restore the world? The resurrected saints! Scripture clearly describes their role: “You... have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). God also instructs His saints: “But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works

until the end, to him I will give power over the nations” (Revelation 2:25–26).

In the parable of the minas, Christ explained the leadership role the resurrected saints will be given as a reward for their faithful service: “Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities’” (Luke 19:16–17). Here we see that Christ’s reward for faithful Christians is not some kind of idle enjoyment; it involves active service to our Savior. Indeed,

during the prophesied Millennium, the saints’ role will be to rule over the earth assisting Jesus Christ (Revelation 3:12, 21).

And what will happen after the Millennium—the prophesied thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth—has ended and after the general resurrection (Revelation 20:7–15)? What will the saints do after obedient and converted human beings have been glorified, and the incorrigible have been reduced to ashes in a lake of fire (Malachi 4:3)?

Planet Earth... and Beyond

God inspired the Apostle Paul to write about our ultimate destiny:

For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands” (Hebrews 2:5–7).

There is more! Paul wrote further, “You have put all things in subjection under his feet” (Hebrews 2:8). What did Paul mean by “all things”? The Greek used here, *ta panta*, is all-inclusive, meaning “every, the whole” (*Strong’s Concordance*). The *Weymouth* translation renders “all things” as “the universe.” All things will be put under the dominion of the resurrected saints, working through God’s Kingdom.

In other words, even though all things—the whole universe—are not currently under humanity’s dominion, they *will* be (Hebrews 2:8). Can we grasp that? Just as God originally gave human beings dominion and rulership over the earth, His ultimate goal is for us to rule over the entire universe! In the same way that we were meant to work on and beautify the earth, God has also called us to assist Him in refashioning and “planting” the desolate planets throughout the vast universe (Romans 8:19–21). Our destiny is literally to join His family business!

Thank God for our awesome destiny—and God speed the day when His plan for each of us is complete.

—Rod McNair

German Battle Tanks to Support European Armies

In the past, Germany has been reluctant to share military technology with other nations. However, the war in Ukraine is changing things (*Politico*, August 1). In January, Germany finally agreed to send 18 of its Leopard 2A6 high-tech battle tanks to Ukraine. Until then, Germany's talk about *Zeitenwende*—the historic shift in the nation's military and defense policy, promised in early 2022 by Chancellor Olaf Scholz—had been primarily just that: *talk*. Yet sending 18 tanks to Ukraine created an opportunity to not only build more tanks to replenish Germany's armaments, but also establish a common European armaments strategy.

Poland recently ordered tanks from both the United States and South Korea (over 1,200 tanks in all). Yet, this order of mixed products creates maintenance, communal training, and supply chain issues. Having a common defense platform streamlines production, maintenance, and training. Following Germany's announcement to provide tanks, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Italy have lined up to obtain, collectively, more than 250 German tanks in the years ahead. The Czech Republic plans to establish its own production line to help fill the order, and so may Italy. Norway ordered 54 German tanks earlier this year, and Germany will also be replacing more of its own Leopard tanks.

As more German battle tanks are built and used by European nations, we may begin to see even more cooperation and sharing in the development of defense technology on the continent. Bible prophecy reveals that Germany will lead a European political, military, and economic power that will dramatically affect the entire world. The Bible refers to this future superpower as “the beast” (Revelation 13;17).

China's New Smart-App for Religious Worshippers

A human rights organization working in China has reported that one Chinese province is now requiring churchgoers to register with a smartphone app developed by the provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission (*EWTN*, March 7). “According to ChinaAid, applicants must fill in personal information, including their name, phone number, government ID number, permanent residence, occupation, and date of birth before they can make a reservation. Those who are allowed into a place of worship must also have their temperature taken—suggesting the app may be related in some way to COVID-19 restrictions—and show a reservation code.”

What begins with China could spread to other nations. The Bible indicates that a German-led “beast” power will control much of Europe at the end of the age. This economic, religious, and military superpower will work to control in

some way who can buy and sell. A mandated day of worship is likely to play into this mechanism of control. Only those in compliance, bearing the “mark of the beast,” will be able to function freely in society (Revelation 13:11–18). While such technology is not itself the “mark of the beast,” it presents an interesting possibility concerning one of the ways measures of control may be implemented by the “beast” in the years ahead.

Radioactive Fish

It has been over a decade since the meltdown of Japan's Fukushima nuclear reactor. Since then, water used to cool the hot nuclear reactor has been stored in massive storage ponds. Now, *The Guardian* reports that Japan is preparing to release over 1.3 million tons of radioactive water into the environment—a plan already approved by the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (July 23). However, some fish found near the Fukushima plant contain levels of radioactivity that are exponentially higher than those approved by the government.

In reaction to this, Japanese seafood from the region is facing boycotts. About a month ago, “China began blanket radioactivity testing of Japanese seafood imports... leading some wholesalers to cease handling such produce from Japan.” A fish with high radioactivity concentrations was found as far away as 50 kilometers from the plant. South Korea and some

other Pacific Island nations are also concerned by Japan's pending release of contaminated waters. No one knows exactly how these waters will impact the ocean environment.

As mankind develops more innovative sources of energy, those sources often carry with them great destructive potential. On our own, we simply lack the wisdom and insight of our Creator! It is only under the wise guidance and loving reign of Christ that mankind will develop truly safe and clean technologies.

European Nations Request German Military Presence

The war in Ukraine is shaking up politics and military planning throughout Europe—and it is worrying nations on Russia's periphery. In late June, Germany announced that it would send 4,000 troops to Lithuania (*Politico*, July 4). Not long afterwards, the Romanian prime minister “urged German Chancellor Olaf Scholz... to further boost NATO's eastern flank by sending over German troops to his country ‘soon’ and ‘permanently.’” The urgency in the prime minister's request was palpable, as the sounds of war echo near the border his country shares with Ukraine.

Less than a century ago, it was the sound of German artillery that echoed across Europe. Now, many of the same nations who once feared Germany are turning to their more prosperous and powerful neighbor for military protec-

tion. However, this should be no surprise. Bible prophecy indicates that a German-led European “beast” power will lead Europe again in the not-too-distant future. This powerful military and economic force will lead a group of “ten kings”—leaders of nations that are willing to submit to Germany’s power over them (Revelation 17:12–13). If more nations request the presence of the German military on their own soil, students of Bible prophecy should take note.

Does Human Life Matter?

“It’s my life and I can do with it what I want to” is a common mantra in Western society. Yet, in recent years that mantra has taken on a grave twist. With the legalization of euthanasia—what some have called “mercy killing”—people are increasingly allowed to commit suicide with the help of their doctor. And in some countries, the reasons given to justify this seem increasingly trivial.

In 2002, the Netherlands became the first nation in the world to allow doctors to kill patients who desired suicide as long as the patient satisfied certain “strict” conditions (*AP*, June 28). But those conditions have become increasingly loose and vague, allowing suicide by individuals with autism or intellectual disabilities merely “because they said they could not lead normal lives.” Several years ago, the Dutch government moved to allow euthanizing children under age 12 with terminal illnesses (*BBC*, October 14, 2020). One must ask—just what is the primary goal here? Benefitting the suffering child, benefitting the suffering parents, or reducing the medical burden on society?

Mankind has a strong tendency toward playing God. Yet the Bible makes clear that God, not man, is the Life-giver. He alone has the power and authority to give and to take life. When human beings take the life of another human being, it is called “murder”—something

God strictly forbids (Exodus 20:13)—and suicide is essentially self-murder.

Watching someone suffer is very difficult, but it never warrants taking God’s prerogatives into our own hands. Suffering reminds us that we do not live in God’s world, but in a world currently ruled by the “god of this age”—Satan, the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4). However, there is a world coming in which suffering will cease: “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain” (Revelation 21:4). That is the world we seek, not the panacea provided by assisted suicide. But that world requires the return of Jesus Christ to make it a reality.

Archbishop Calls Model Prayer “Gender-Biased”

According to a high-ranking Church of England official, Jesus’ model prayer—commonly called the “Lord’s Prayer”—is dangerously biased toward patriarchy. *The Guardian* quoted the Archbishop of York when it reported that the “opening words of the Lord’s Prayer, recited by Christians all over the world for 2,000 years, may be ‘problematic’ because of their patriarchal association” (July 7). Although he does not speak for the whole of the Church of England, the archbishop’s comments reflect rising moral confusion in the organization and beyond. Those who claim to lead others

in Christ’s name should understand the foundational principles of the Bible, but many religious leaders today are increasingly influenced by the moral degradation of society.

The Bible clearly says that God is a Father, and Jesus punctuated this fact when He taught His disciples to pray (Matthew 6:9). Christ did not teach us to pray to “the great deity” or to some intentionally vague sense of God. Rather, He taught us explicitly to pray to “Our Father in heaven.” Although this clear reference to a father figure is uncomfortable to a growing number of people in Western society, it is a clear biblical teaching, and it relates to God’s plan to build a family! He desires “godly offspring” (Malachi 2:15). God is the Father, while Jesus Christ is the Son and the *Groom* who will one day marry His Bride, the Church (Revelation 19:7–9). And Christ, in the role of husband, is “head over all things to the church” (Ephesians 1:22).

A clear family structure is laid out in the pages of the Bible, and that family structure has as its highest authority God the Father, the head of His family (Ephesians 3:14–15). The Bible warns about those who profess to be wise, yet have become fools (Romans 1:22). We are also warned in the Scriptures that if those who claim to be of God “speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). The Bible reveals what God’s family looks like and how it should function. TW



LETTERS TO TW

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK



I'm on a fixed income and so grateful to find free literature to read. I'm reading *The Ten Commandments* right now and love it, and will soon start the Bible Study Course. I can't wait. Thank you for being there and God bless you. I have a brain injury and your small books are perfect for me to understand because they are easy to understand and I can remember what I learn. Thank you again.

—Subscriber in Ohio

Thank you for my subscription to *Tomorrow's World*. I was especially blessed by your recent article on Hell. I was very glad to learn that non-believers will not suffer eternally in Hell. That answers one of the chief objections that non-believers have about Christianity. Keep up the good work.

—Subscriber in Florida

Hello, I have been receiving your magazine for several years now. Always useful. (I share it with others.) The article "Planet Earth: Your Inheritance" is the best article ever. Mr. Ames presents the information in a concise, logical, and straightforward way, the best for this topic that I have read over my lifetime. As a student of Eschatology over decades, this is the first time the subject of where we end up and when has been presented in a cogent way. And with scriptural references all the way through. Thank you.

—Subscriber in British Columbia

Thank you for regularly sending me issues of *Tomorrow's World*. I am an avid reader of this magazine. It helps me learn more about the Bible and develop my spiritual wellbeing. Every item in it is so good that I often quote sentences verbatim in our weekly Bible study. I collect every issue and review specific topics during my quiet time. May the Lord continue to bless this publication and its people as they spread The

Good News, giving hope to many people like me worldwide. To God be the glory!

—Subscriber in New South Wales

The *Tomorrow's World* Bible Study Course has really changed my life. Now I understand things that are happening to me in a clearer way and I'm actually coping dealing with a different challenge every day. I'm really blessed and now my faith is even stronger. Thanks to you for educating me and taking the time to send me the literature I need, and I finally have most of my answers I have been asking God my entire life.

—Subscriber in South Africa

Is there a congregation of believers anywhere close to Morgan City, Louisiana? Years ago, my mother used to listen to one of your founding fathers on the radio, Mr. Armstrong. I'm 78 years young and I enjoy reading your literature daily.

—Reader in Louisiana

Editor's Note: We're glad to hear it! For any of our readers who are interested in attending a congregation of the Living Church of God, information can be found by contacting one of our Regional Offices listed on page 4 of this magazine or by visiting TomorrowsWorld.org and clicking on "Meet the Church Behind TW" near the bottom of the home page.

Errata: On page 17 of our July 2023 issue, we incorrectly made reference to the "late" Tom Brokaw—the retired NBC News journalist is very much alive, having successfully battled multiple myeloma for more than a decade. Furthermore, on page 10 of our August 2023 issue, we confused the regency years of England's King George IV with his years of reign (1820–1830). We apologize for these errors.

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Mail your letters to "Letters to the Editor" at one of the Regional Offices listed on page 4 of this magazine, or send email to Letters@TomorrowsWorld.org. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

TOMORROW'S WORLD

TELEVISION LOG



AUSTRALIA

Nationwide 7TWO SU 7:00 a.m.
Nationwide SC10 SU 7:30 a.m.

BARBADOS

St. Michael CBC 8 SU 2:00 p.m.

JAMAICA

Kingston TVJ SU 7:00 a.m.

NEW ZEALAND

Nationwide TVNZ2 SU 5:00 a.m.
Nationwide TVNZ2 +1 SU 6:00 a.m.

PHILIPPINES

Nationwide TV5 MO 11:30 p.m.
Nationwide TV5 TU 12:00 a.m.

SOUTH AFRICA

Nationwide CTV/SA SU 11:00 a.m.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Nationwide CNC3-TV SU 8:00 a.m.

UK & NW EUROPE

WORD (TWN) Sky TV 590 SU 11:00 a.m.
Sky TV 590 SU 12:30 a.m.
Sky TV 590 FR 12:00 a.m.



CANADA

Nationwide Networks (All times Eastern)

Vision SA 3:30 a.m.

FAITH TV SU 5:30 p.m.
MO-FR 10:30 p.m.

TU 5:00 p.m.

CHNU MO-FR 10:00 p.m.

CTV (Maritimes) SU 7:30 a.m.

CTV (Alberta) SU 1:30 p.m.

UNITED STATES

Nationwide Networks (All times Eastern)

Binge SU 9:00 a.m.

Charge Network SU 7:30 a.m.

Circle TV SU 8:00 a.m.

COMET SU 7:30 a.m.

The CW Plus SU 8:00 a.m.

MO 2:00 a.m.

getTV SU 7:00 a.m.

Impact TV SU 11:00 p.m.

MO 10:30 p.m.

SA 11:00 p.m.

NewsNation (formerly WGN) SU 6:00 a.m.

Rewind SU 9:00 a.m.

The Word Network SU 6:00 a.m.

SU 7:30 p.m.

FR 7:00 p.m.

DISH Network* (All times Eastern)

Impact Ch. 268 SU 11:00 p.m.

MO 10:30 p.m.

DIRECTV* (All times Eastern)

Word Ch. 373 SU 6:00 a.m.

SU 7:30 p.m.

FR 7:00 p.m.

For the most up-to-date listings, please go to
TomorrowsWorld.org/tune-in

AK Anchorage KYUR SU 6:00 a.m.
Fairbanks KATN SU 7:00 a.m.
Juneau KJUD SU 6:00 a.m.

AL Dothan WTVY (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.
Huntsville WZDX SU 9:30 a.m.
Montgomery WBMM (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.
Opelika WLTX SU 7:30 a.m.

AR El Dorado KNOE SU 7:00 a.m.
Fayetteville KHOG SU 7:00 a.m.
Fort Smith KFTA SU 10:00 a.m.
Fort Smith KHBS SU 7:00 a.m.
Jonesboro KAIT SU 7:00 a.m.
Little Rock KASN SU 10:30 a.m.

AZ Tucson KMSB SU 8:30 a.m.
Yuma KECY (CW) SU 9:00 a.m.

CA Bakersfield KGET (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Chico KHSL (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

El Centro KECY (CW) SU 9:00 a.m.

Eureka KECALD/KVIQ (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Monterey KION (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Palm Springs KCWQ (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Salinas KION (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

San Francisco BAVC (Public Access) WE 8:00 a.m.

San Luis Obispo KSBY (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Santa Barbara KSBY (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Santa Maria KSBY (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

CO Colorado Springs KXTU SU 9:00 a.m.

Colorado Springs KXTU SU 10:30 a.m.

Grand Junction KJCT (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

CT Hartford WWLP (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

DC Washington DC WDCA SU 7:30 a.m.

DE Harrington WMDT (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

FL Ft. Lauderdale WBFS SU 6:30 a.m.

Gainesville WCJB SU 6:00 a.m.

Gainesville WCJB (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Jacksonville WCWJ SU 6:30 a.m.

Miami WBFS SU 6:30 a.m.

Panama City WJHG (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

Tallahassee WTLF SU 8:00 a.m.

Tampa Bay WTOG SU 8:00 a.m.

GA Albany WALB (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Albany WALB SU 11:00 a.m.

Atlanta WATL SU 10:00 a.m.

Augusta WAGT (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Columbus WLTX (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Macon WMAZ SU 8:00 a.m.

Savannah WSAV SU 8:00 a.m.

Thomasville WTLF (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

IA Ottumwa KWOT SU 8:00 a.m.

ID Boise KBOI SU 7:00 a.m.

Idaho Falls KIFI SU 7:00 a.m.

Twin Falls KMVT SU 7:00 a.m.

IL Chicago WJYS SU 8:00 a.m.

Chicago WJYS SU 8:30 a.m.

Peoria WHOI SU 7:00 a.m.

Quincy WGEM SU 7:00 a.m.

IN Fort Wayne WPTA SU 7:00 a.m.

Fort Wayne WPTA SU 7:30 a.m.

Lafayette WFLI SU 7:00 a.m.

KS Kansas City KCWE SU 7:30 a.m.

Topeka KTKA SU 7:00 a.m.

KY Bowling Green WBKO SU 7:00 a.m.

Lexington WTVQ SU 7:00 a.m.

Louisville WBNA SU 9:30 a.m.

Paducah WDKA SU 11:00 a.m.

LA Alexandria KALB SU 7:00 a.m.

Lafayette KATC SU 7:00 a.m.

Lake Charles KPLC SU 7:00 a.m.

Monroe KMCT SU 6:00 a.m.

Monroe KNOE SU 7:00 a.m.

New Orleans WNOL SU 7:00 a.m.

Shreveport KSHV SU 10:00 a.m.

West Monroe KMCT SU 6:00 a.m.

MA Springfield WWLP SU 7:00 a.m.

ME Bangor WABI SU 8:00 a.m.

Presque Isle WBQP SU 8:00 a.m.

MI Alpena WBAE SU 8:00 a.m.

Lansing WLAJ SU 8:00 a.m.

Lansing WLAJ SU 11:00 a.m.

Calumet WBKP SU 8:00 a.m.

MN Cloquet KDHL (CW) SU 8:00 a.m.

Duluth KDHL SU 8:00 a.m.

Mankato KMNF/KEYC (CW) SU 9:00 a.m.

Rochester KTTC SU 7:00 a.m.

MO Columbia KOMU SU 7:00 a.m.

Joplin KFJX SU 8:30 a.m.

Kansas City KCWE SU 7:30 a.m.

St. Joseph KNPG SU 7:00 a.m.

St. Louis KPLR SU 6:30 a.m.

MS Biloxi WXXV SU 7:00 a.m.

Columbus WCBI SU 7:00 a.m.

Greenwood WBWO SU 7:00 a.m.

Hattiesburg WHLT/WXXX SU 7:00 a.m.

Meridian WTKO SU 7:00 a.m.

MT Billings KTVO SU 7:00 a.m.

Butte KBZK SU 7:00 a.m.

Butte KXLF SU 7:00 a.m.

Glendive KWZB SU 7:00 a.m.

Great Falls KRTV SU 7:00 a.m.

Helena KTVH SU 7:00 a.m.

Missoula KPAX SU 7:00 a.m.

NC Asheville WGGG SU 9:30 a.m.

Asheville WGGG SU 11:30 a.m.

Charlotte WAXN SU 9:00 a.m.

Charlotte WMYT SU 8:30 a.m.

Greenville WNCT SU 8:00 a.m.

Hickory WHKY MO 7:30 p.m.

Raleigh WRAZ SU 7:30 a.m.

Willmington WWAY SU 8:00 a.m.

ND Bismarck KXMA (CW2) SU 7:00 a.m.

Fargo KJXB (CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

Williston KXMD SU 7:00 a.m.

NM Albuquerque KWBQ SU 8:00 a.m.

NV Reno KOLO SU 7:00 a.m.

NY Binghamton WBNG SU 8:00 a.m.

Brooklyn BRIC SU 7:00 p.m.

Brooklyn BRIC MO 12:30 a.m.

Elmira WENY SU 8:00 a.m.

Watertown WWTI SU 7:00 a.m.

Utica KYWKTV SU 8:00 a.m.

OH Cincinnati WSTR SU 9:00 a.m.

Cleveland WUAB SU 8:30 a.m.

Columbus WOXB/WXW/WGCT/WOIZ SU 8:00 a.m.

Toledo BBCL SU 7:30 a.m.

Zanesville WBZV SU 8:00 a.m.

OK Ada KTVZ SU 7:00 a.m.

Lawton KAUZ SU 7:00 a.m.

Tulsa KCWC SU 8:00 a.m.

OR Bend KTVZ SU 8:00 a.m.

Eugene KMTR SU 8:00 a.m.

Medford KTVL SU 8:00 a.m.

PA Erie WSEE SU 8:00 a.m.

Philadelphia WPSG SU 7:30 a.m.

Pittsburgh WPCW SU 7:30 a.m.

SC Charleston WCBD SU 8:00 a.m.

Columbia WOLO SU 11:00 a.m.

Florence WWMB SU 8:00 a.m.

Greenville WYCW SU 9:30 a.m.

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Myrtle Beach WWMB SU 8:00 a.m.

Rock Hill WAXN SU 9:00 a.m.

Rock Hill WMYT SU 8:30 a.m.

SD Rapid City KCLO (ION/CW) SU 7:00 a.m.

Sioux Falls KFSY SU 7:0

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UPCOMING TELECASTS

Do You Fear God?

Does God have any meaning in your life? What does it mean to fear Him—and to love Him?

November 2-8

Five Myths About the Bible

Most believe what others say about the Bible. You'll be amazed by what it really teaches!

November 9-15

Why Are You Alive?

Are we just clumps of cells meant for oblivion, or do our lives have a glorious eternal purpose?

November 16-22

Seven Letters to Seven Churches

Two chapters in the book of Revelation reveal vital lessons for Christians in the end-times!

November 23-29

The War Against Normal

How can we stay sane in a world where biblical values are ridiculed and perversity is praised?

November 30-December 6

Will You Escape Armageddon?

Is our world about to end? Can you and your loved ones be protected from disaster ahead?

December 7-13

Schedule subject to change

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