

GN

The Good News

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ABOUT OUR COVER

Man examines British edition of the Plain Truth at newsstand in London, England. The story behind how Christ's gospel is successfully reaching Europe via newsstand distribution begins on page 16.

Ian Henderson — GN

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Yes, God's Holy Days Are Up-To-Date in the Space Age

If Jesus Christ were here in person, He would still be observing the same customs He observed when He was on earth as the "Son of man." Believe it or not, He would keep the Passover just as He kept it with His disciples, observe the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles! For decades the Church of God has been keeping the annual holy days ordained by God in the time of Moses. It is another unique practice, clearly setting God's Church apart from all others. But why are these festivals still observed in this modern age of space travel and advanced technology? Here is the answer, made plain, from your Bible!

WHEN I was only a small boy in the thirties, and the Western world was struggling out of the worst depression in economic history, I remember so well my father, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, and my mother observing God's annual holy days *alone*.

Though my memories are vague concerning the beginning years of Church attendance — I remember very vividly the annual trips to a nearby Oregon resort for the observance of the "Feast of Tabernacles" every fall!

To me, it was a marvelous opportunity for fishing along one of the most beautiful of Oregon's mountain streams, walking along thickly forested paths in Oregon's mountains, and experiencing joy and excitement as only a nine, ten, or eleven-year-old boy can know.

When I was discharged from the Navy in 1952, a small group of approximately 400 of God's people were observing the Feast of Tabernacles at a mountain resort in Northern California.

By the next year (1953), I had been converted and baptized, and I attended my very first Feast of Tabernacles as a member of God's Church. That was twenty-one years ago.

What had started as one determined family, observing God's annual holy days *alone*, had, by 1953, become a truly *national* festival, observed by almost 1,000 people.

As God's Work and His Church grew, so did the festivals.

Today, God's Church observes the annual holy days of God in literally hundreds of locations all around the world. This fall we will be observing the Feast of Tabernacles in twelve sites in the United States alone, and many, many more in other countries all over the world

(including thousands of brethren meeting together in two sites in Canada).

Why Holy Days?

One of the most unsettling and shocking biblical revelations to my father, in his very early research, was (as he has so thoroughly covered in his autobiography) the discovery that God's Sabbath day is still holy, and must be observed by God's people today!

There is a great Sabbath PRINCIPLE in God's Word, which transcends and supercedes the mere observance of a particular span of time — though it is overlooked by most.

The entire question revolves around whether one is of a willing and obedient spirit, and really desires to OBEY His God and Creator, who gives him every breath of air he breathes, or whether one wishes to be a pharisaical "nitpicker" and must be, like a balky mule, forced or dragged with the threat of a whip into doing every simple task set before him.

It is a matter of *conversion*, and of ATTITUDE!

The question revolves around whether or not we are willing and eager to do all our heavenly Father commands us, as well as being instantly responsive to even those things which He may *suggest* for our *good* — or whether we are always carefully approaching the study of His Word from the point of view of "Just how much MUST I do?"

Obedience to God is the perfect example Jesus set. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the SAME yesterday, today and forever! (Heb. 13:8.) He set us an EXAMPLE that we should walk in His steps (I Peter 2:21).

And Jesus KEPT the weekly Sabbath, and called Himself the Lord of the Sabbath day (Mark 2:28). He plainly SAID He had kept His Father's commandments (John 15:10), and commanded His true disciples to teach all nations to observe *all things* whatsoever He had *commanded them* (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus kept the Passover throughout His entire life. One very beautiful and meaningful passage of Scripture (Luke 2:41-47) relates the account of Jesus astounding the doctors of Levitical law in the Temple following the observance of the Passover with His parents in Jerusalem.

A great deal of space is used by the Gospel writers recounting almost moment by moment the events surrounding Jesus' final Passover, where the changing of the Old Testament Levitical symbols into bread and wine as the symbols of His broken body and His shed blood took place.

The Apostle Paul clearly COMMANDED Gentile Christians to DO exactly as Jesus had said: "... This DO in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Compare with I Corinthians 11:24 where the exact same scripture is repeated.

It is plain from MANY scriptures that Jesus Christ of Nazareth observed the *annual* holy days as well as the weekly Sabbath!

It is very clear that the Apostle Paul observed such annual holy days, and urged Gentile Christians to do so. (I will explain and expound some of these scriptures a little later in this article.)

More Understanding Follows

My father was stunned to find that his pet argument — "But all these churches can't be wrong" — made no sense *whatever!* When he discovered there was no biblical authority whatsoever for Sunday observance, it was only a matter of a few years before his thorough Bible studies naturally led him in direct confrontation with Jesus' plain example of the observance of God's ANNUAL Sabbaths, as well as the weekly one.

It had been casually assumed by my father, having been brought up as an average Protestant, with the generally accepted teachings of fundamental "Christianity," that the New Testament "did away with" all of God's "Old Testament" laws.

It was another shocking experience to find Jesus Christ of Nazareth observing ANNUAL holy days and plain commands to Gentile Christians to do so!

Through the years, God's Church has grown in the understanding of the true meaning of these annual holy days. While pagan holidays show no purpose or plan in human existence — and generally revolve around human lust and greed (such as exchanging of gifts among each other, new clothing, trips, social obligations, etc.) — God's annual holy days reveal the full scope and depth of God's great purpose for all of mankind.

"Feasts of the Lord"

The "festival chapter" of the Bible is Leviticus 23. Here the ANNUAL Sabbath days are listed *right after* the weekly Sabbath. This chapter is absolutely vital in understanding just which days God intended man to keep holy — in fact, the only chapter where *all* of God's festivals are listed!

Notice carefully the wording in this important chapter:

"And *the Lord* spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning *the feasts of the Lord*, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even *these are my feasts*" (Lev. 23:1-2).

These are not the "feasts of the Jews" as some have mislabeled them — they are *God's* feasts! Like the weekly Sabbath, they were made for *man* (Mark 2:27), not just a single nation.

The annual holy days of God are seven in number. They are kept during the first seven months of the sacred calendar. In the first month is the *Passover* and the *Days of Unleavened Bread* (verses 5-6).

Fifty days later is the Feast of Pentecost (or Feast of Weeks). It is described in verses 9-21. (The June issue of the GN had a full explanation of this important holy day.) This feast day always falls on

a Sunday immediately following the Sabbath day.

Later, in the seventh month (Tishri), there is a festival called "Trumpets." Verses 23-25 describe the observance of this festival. Each of these holy days is a *Sabbath* day, as you can see from the aforementioned verses.

On the tenth day of the seventh month, the people were instructed to observe a day of *atonement* (verses 26-32). This was a day of fasting — no food or water was to be taken. (The term "afflict your souls" is a reference to fasting. Compare Psalm 35:13.)

Following the Day of Atonement, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the greatest festival of the year was to begin — the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33-44). It was also called the "feast of ingathering" (Ex. 23:16), because this important seven-day festival fell during the great fall harvest season. The whole nation gathered in the main harvest of the year at that time.

On the eighth day there was a special Sabbath also. It became known as the "Last Great Day" (compare Lev. 23:39 and John 7:37). It was the very last annual Sabbath in the seven-month holy day season.

Each of these annual Sabbaths was a day of sacrificing. The people had to come to the Tabernacle and offer an offering on each holy day.

Of course, my father realized that we don't have to observe these sacrifices today. There was no Temple, no Levitical system functioning, and no way to offer such sacrifices. Hebrews 9 clearly shows that the sacrificial ablutions and ceremonies of the Old Testament are no longer necessary today in the New Testament Church. Christians need not offer any sacrifices except that of their own person (Rom. 12:1). Christ was the sacrificial Lamb of God. He fulfilled those Old Testament types and thus rendered them unnecessary.

But what about the holy days themselves? Were they too done away?

There is no New Testament evidence that these annual festivals were ever rescinded. On the other hand, there is *abundant* evidence that Jesus Christ and the New Testament Apostolic Church kept those very same days!

Further, those who would argue against God's plain commands need to realize once and for all that God is ALIVE; that Jesus Christ is ALIVE;

some place or reference in the New Testament to something in the Old Testament, then you are not required to keep it.

The point is, there is no New Testament evidence that the festivals were ever rescinded. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence that the first-century Church kept these very same annual holy days.

God and Christ are just as alive

Is Easter in the Bible?

Many people refer to Acts 12:4 as proof that Luke, the author of the book of Acts, mentioned Easter in his narration. The King James Version says that Peter was taken (arrested) and put in prison "to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people" (verses 3-4).

The word "Easter" is a mis-translation. The original Greek word — the word Luke wrote — is

"Pascha," which should always be translated "Passover." In every other place in the New Testament where "Pascha" is used, it is always rendered "Passover." Examples are found in Matthew 26:2, 17-19; Mark 14:12 and I Corinthians 5:7.

Virtually all other Bible versions faithfully render this verse in Acts 12 as "intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people."

that God's Holy Spirit is living and powerful, and the Bible is a *living witness*!

No one should assume that unless you can read a SPECIFIC COMMAND somewhere in the New Testament, God's expressed and implied will (and His desire in our lives, as well as the examples of the "holy men of old") is automatically obliterated!

God does *not* need to speak to His children *twice*! If God clearly expresses His will, BLESSES His people for observing His ways and His laws, and we see a *New Testament example* of God's Church doing the very same thing, then we ought to obey our God.

People begin to assume that unless the New Testament carefully itemizes and catalogs every centillionth of required Christian behavior, that it is no longer obligatory; that unless you can find

today; the Church is alive and the Bible is a living witness. God's expressed will can be determined and given to mankind through human instruments and through inspiration today, based upon the fundamental Scriptures in the Old Testament, just as easily as it could have been during the writing of the New Testament.

Jesus Observed the Passover

Jesus Christ of Nazareth — who was and is our perfect example — observed these annual festivals throughout His earthly life. For instance, He was in the habit of observing the Jewish Passover from infancy. Luke preserved the vital details: "Now his [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem *every year* at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the

feast. And when they had fulfilled the *days* [plural]..." (Luke 2:41-43). Here is the important proof that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus also observed the Days of Unleavened Bread following the Passover.

So Jesus had been *keeping* the Passover all His life.

Christ Institutes the New Testament Passover

Now, in His very last Passover, on the very evening of His murder, Jesus left some definite and specific commands.

Notice them in John the 13th chapter: "And supper being ended [Greek: during supper], the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

"After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (verses 2-5).

Notice! This ceremony of the washing of the feet of the disciples had *nothing whatsoever* to do with the Old Testament observance of the Passover. It was being instituted *for the first time* by Jesus Christ Himself.

He was taking this last-minute opportunity to institute an observance which He commanded His disciples of all ages to keep (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus, after washing the disciples' feet, "said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (verses 12-14).

He went on to say: "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. . . . If ye know these things, happy are ye if you *do* them" (verses 15-17).

To a really converted Christian, who literally "trembles" at God's Word (Isa. 66:2), a plain statement of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (who is *very God*, soon-coming King and RULER of this entire universe, and to have the say-so over your eternal

life, as well as your day-to-day physical existence) would be tantamount to a gigantic ear-splitting, thundering, multimegaton, explosive ORDER! To avoid, in some way, doing what Jesus says DO is "unthinkable" to a converted Christian, who really loves, adores, WORSHIPS, and wants to OBEY His Saviour and soon-coming King, as well as his present High Priest in heaven.

Again, the entire principle of God's annual holy days is summed up in whether a person wishes to be totally subservient and obedient to His God who gives him his every breath — or whether he wishes to construct some humanly devised "theology," carefully and intricately weaving himself a web of satisfactory pseudo-sentimental intellectualism which is nothing more than the very same "ordinances of men" which Jesus Himself came to *obliterate!*

When Jesus says He has given us an example that we should DO as He has done, it would seem to any converted Christian there is no argument left!

Now turn to Luke's account and notice that Jesus commanded us to

Colossians 2:16 was written as a warning to the Gentile Christians at Colosse to protect them from false teachers — teachers who were subtly perverting the message Paul taught. Notice what Paul wrote: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink [margin — for eating or drinking], or in respect [any part or portion connected with the observance] of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. 2:16).

The Greek in verse 16 for "meat, or in drink" — "en broosei" and "en posei" — means "in eating and in drinking."

There is no mention of the abo-

Colossians 2:16

lition of God's law or His holy days. Nothing is done away in these verses. In fact, it is just the opposite. The very criticism the Colossians were receiving about their observance of these days proves they were keeping them. How could they be criticized "with regard to" days they were not keeping?

The once-pagan Colossians never kept these holy days of God before! They were heathen prior to conversion. Now that they had learned the gospel, they were keeping holy the days God made holy. And Paul is warning them not to return to or be influenced by their old pagan ways — the ways of those who hated

do something else in connection with observing the Passover. "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:17-18).

Jesus took wine, the fermented "fruit of the vine," and divided it among the disciples. He explained: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (verse 20). Jesus showed that the wine was to symbolize His shed blood.

Also, "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this *do* in remembrance of me" (verse 19).

Here again, in instituting the new symbols of the wine and the bread, showing His shed blood and broken body for the forgiveness of our spiritual and physical sins, Jesus gave a command. He said, "*This do — in remembrance of me.*"

Very shortly afterward, Jesus had to literally act out the real meaning of the New Testament symbols. He was led like a dirty criminal, made

to carry His own stake, until He fell under the weight of it — and then was hauled roughly up and had to feel huge spikes being pounded mercilessly through the flesh, pinning His hands and feet to the wood. He had to suffer a merciless beating which tore His flesh open, disfiguring Him, causing Him to bleed from dozens and even hundreds of open gashes and cuts! He was beaten and whipped with a "scourge," which was a whip of many leather thongs, with bits of lead and metal tied in the ends of them.

Then, after having to feel his own body weight ripping and tearing at the flesh where the nails had been driven through, without any relief in sight, Jesus had to feel a huge, sharp metal spear jamming into His side, cutting open His stomach! Christ died a hideous, merciless, depraved, brutal death — such as a normal man would not think of inflicting upon a rabid dog.

Christ, through His tremendous sacrifice, has willingly become our Passover "Lamb" that the filth of the world, the diseases of the world, the sins of the world, and the ulti-

mate death of the world will *pass over* us!

But the Passover was far from the only annual festival that Jesus continually observed.

The Feast of Tabernacles

Notice Jesus' example during the Feast of Tabernacles — the last one of His earthly ministry. "Now the Jews' *feast of tabernacles* was at hand. His brethren [physical brothers] therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. . . . Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come. . . . Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, *then went he [Jesus] also up unto the feast*, not openly, but as it were in secret" (John 7:2-3, 6, 8-10).

Because of continually mounting persecution, Christ wisely chose not to travel *openly* in Judaea (verse 1). But verse 10 does definitely show that He did *risk His life* to keep God's Festival of Tabernacles.

God's law and His festivals.

"Let no man therefore judge you . . ." (verse 16) in these matters, said Paul, "but [rather] the body of Christ" (Col. 2:17).

This verse has troubled many. Yet it should not. Notice that the word "is" in the King James Version is in italics. It does not appear in the original. The original Greek says only, "...but, the body of Christ." What is the body of Christ? How does Paul use this expression in Colossians?

Turn to chapter 1. In verse 18 we find that Christ "is the head of the body, the church." See also Colossians 2:19.

The true Church of God is the

body of Christ. Just as the Spirit of God once dwelled in the earthly body of Jesus Christ, so now the Holy Spirit dwells in each member of the Church and together the members constitute one body, doing the very work Christ did. The Church is therefore Christ's body today! And Christ is the Head as the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23).

Paul is declaring in Colossians that no unauthorized person is to sit in judgment of a true Christian's conduct. Man does not determine how we should live. But it is the responsibility of the Church — the body of Christ — to determine these matters! The

Church is to teach how to observe the festivals — to explain the meaning of self-control in eating and drinking, etc.

So these little-understood verses ought to be translated clearly: "Let no man therefore judge you . . . but [rather let] the body of Christ [determine it]." Let Christ's Body judge these Church matters. Greek scholars recognize the last clause "but [rather] the body of Christ" demands that a verb be added, but have often not seen that the missing verb should be supplied from the most logical and grammatically parallel clause so as to read properly "Let the body of Christ judge [these matters]"!

Verse 37 tells of yet another festival that your Saviour observed: "*In the last day*, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying..." This Last Great Day is a one-day festival (Lev. 23:39).

The Acts of the Apostles

The Apostle Paul wrote: "Be ye followers of me, *even as* I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). One way in which Paul continuously and consistently imitated Christ's example is by observing (and teaching others to observe) *the very same set of festivals* Jesus did.

He wrote in verse 2: "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and *keep the ordinances*, as I delivered [taught] them to you."

What ordinances? The rest of chapter eleven relates several.

But for our purposes, note verse 23: "For I have *received of the Lord* that which also I delivered unto you [now comes one vital ordinance

Paul taught these Corinthians — this is exactly how Paul followed Christ], That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread..." And then follows a repetition, a reiteration, of just exactly how Jesus taught His disciples (future apostles) how to keep the Pass-over with the New Testament symbols (verses 24-28).

So the Apostle Paul taught *Gentile Christians* to observe the Pass-over in a New Testament manner.

Unless you are fully educated concerning the life of the Apostle Paul, seeing it in the perspective of the day in which he lived, perhaps you cannot realize how absolutely, tremblingly and perfectly dedicated he was to the expressed will of Jesus Christ — and how *carefully* he strove to obey His Saviour in all things!

After all, the Apostle Paul himself had to confess that he acted above and beyond any requirement of his own government or religion at the time, in obtaining written per-

mission to PERSECUTE early New Testament Christians, even to the point of DEATH — apparently causing some to *curse God*, and to renounce their salvation, before he brutally put them to death!

Only if you realize the name of Saul was beginning to be whispered with alarm and fear in the private homes of many a New Testament Christian during that day as being a great and bloody persecutor of God's Church, can you get the true picture of the fantastic *change* in his very character, personality, and nature as you read many of the deeply spiritual, moving passages written by this man who formerly had caused Christians to be KILLED!

By no amount of human reasoning can anyone ever accuse the Apostle Paul of formulating some New Testament Pharisaism of do's and don'ts in striving to do ONLY that which was absolutely required of him. He obeyed his God and his Lord with real zeal and fervor! The



Only 87½ Shopping Days til Christmas...

But wait a minute! Have you ever stopped to think about *why* we observe such supposedly Christian holidays as Christmas, Easter, etc? Why doesn't the Bible endorse these holidays? And what days *does* it sanction as holy?

You can discover the answers to these questions in a free booklet, *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days, Which?* We think you'll find the truth surprising.

See inside front cover for the mailing address nearest you.

Pagan Holidays-
or God's Holy
Days-Which?

Apostle Paul not only FOLLOWED every example of Jesus Christ he humanly was able to, but powerfully and insistently taught all of those who would listen to his preaching (or who read his moving letters) to do the same!

Paul was human — he was frail, weak, and openly lacerated himself for his humanity by calling himself a “wretched man” (Rom. 7:24). He said he was the “offscouring of all things” (I Cor. 4:13); he said he was the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15); he said that he was the very least of all the apostles, and was not fit to be called an apostle because he persecuted the true Church of God (I Cor. 15:9).

Paul was not without his deep humility — but Paul was striving with all his being to be completely OBEDIENT to God’s law! Paul plainly commanded Gentiles to observe the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* immediately following the Passover!

Notice I Corinthians 5:7: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.”

How could they be “unleavened” and yet still be commanded to “purge out the old leaven”? This would be a complete contradiction of terms, unless the obvious meaning is understood: the Apostle Paul is urging them *spiritually*, to get rid of sin still dwelling in their lives, EVEN AS they already had swept out the bread and the crumbs containing leaven from their homes!

“For even *Christ our passover* is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast [of Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the *unleavened* bread of sincerity and truth” (verses 7, 8).

Paul told them they were unleavened *physically* (verse 7) — *not* spiritually, because they were *knowingly* harboring an incestuous fornicator in the Church (verses 1-2). But these Gentile Christians were clearly keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread according to the literal in-

struction given in Leviticus 23:6 and Exodus 12:18-20.

Pentecost and the Day of Atonement

Only fifty days after Jesus’ ascension, God sent His Holy Spirit to a select few repentant men during a *New Testament* annual holy day. “And when the *day of Pentecost* was fully come . . .” (Acts 2:1). And then Luke goes on to detail the utterly unique activities of that vitally important day (verses 2-41).

Later, the Apostle Paul “. . . hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem *the day of Pentecost*” (Acts 20:16).

Now notice yet another New Testament festival connected with the historical account of Paul’s activities in taking the gospel to the Gentiles. Concerning Paul’s perilous sea voyage to Rome, we read: “. . . When sailing was now dangerous, because *the fast* was now already past . . .” (Acts 27:9).

Directly adjacent to verse 9 in some editions of the King James Version, there is a marginal reference which reads: “The fast was on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27; Numbers 29:7).”

Almost all biblical scholars (conservative and liberal, ancient and modern) agree that “the fast” spoken of in Acts 27:9 is the Day of Atonement (*cf.*, *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 483; *Critical and Experimental Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 179; *Clarke’s Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 890; *Wheeldon’s Commentary — Acts and Romans*, p. 264; *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, p. 1008; *Peake’s Commentary on the Bible*, p. 924; Jamieson, Faussett and Brown *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 1132).

But Which Festivals Today?

The religious holidays (i.e., Easter, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Halloween, etc.) now observed by Christendom are nowhere found in the New Testament. (The word “Easter” in Acts 12:4 — King James

Version — should be translated “Passover.” See box on page three for full explanation.)

These holidays simply were *not* kept by the Apostolic Church.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica states: “Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church . . .” (vol. 5, p. 641, 14th edition). “There is *no indication* of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers. The sanctity of special times [current religious festivals] was an idea absent from the minds of the *first Christians, who continued to observe the Jewish festivals* [of Leviticus 23], *though in a new spirit*, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed” (vol. 7, p. 859, 14th edition, emphasis mine).

But perhaps even more important than just the proof of the first-century observance of God’s holy days is the poignant meaning that is packed into each and every one of them.

The Meaning of God’s Holy Days

The New Testament states that “Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.” Jesus was the Lamb of God (John 1:29). The Passover, originally commanded in Exodus 12 (*before* the Ten Commandments were given at Mt. Sinai!), pictures *in advance* the great sacrifice of Christ. After A.D. 31, it became a *memorial* of Christ’s death. It depicts the shed blood of Christ on behalf of all human beings.

It is also obvious, from a study of I Corinthians, that the Days of Unleavened Bread picture the putting away of sin. Leaven is a type of sin (I Cor. 5:7, 8).

Other scriptures come clear as the pattern unfolds. The Festival of Pentecost or Firstfruits pictures the first small “spring” harvest of lives for God’s Kingdom. James likens Christians of this age to firstfruits for the Kingdom (James 1:18). It was on the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, that God first gave His Spirit to

the original apostles and disciples (Acts 2). Thousands were then added to the true Church as God called them. This was the very first typical harvest of God's children.

The Day of Trumpets depicts the triumphant return of the powerful, living Christ to set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

Following Jesus' return, the world will be united with God. He will put His Spirit into people's hearts and minds and the world will be *at one* with God — reconciled to the Father through the blood of Christ.

Satan will be bound and his evil influence removed from the face of the earth. He will be cast into the lake of fire, as a symbol of his unrepentant condition. Then he will be banished to outer darkness for a thousand years, after which he will be released for a short time.

My father and mother had kept these annual holy days by simply observing them as they would the weekly Sabbath. They did no *servile* work, but would study God's Word, especially those sections which applied to the days which they were observing. Several years later, during the fall festival — *Tabernacles* — they would often go off to a desert place such as Siegler Springs in California for the full eight days of the feast. Only the first and last days were Sabbaths, but the whole festival period was *eight* full days.

How Would We Observe God's Festivals?

Later, when God began to add members to the Church, the problem of how to observe the festivals in the *physical* sense arose. How should such festivals be financed? Should they be kept locally or at distant sites?

Since the Church no longer observed the Levitical, sacrificial laws, there was no need to go to Jerusalem to keep the feasts! That much was obvious.

But the word "tabernacle" means a *"temporary dwelling place."* Since the festival pictured the world of tomorrow, it seemed logical that

that feast should be kept at some temporary site *away from* the home environment. In ancient Israel the people had made temporary "booths" of leaves and other materials as a means of shelter for the eight days of the fall festival.

But how did they finance the trek to Jerusalem from all the distant borders of Israel?

God had provided a way — the second tithe!

In Deuteronomy 14:22-26, God commanded: "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat [it] before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there [the Tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem], the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it [the tithe]; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after [desires], for oxen [*i.e.*, steak, prime rib], or for sheep [leg-o-lamb!], or for wine, or for strong drink [liquor], or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household."

Now obviously, there had to be some newer understanding of these verses that would fit in with modern society. We do not live in a basically agrarian society as did the ancient Israelites. The average person just doesn't *have* any sheep or oxen on which to tithe. And you can't buy gasoline with corn, grain or wine.

It became apparent to my father that a simple monetary tithe was the way to finance these important festi-

vals. So the Church members were then asked to save a second tenth of their own income *for themselves* for use at the annual festivals. This amounted to a prepaid vacation each fall for every member of the Church at some of the choicest resort areas in the country.

Festival Sites

As I mentioned earlier, in the early years the fall festival was kept at places like Belknap Springs, Oregon, and Siegler Springs, California. But once the Church began to really grow in numbers, it became necessary to find a larger festival site that would potentially accommodate *thousands* of brethren.

Big Sandy, Texas, the site of one of the three campuses of Ambassador College, was chosen. As that site grew, people came from all over the United States and Canada to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

A giant steel "tabernacle" was erected — but before many years that too was outgrown. The Church was growing in such numbers as a result of the preaching of the gospel, that a new site simply *had* to be found.

The second site was beautiful Squaw Valley, which opened up to us in 1961. Located 40 miles from Reno, in the scenic Donner Pass region of Northern California, Squaw Valley provided a beautiful and inspiring festival site. Thousands were diverted to that site from Canada, the northern and central United States, and even far-away Hawaii. Many more feast sites were to follow, both in the United States and other countries. Before long it was necessary to begin a festival site development division headquartered in Pasadena, but later shifted to Big Sandy, Texas.

This division took care of the purchase of properties and buildings, and arranged accommodations and housing for tens of thousands of festival keepers annually. The festival operation for the Church ran into the multiple *millions* of dollars every year. It was — and still is — a

giant operation involving the time and effort of *hundreds of people*.

Today about 100,000 brethren attend the festivals around the world. Feast sites exist in far-away Australia, Great Britain, the Philippines, France, Germany, South Africa, Canada, Hawaii, and many other countries around the world. These festivals have been an enormous success! Each year the great master plan of salvation has taken on new and deeper meaning to all those who have attended these annual festivals. Thousands look forward, each fall, to a fantastic vacation of good food, fine recreation and spiritual rejuvenation.

Tens of thousands of God's people will tell you there is no possible way to describe the emotional **IMPACT** and the deep **THRILL** of journeying to a place where thousands of others (of like belief) are assembled together, and gathering as one family in one place for the observance of God's annual holy days!

The first sound of 12,000 or more voices lifted in song for the very first opening meeting of the Feast of Tabernacles is always an exciting, thrilling, and never-to-be-forgotten experience!

God has providentially made it possible for my father and me to be at every feast site in the United States and Canada, with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so with each year that God adds to His flock.

This may well be the last year my father and I will have the opportunity to appear before all of our major festival sites in the United States and Canada. Actually, since we are already designating the Ambassador College Pasadena Campus as the "headquarters feast site" for approximately three thousand people, it is **ALREADY** impossible for us to be at all sites even in the United States.

This year, both my father and I shall have to speak ten times at ten festival sites in eight days — before a combined audience of approxi-

mately 83,000 in the United States and Canada.

This year, we are looking forward to the greatest and most inspiring Feast of Tabernacles of all!

There will be literally *thousands* of "little ones in Christ" in our midst; *thousands*, to whom every single moment of the Feast of Tabernacles this fall will be a never-to-be-forgotten experience which they will cherish for the rest of their lives!

All of us, as we think of the approaching Feast of Tabernacles, and the wonderful opportunity of visiting and fellowshiping with literally thousands of others in whom is the very Spirit of God; attending inspiring, uplifting, dynamic services and hearing meaningful sermons; attending the many special activities scheduled, such as seeing the exciting films of Mr. Armstrong's Manila campaign, films of our television specials, excerpts of television broadcasts, and many other films of exciting aspects of the Work; participating in Bible studies, family occasions, recreational activities such as boating, water skiing, picnicking, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, fishing, or just relaxing with one's family around the pool with a group of friends — it fills us with a combination of nostalgia for

the many past festivals that many of us have known, and sharpens and hones our anticipation of looking forward to this coming Feast of Tabernacles and season.

For me, and for my father (who jokingly says he is only thirty-nine, at age eighty-two), it is a time of a grueling pace — of dashing from one festival site to another. But, though it is physically exhausting, it is so spiritually uplifting and deeply rewarding to speak before so many tens of thousands the words of God and the words of *life itself*, that I can only say it quickens the pulse and inspires us as we look forward to such a great opportunity with real anticipation.

By the way, even if you are not yet a baptized member of the Worldwide Church of God — you are **MOST WELCOME** to attend the Feast of Tabernacles with God's people, and see and observe with your own eyes all that happens there, realizing we are human, and that we do make mistakes. While it is human to err, it is divine to forgive. We *are* human, and we certainly hope there is enough of God's Holy Spirit to add to us the tolerance and forgiveness that makes us the kind of human beings it is just plain good to be around! □

Festival Counsel

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

The answer is yes, we do.

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

So if you do have questions

about how and when to observe God's annual festivals, please feel free to write us and request a private appointment. Worldwide mailing addresses are on the inside front cover.

Or if you would prefer faster service, please dial this toll-free number in the *continental* United States: 800-423-4444. (Readers in California, Nevada, Alaska and Hawaii should call 213-577-5225 collect.)

Remember, this service is absolutely *free* and without personal obligation.

WHY CHRIST CURSED THE FIG TREE

WHY DID Jesus curse the fig tree for not having any figs when "the time of figs was not yet"?

The account in Mark 11 has stumped many people. But it need not. Rightly understood, it makes very good sense — and carries a valuable lesson for us.

"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he [Jesus] was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it" (Mark 11:12-14). The next day they saw that the fig tree had withered away (verses 20-21).

Jesus was hungry. His active, zealous life burned up plenty of energy. And probably He had not yet eaten anything that day. But He had grown up in the Holy Land. He knew very well when, and when not, to expect to find figs on a tree. It was then only April. The mature fig is not formed until June. Surely Jesus knew there would be no mature figs at that time! "The time of figs was not yet" (verse 13).

But notice that Jesus did not go to the tree expecting to find "figs" —

He was looking to see, instead, whether there was "anything" on it. What was the "thing" He expected?

At the time a fig tree puts out new leaves in the spring — whether it is early or late — it already bears the *taqsh*, the small knobs, or buds, which are the forerunners of the figs that are to grow there. Later they will develop into the early or first-fruit figs (called *bicura* and *boccore*) which ripen at the end of June. (While not particularly palatable, these buds may be eaten if one is hungry enough — even when they are very small.) The fig tree in question had put forth leaves *early*. Jesus could see that from a distance. He had every reason, therefore, to assume He would find undeveloped, but edible, buds or "proto-figs" on it.

However, if the small proto-figs are not present with the earliest leaves, the fig tree will bear no fruit that year. This was a tree that had none. Jesus could see at a glance that the tree was barren, or perhaps diseased. There was no reason for such a tree to continue to exist.

No doubt Jesus remembered the principle He had often reiterated: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 7:19; Luke 3:9). And, "... three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke 13:7.) He instantly saw an opportunity to make this tree an object lesson to teach His disciples in a most dramatic and unforgettable way the lesson that our heavenly Father wants *us* — in our Christian lives — to "bring forth fruit" (John 15:16), to "bear much fruit" (verse 8).

None of Jesus' miracles were done to show off. They were done to teach, not just to impress for the moment. He did not lose His temper, or curse the fig tree out of anger or disappointment at finding no figs. He chose, with purpose, to use this showy, but worthless, tree to symbolize the hollowness, emptiness, barrenness, phoniness, superficiality and pretension of Christians who

don't continue to grow, progress and PRODUCE.

Green leaves are not wrong, but there *must* be fruit with our Christian profession!

The only purpose of a fig tree is to bear fruit. But a barren "Christian" fig tree only *deceives* and further disappoints other people who are looking for spiritual food and find none.

All such barren "fig trees" — even in the Church of God — are fit therefore only to wither and die; and they shall! They are good for nothing but to be cast into the fire and burned (see John 15:1-6; Heb. 6:7-9).

Did the disciples who heard Jesus curse the fig tree get the point? Apparently at that time they did not. They were so astounded by the power He possessed and used that it excluded almost everything else from their minds.

So Jesus, good and flexible teacher that He was, let it pass, and chose instead to make certain they perceived an alternate message concerning the power of faith and of prayer (see Mark 11:22-26). But later the whole account was written so we could understand today.

Right now is not the "time of figs" for the world. For most people that time will only come with the spiritual harvest which will begin at the end of this present age. (Write for our free article "Is This the Only Day of Salvation?")

But individually, we receive our chance for salvation at any time Christ chooses — our only chance. So the time for you or me to be bearing fruit is whenever Christ calls on us — just as it was for the fig tree.

We must through continued union with Christ, through His Spirit, be bringing forth now the *fruit* of the Holy Spirit. That fruit is love, joy, peace, patience (which often includes suffering long), gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). And it includes much more than many see.

— Lawson Briggs

Many of our long-time readers have come to understand that the biblical Sabbath is the seventh day of the week. God has never given any ecclesiastical body the authority to change His day of rest. Nothing in the New Testament even remotely suggests that the Church Christ started ever kept any day but the seventh. But how should Christians observe and keep God's weekly Sabbath day?

AT THE end of creation week, God "ended his work that he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. 2:2-3).

The seventh day of the week thus became a special day, a memorial of creation; holy, sanctified time. (The term *sanctified* means "set aside for a holy use or purpose.") God rested, not because He was tired (see Isa. 40:28), but to set an example for His human creation. The seventh day was to become a day of rest and rejuvenation — both spiritually and physically — for all of mankind.

Remember the Sabbath Day

Those who knew God's will and walked in it between Adam and Moses kept the Sabbath day as a memorial of creation and a day of rest. When the children of Israel were led out of the land of Egypt, God instructed them to "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). They could not be expected to *remember* something of which no one had ever heard. Nor could they be asked to *keep* something holy which had never previously *been* holy!

God was not here *instituting* the Sabbath. Rather, He was reminding them of it and formalizing proper guidelines for its observance.

In describing the basic guidelines

of Sabbath observance, God instructed: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God [not "of the Jewish people!"]: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates" (Ex. 20:9-10).

The term "work" here is referring especially to the labor of *earning a living*. It is mainly oriented to farming — the servants ("hired hands" today) and the cattle were also to be rested. That society was primarily agrarian; farming and those efforts with which it was associated were the main occupations.

After giving these simple guidelines, God then reminded them that the seventh day was indeed a memorial of the original creation: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (verse 11).

To *hallow* is to make holy or set apart for holy use. It is very similar in meaning to "sanctify." This was done at creation and remains so to this day.

Once the basic command was given to keep the seventh day holy, God later *expanded* on the specific means by which the day was to be observed or "hallowed."

Theocratic Israel was abundantly instructed in the keeping of the Sabbath. It was a day that was to be a *sign* of the true people of God (Ex. 31:13). In the community of Israel those who defiled the Sabbath by violating it were to be put to death (verse 14). That's how important its national observance was to God.

National Violations

Unfortunately, as the nation drifted away from God, the leaders failed to instruct the people zealously in the keeping of the Sabbath. They also failed to carry out the death penalty for violation of this

OCT. 1974						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN

by Brian Knowles

DEC. 1974						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30	31				

JAN. 1975						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

holy day. As a result, the Sabbath day came to be generally abused on a national scale. The nation descended deeper and deeper into sin. Finally, well into the period of the monarchy, Sabbath breaking had become a *major* national sin (see Jer. 17:19-27; Isa. 58:13-14).

People were flagrantly and openly conducting business in the very Temple of God on His most holy Sabbath day! This aroused God's wrath! He spoke powerfully through His prophets and warned the people of impending national punishment if they didn't cease to violate the day He had set apart.

The warnings of the prophets went unheeded and the nations plunged into captivity to Assyria and later Babylon. The House of Israel, with its capital at Samaria, never returned to the area of Palestine. Instead they were permanently replaced by Gentile peoples who became known as Samaritans.

The southern House of Judah returned in part after some seven decades of captivity in Babylon. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Joshua (the High Priest), Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jewish people once more began to observe God's Sabbath day.

Some time after Ezra and Nehemiah, later religious leaders, in their misguided zeal to avoid the mistakes of the past, began to enforce the Sabbath in a much more vigorous manner. They took the known biblical guidelines and embellished them considerably. They began adding many "do's and don'ts" to the keeping of this day to the point that it became an intensely complex and complicated matter.

The sect of the Essenes, for example, refused to light fires or even relieve themselves on the Sabbath day! Severe penalties were imposed for violations of these additional laws. Instead of being a delight to the people, the Sabbath became a burden. The Jewish people — at least those who gave heed to these sectarian leaders — became *enslaved* to the Sabbath.

Sabbath Made a Burden

By the time of Christ's earthly ministry, the custom of keeping the Sabbath in the manner of the scribes and Pharisees had become deeply entrenched among devout Jews. They had many very stringent stipulations about what they could and could not do on the Sabbath day.

The scribes and the Pharisees acted as "spiritual policemen" and attempted to enforce these rigid rules of Sabbath keeping. After all, they did sit in "Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2). Didn't they have the right to determine — *beyond* the revealed Word of God — just what the people could and could not do on the seventh day?

The scribes and Pharisees personified a common human problem — power corrupts. The heady wine of being in ecclesiastical authority over the people was too much for them. They began to lose sight of the spirit of the laws of God and emphasized the letter. Laws that were originally holy, just and good *as God had given them* became massive burdens to the people. Instead of drawing people to God, they alienated them from Him. The religious leaders of that day took it to themselves to add to the laws of God in direct violation of yet another law:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2; see also 12:32).

Yet, these religious hypocrites (Matt. 23:13) *added* some sixty-five do's and don'ts to the keeping of the Sabbath day which God had *not* commanded! And they felt justified in so doing. They believed they were protecting the people from straying too close to the edge of the cliff and becoming "permissive" in the keeping of the weekly Sabbath. They went "above and beyond"—and in so doing became "more righteous" than God!

The *real* problem, of course, was that they were *self-righteous*. They were not satisfied with the law as

God had given it. They had to embellish it, add to it, "improve" upon it. Thus they became enslaved to a day which was really intended to serve them.

Jesus Indicts the Pharisees

Jesus pinpointed the problem in a scathing indictment of their teachings and practices: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you *observe* [i.e., the Sabbath day], that observe and do; but *do not ye after their works*: for they say, and do not. For *they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne*, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matt. 23:1-4).

The Pharisees used the power of binding and loosening to pervert the true intent of the law of God. They made religious observance burdensome rather than a blessing.

Time after time, the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus in alleged violations of the "law" of the Sabbath. What they didn't seem to realize is that Jesus Himself was the God of the Old Testament who had personally *given* that law to Israel and knew best how to interpret it.

On one occasion Jesus and His disciples had gone through a field on the Sabbath day and the disciples began to pluck some heads of grain in accordance with a provision made in the Law. The corners of fields were not to be harvested in order that the poor of the land might go through these fields and take some grain when they were in need (Lev. 19:8-9; Deut. 23:25).

The law of God stated nothing about this being "unlawful." This was one of the "don'ts" added by the religious leaders after the time of the Restoration. To those who thought themselves more righteous than God, plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath — even if you were starving — was "work." Therefore, they determined that it was "unlawful."

Jesus and the Sabbath

To the Pharisees who asked if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day, Jesus replied: "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days" (Matthew 12:11-12).

Jesus then proceeded to heal the man in their presence.

* * *

Regarding the rigorous and legalistic do's and don'ts of Sabbath observance which the Pharisees imposed, Jesus said: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

* * *

Christ was teaching on the Sabbath in a synagogue when He saw a woman bowed over with a spirit of infirmity. He laid His hands on her and healed her right there. The ruler of the synagogue became indignant and objected vehemently to this healing on the Sabbath day. Christ replied: "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

"And when he had said these

things, all his adversaries were ashamed . . ." (Luke 13:15-17).

* * *

An impotent man who had been bedridden for 38 years lay at the pool of Siloam, "waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had" (John 5:3, 4).

Knowing that the man had no one to put him into the pool, Jesus said: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (verse 8).

"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath" (verse 9). This angered the onlookers, who claimed that it was not only unlawful to heal on the Sabbath, but also for the man to carry his bed! (Verse 10.)

Instead of rejoicing about the healing of a man who had suffered so many years, the religionists persecuted Jesus "and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day" (verse 16). Jesus' answer to them is recorded in verses 17-47. Verse 30 shows that God in heaven approved of what He did on the Sabbath, for Jesus said: "I can of mine own self do nothing . . ."

* * *

The great champions of the law and of strict Sabbath observance sought to murder Jesus in obvious violation of the sixth

commandment. Jesus said: "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?" (John 7:19.)

The people accused Him of demon influence because He said this. Jesus answered: "I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision . . . and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (verses 21-24).

* * *

John 9 records another account of Christ healing on the Sabbath day. Again the Pharisees made no small stir over the matter. They simply couldn't understand how their own concept of Sabbath observance could be violated and the man still be of God. This is why they said: "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them" (John 9:16).

* * *

Christ often taught on the Sabbath: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). □

The Spirit of the Law

With this background in mind let's notice the actual account (using *The New International Version*).

"One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?'" (Mark 2:23-24.)

Rather than argue the technicalities of the law with them, Jesus gave in reply an example from the life of King David, a man after God's own heart.

"He answered, 'Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the time of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is only lawful for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions'" (verses 25-26).

Here Christ was pointing out that the law was not meant to be a burdensome, rigid, ironclad, inflexible thing. It was intended to picture something. It should not be violated wholesale or the meaning of the law would have been lost. Yet God did not intend that there should be food available in the Temple and the king and his men starving!

God intended that no servile or remunerative work be done on the Sabbath. But that did not mean that a person could not expend *any* physical effort on that day! *The keeping of the Sabbath is not an end in itself*. It is a memorial of creation, a reminder of the beginning of the great plan of God. It is a time to worship God, to set aside the cares of the week and turn one's thoughts to God, and to rest one's body and mind. But it is not a day to which man must be in servitude. In fact, precisely the opposite is the case.

"Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.' So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (verses 27-28, NIV).

Christ Himself is Lord, Master

and Giver of the Sabbath. It is *His* right — *not man's* — to instruct us on just how that law is to be observed.

Man has no right to go *beyond* the revealed will of God, or to *add* to the Word of God, in the manner of the keeping of the Sabbath as did the sect of the Pharisees.

What Jesus Said About the Sabbath

Jesus and His disciples were often criticized by the religious leaders for their "liberality" in observing the Sabbath day.

In response to criticism of His healing a man with a withered hand on the seventh day, Jesus asked:

"... 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent.

"He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus" (Mark 3:4-6, NIV).

Incredible! Because He "broke" *their* law of the Sabbath, they probably thought they would be doing a service to God by killing Christ. They had zeal, but not according to knowledge. They were more "righteous" than God and Christ, who had given them the law of the Sabbath! They *enslaved* man to the picky do's and don'ts of Sabbath keeping. They took a perfectly good law and turned it into a burden.

Jesus said: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). God's laws are the way to freedom — not bondage. The laws were made to serve man — not vice versa. The Sabbath is a day in which man may rest and rejuvenate his person both spiritually and physically.

How Not to Keep the Sabbath

In their misguided zeal, some have suggested — or rather insisted

— that the Sabbath is a day in which no *pleasure* of any kind may be indulged. Anything that is physically active or entertaining is wrong according to this line of thinking. This misunderstanding is based mainly on Isaiah 58:13-14:

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, *nor finding thine own pleasure*, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord . . ."

Now think about this. It's pretty difficult to call a day a "delight" when it contains nothing pleasurable!

The problem is derived from a misunderstanding of what is meant by "thine own pleasure" in this verse. The Hebrew word so translated is *chephets*, and it is usually translated "desire" or "purpose." Let's look at a couple of other examples of the use of this word in the writings of Isaiah.

"That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my *pleasure [chephets]*: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44:28).

Are we to believe that the word "pleasure" here means entertainment, fun or pleasure in that sense? Obviously not. It simply means that Cyrus would perform God's *will* or *purpose*.

Notice also Isaiah 46:9-10: "... For I am God . . . declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my *pleasure [chephets]*."

Again, the word obviously has nothing to do with fun and entertainment. It plainly refers to the fact that God's *will* or *purpose* will be accomplished.

With that in mind, let's go back and look at the way the Jewish translators rendered Isaiah 58:13:

"If thou turn away thy foot be-

cause of the sabbath, from *pursuing thy business* on My holy day . . . *nor pursuing thy business* . . ." (Jewish Publication Society translation).

The *New English Bible* makes it even plainer: "If you cease to tread the sabbath underfoot, and keep my holy day *free from your own affairs*, if you call the sabbath a day of joy . . . if you honour it by not plying your trade, not seeking *your own interest* or attending to *your own affairs* . . ."

How plain! The Sabbath is a day on which you do *not* ply your trade or perform the usual money-making tasks of the week. It is a day on which you sanctify (set apart) God and think about things of God. The instruction of these verses has nothing to do with pleasure in the sense that we normally use it. It does not refer to entertainment, or laughter, or joy — or even to godly sexual pleasure!

But let's not jump into the other ditch!

Balanced Sabbath Observance

Because this verse is not a stern, Pharisaical injunction against such things does not mean that the Sabbath day should be totally taken up with hedonistic, pleasure-seeking activities! That's "ditchism"!

Why so?

Because the Sabbath is a day when you honor *God*. It is a day when a Christian's mind should be on spiritual things *more* than on the physical.

Obviously, a person must still eat on the seventh day. God is not raining manna down from heaven today, so food must be prepared. Most heavy preparation should be done on Friday, however. But it is

not wrong to cook on the holy days of God (Ex. 12:16). Nor is there any *scriptural* law against watching some types of television programming or having a short, refreshing swim in a backyard pool, or even indulging in mild physical activity — including marital relations. But if any such activity should begin to *dominate* the Sabbath day, it would obviously become a violation since God would be removed from the picture.

bigger than the mere letter — it seeks the greater wisdom of the spirit.

If you can set God apart in your mind on the seventh day — think of Him, learn of Him in His Word, pray more to Him and reflect on your own need to overcome and develop the mind of Christ, then you will be keeping the spirit of the Sabbath day. If your mind is *primarily* on God and the things of God, then the Sabbath is serving you as Christ intended. It will be a day of rest for spiritual and physical rejuvenation.

If your mind is mainly on your own thoughts, dreams, business deals, entertainment, etc., etc., then you will be missing the mark in keeping the Sabbath.

In ancient Israel the Sabbath day was customarily observed by holding services in the local synagogue. A definite series of readings of Scripture were pre-arranged and read every Sabbath in the Temple or synagogue services. These services were usually held in the morning with those in attendance having a major meal (feast) in the afternoon. Often guests were brought home from the synagogue. Thus most of the Sabbath day was taken up with services and fellowship.

Which day is the

1974		OCTOBER					1974	
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT		
		1	2	3	4	?		
?	7	8	9	10	11	?		
?	14 COLUMBUS DAY	15	16	17	18	?		
?	21	22	23	24	25	?		
?	28 VETERANS DAY	29	30	31 HALLOWEEN	SEPTEMBER 1974 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30		NOVEMBER 1974 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	

Christian Sabbath?

Or does it make any difference? Does the Bible say anything about which day a Christian should observe? Write for the booklet, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* See inside front cover for addresses.

The fact that there is a problem finding a balance is the very reason the Pharisees felt they had to legislate many do's and don'ts for the keeping of the day! The people did not have God's Spirit to give them the wisdom they needed in making judgments about what was right and what was not. Today's Christian should not require an endless listing of permissible and nonallowable activities for the Sabbath!

Christ came to teach us the *spirit* of the law. A truly converted mind is

Modern-Day Sabbath Keepers

Today, modern Christians still faithfully keep the seventh-day Sabbath, just as God originally ordained it. The Worldwide Church of God holds weekly Sabbath services throughout the United States and much of the rest of the world.

If you are interested in participating in such services or would like to contact a minister of the Church to learn more, please see the box on page 9 for details. □



NEWS

GETTING THE GOSPEL TO EUROPE

"AND THE gospel must first be published among all nations," said Jesus Christ (Mark 13:10).

One phase of our global effort to fulfill that commission is reported by Jack Martin, director of newsstand distribution.

* * *

In the late 60s our efforts to get the gospel of Christ to Europe had

reached an impasse. Ads in *Reader's Digest* and weekly newspapers were suffering from the law of diminishing returns. In 1967, the government had outlawed the so-called "pirate ship stations" anchored off the British coast, thus ending commercial radio broadcasting. The possibility of airing *The World Tomorrow* program on the BBC is to this day practically nonexistent.

UPDATE
UPDATE
UPDATE
UPDATE



STANDS

The Independent Broadcasting Authority Code states: "No advertisement may be inserted by or on behalf of any body, the objects of which are wholly or mainly of a religious nature, and no advertisement may be directed towards any religious end" (The I.B.A. Code of Advertising Standards and Practice, October 1972).

In 1971, the then Director of Am-

bassador College's Foreign Educational Service (now International Division), Mr. Ronald Dart, suggested a new avenue of approach. Why not place the *Plain Truth* on newsstands? Why not present the gospel directly for people to pick up and take home?

Our first attempt to place the magazine with one of the largest newsstand distributors in Europe

got nowhere. They flatly refused to handle a *free* magazine, despite the offer of regular payment to do the distribution work. However, after much searching, a Scottish-based company agreed to do the job. But getting an agreement was not easy.

In the United Kingdom, retailers receive around 42% of the cover price of most magazines. That percentage represents far more than we

could ever afford as payment for distributing the *Plain Truth*.

But God often deals in the seemingly impossible. The first reaction of the news promotions manager was, "This is very unusual, it's never been done before." Then, considering the unique problems involved, he said: "Leave it with me. I will promise you one thing, the buck stops with me. If it's possible, we will do it."

We waited a week for them to think it over. The day before our second meeting, Mr. Charles Hunting, our circulation manager for Europe, Africa, India and the Middle East, asked if I had a negotiating price in mind. I told him I could not come up with a definite figure. Mr. Hunting had given some thought to this, and suggested that five pence (12 cents) per copy seemed reasonable. It was high enough to be profitable for the distribution house and low enough to be within our means.

Armed with this as a guideline, we went to see the managing director. His assistant asked me on arrival if I had a price in mind. I said, "Yes, but what do you think?" His reply: "Five pence sticks in my mind."

We went into the meeting and the managing director finally agreed to five pence. And five pence has been our average negotiating price in the twenty or more countries we now supply with newsstand magazines.

In our first trial distribution, we planted a "mustard seed" in Britain — only 399 magazines. But 7.5% of those who picked up the magazine wrote in for a one-year, free subscription. The next month, an 8.8% response came from 1100 magazines.

Reassured by these high percentages, higher than from any other media we had used in the United Kingdom, we asked Mr. Armstrong's permission to expand the program. He was very pleased with the operation and gave the go-ahead.

Eire (Southern Ireland) was our next target. The managing director



London, England

“And the gospel must first be published among all nations, said Jesus Christ. Mark 13:10”



Brussels, Belgium

of the major distribution agency said of the *Plain Truth*, "I like this. We can make it go." And they did! An excellent distribution has now been in operation for over two years.

Persistence Pays Off

On the Continent the going was not so easy. Two years of searching in France brought us nothing. Finally, in 1973, one of our newsstand representatives was in Paris, determined to begin a distribution in France. He called at the head office of a well-known chain store to arrange an appointment for me. In a short time he found himself in a director's office explaining the magazine and the College. The director was quite interested and said: "I see no reason why we cannot distribute your magazine." This director represented a group which has 359 stores throughout France. Until recently we had supplied 34 of their best outlets with 16,000 copies each month.

Now after a period of difficulty with his chain, whose directors soon received letters of complaint from religious bodies upon distribution of *La Pure Verité*, a new bookshop distribution has been arranged at half the cost!

Recently, another of our representatives located a distributor in Strasbourg, France. His comments on the magazine were, "This is incredible. Strasbourg is the best area in Europe for your magazine in various languages. We would like to display it."

Breakthrough in Scandinavia

In Scandinavia the going was even tougher. Distributors refused to handle the *Plain Truth* despite discussions over a two-year period. To place such a magazine in Scandinavia seemed almost impossible. In Norway, for example, a monopoly exists between publishers and distributors; a free magazine was viewed with suspicion and disapproval. To accept it might open the floodgates to numerous other

free publications, and commercial publishers would suffer.

But a visit to Oslo, Norway this year broke the ice. The British Embassy supplied a list of department stores and possible outlets for the *Plain Truth*. Delivery would be direct; we would not have to use a distribution agency. One large chain of stores accepted the magazine. Because many Norwegians speak English and have close affiliation with the British people, the managers asked for the English edition.

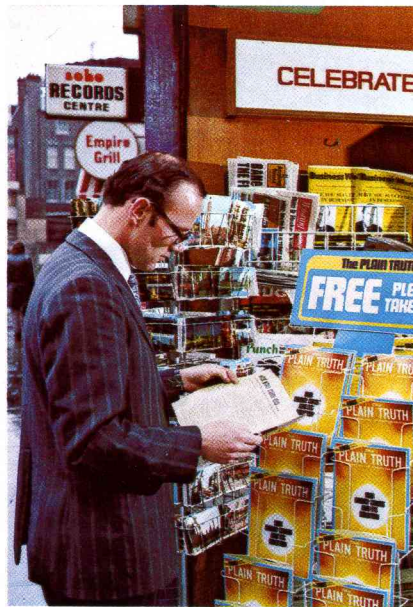
They have given the *Plain Truth* excellent display — better than any of our other newsstand displays worldwide. There are even posters on shop doors advertising “The *Plain Truth* — free inside.” In fact, the management liked the magazine so much we were able to negotiate an unusually low payment for using their newsstands.

Next, we went to Sweden. A representative of the major Swedish distributor had previously told me that the *Plain Truth* will be distributed “over my dead body!”

We now have a fine distribution in Sweden. The British Embassy directed us to a department store with newsstand sections and outlets throughout Sweden. Their marketing manager was so impressed with Ambassador College and the magazine that he asked us to send the president of the company our booklet *This Is Ambassador College* in order to make a final decision on distribution.

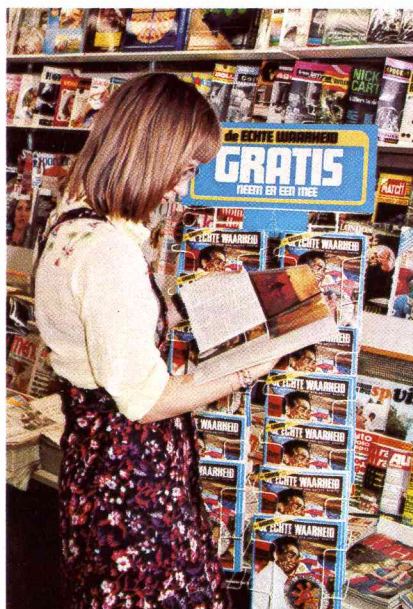
Two days later the president asked to see us: “We are going to distribute the magazine for the smallest charge possible. I am not doing this for money, but because I believe it will be good for the Swedish people.” He has since written to his managers and asked *them* to read the *Plain Truth* each month!

With two down, one to go, we went on to Finland. After much searching we had only one choice: we would have to approach a distributor who had refused us twice before. First we prayed, then we phoned. Both of the men I had seen



London, England

“Do your people really understand what a tremendous and marvelous open door this is?”



Amsterdam, Holland

previously were out of town. Only the president was in and he agreed to see us!

After 2½ hours of discussion, he said, “This is fantastic. We are going to do it!” After two years God had opened the door to all of Scandinavia in one trip.

Spectacular Growth

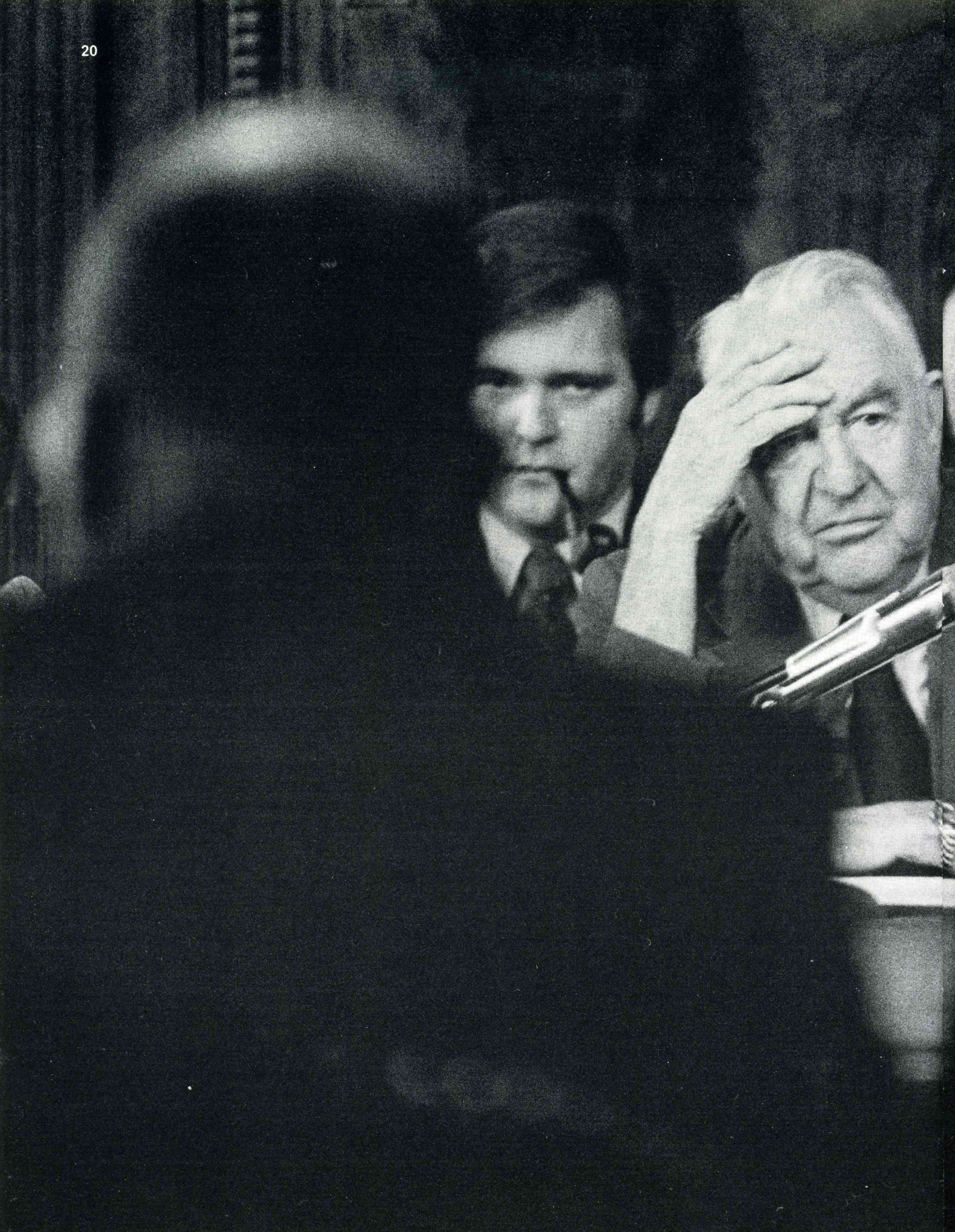
Today, 300,000 *Plain Truth* magazines are distributed from newsstands each month in countries as far afield as Japan, South Africa and French Canada. In general, the outlets we use have a high volume of trade and are well situated. They vary from supermarkets to department stores, from airport and railway stations to regular city center news agencies.

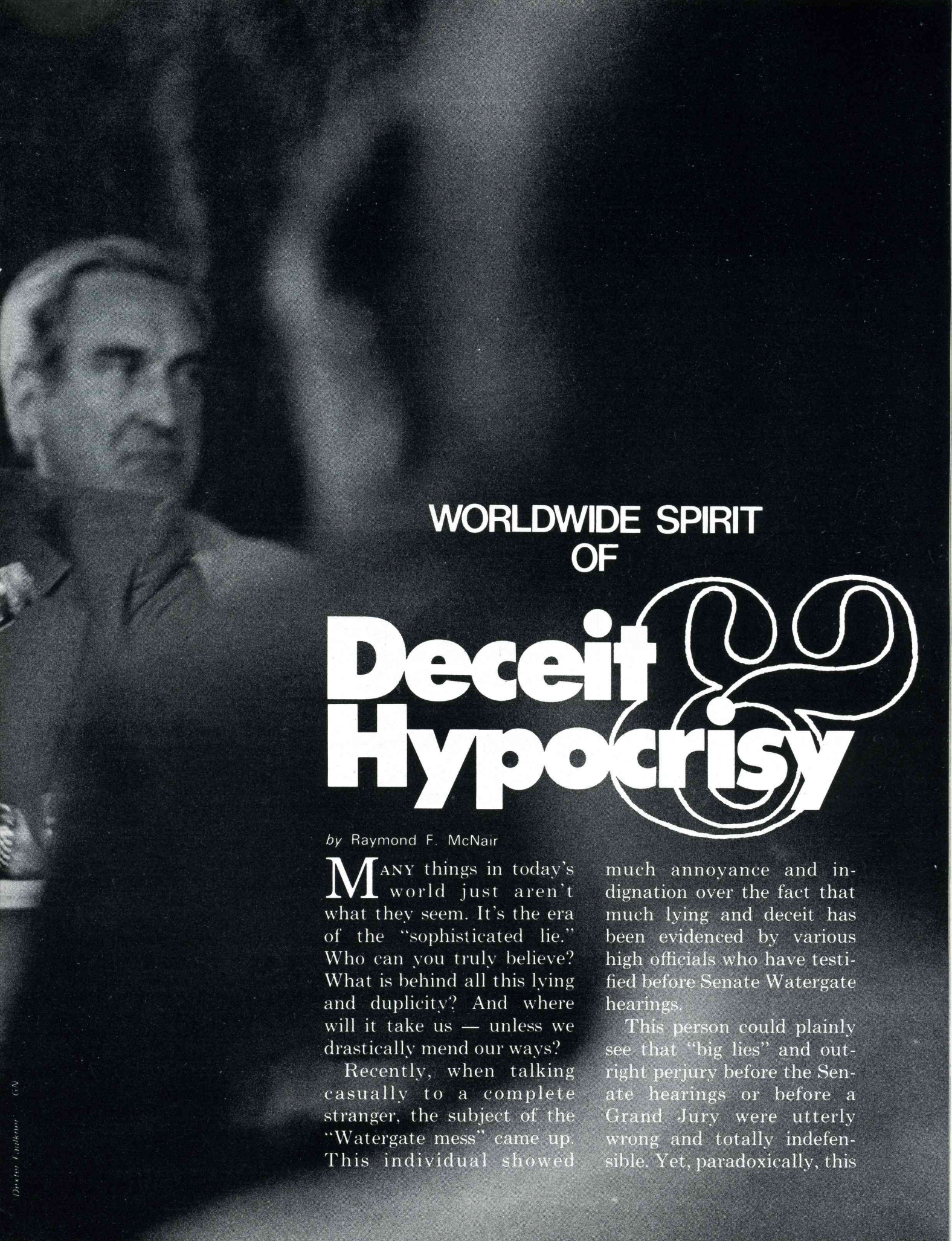
Distributors have even placed the *Plain Truth* in the EEC (European Economic Community) and SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in Europe) buildings in Belgium, as well as the European Community Center, housing the European Court of Justice, in Luxembourg. One distributor plans a new display in the European Parliament Building in Strasbourg.

From an initial 399 issues we have gathered 160,000 new subscribers for our mailing list at Bricket Wood. Eighty thousand of these people are in the United Kingdom.

The magazine is becoming quite well known in Britain. One newsagent commented that thirty or forty people had recently come into his shop asking for the *Plain Truth*. He was very relieved when we offered to supply him. The wholesale managing director who first accepted the *Plain Truth* in Britain recently said to me, “Do your people really understand what a tremendous and marvelous open door this is? People will flock to get the *Plain Truth* because it offers them solutions to their problems.”

Newsstand distribution has indeed become a very effective open door to publishing the gospel to the whole world before Christ returns. □





WORLDWIDE SPIRIT
OF

Deceit Hypocrisy

by Raymond F. McNair

MANY things in today's world just aren't what they seem. It's the era of the "sophisticated lie." Who can you truly believe? What is behind all this lying and duplicity? And where will it take us — unless we drastically mend our ways?

Recently, when talking casually to a complete stranger, the subject of the "Watergate mess" came up. This individual showed

much annoyance and indignation over the fact that much lying and deceit has been evidenced by various high officials who have testified before Senate Watergate hearings.

This person could plainly see that "big lies" and outright perjury before the Senate hearings or before a Grand Jury were utterly wrong and totally indefensible. Yet, paradoxically, this

same individual, only minutes later, urged me to palm off my twelve-year-old son as an eleven-year-old in order to save approximately one dollar on the cost of a scenic tour on Catalina Island (just off the Southern California coast).

Apparently, this person did not seem to feel that to deceive, lie and cheat in order to save one dollar would also be dishonest and immoral. But it *is* just as wrong (or sinful) to steal one dollar as it is a million — at least in the eyes of God.

The Founder of true Christianity said: "He that is *faithful* [honest] in that which is *least* is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

He who would steal a postage stamp would likely steal money or other valuables also — if he got the chance!

A lie often has to be covered by several other lies, which have to be covered by yet more lies. Such an intricate web of duplicity is woven that it becomes almost impossible to discover the real truth.

Lying and stealing often go hand in hand. A person who steals will often need to lie to cover up his crime. Perhaps this is why the eighth commandment — "Thou shalt not steal" — is followed immediately by the commandment against bearing false witness (Deut. 5:19, 20). Elsewhere in the Pentateuch we read: "Ye shall not *steal*, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another" (Lev. 19:11).

Little White Lies

Most parents no longer teach their children to love, fear and obey the Creator God; they no longer teach their children the Ten Commandments.

Children are seldom drilled in the old-fashioned virtues of strict honesty and integrity; they are rarely taught that little white lies are neither "little" nor "white" in the sight of God. Many of these children, permitted to tell little white lies

(fibs) with impunity, will, as a matter of habit, grow up to become outright liars and perjurers as adults.

But on the other hand, a child who is taught to tell the *truth* even if it hurts — and who sees his parents set the right example by constantly *speaking* and *living* the truth — will grow up to be an adult who tells the truth.

A person who grows up to be a chronic liar — whose word is no good — is neither fit for God nor man. No one likes to deal with a liar — one whose word can never be trusted.

Is it any wonder that we live in the age of the kickback, cover-up and the bribe? When we do not consistently teach our children the importance of being honest and

**"For the Lord
hath a controversy
with the inhabitants of
the land, because
there is no truth, nor
mercy, nor knowledge of
God in the land."**

Hosea 4:1

truthful, is it any wonder there are so many grown-up cheats with their thumbs on the scales?

A Deceitful Society

In such a deceitful society, are we shocked to learn that a "pregnant" woman at the checkout counter of a supermarket turns out to be concealing a turkey under her dress?

When deceit, lies and hypocrisy have become *a way of life* — should we be amazed to find employees stealing from their employers — walking off with tools, company property, and literally anything that is not nailed to the floor?

At one factory, all employees were asked to assemble with only a few minutes' notice. Not being told that the purpose of the assembly

was for a group photo, hundreds of tools and assorted items were found strewn over the factory premises. Fearing an inspection, the employees had hastily discarded the tools and other stolen items they had concealed on their persons.

Surely everyone is familiar with the "big lie" so often repeated in the field of advertising. So much of salesmanship and business in this world is based on misrepresentation, half-truths and/or outright lies.

Fear of Getting Caught

Many lament the deceit and hypocrisy practiced by the average person in the Western world. They see this widespread duplicity as an indication that we have lost our spiritual and moral strength, and are going the way of ancient Rome — down the drain!

But, sadly, all too many who bemoan the guile and dishonesty revealed in the lives of others, themselves indulge in fibs, cheating or other forms of hypocrisy — and think nothing of it! Such dishonesty has become so ingrained that it has become a way of life.

In the view of all too many, it is not *lying* that is bad, but *getting caught*. Few today really believe *honesty is the best policy*. Many regard this as a Puritan ethic which has long since become passé.

Inveterate liars do not understand that there *is* an absolute, living, *spiritual* law, which when broken exacts a penalty.

But, most importantly, liars fail to realize that lying is a sin against the great Creator God — "and the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). These short-sighted people fail to understand that all forms of lying destroy character, in the long run hurting *themselves* as well as others.

"No Truth . . . in the Land"

The Prophet Isaiah long ago wrote of many of the sins which plague our nations so much today. "... Your *iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and

your *sins* have hid his face from you, that he will not hear... *your lips have spoken lies*, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for *justice*, nor any pleadeth for truth..." (Isa. 59:2-4).

How does God look upon a nation of liars and hypocrites? "In transgressing and *lying* against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and *uttering from the heart words of falsehood*. And *judgment* is turned away backward, and *justice* standeth afar off: for *truth is fallen in the street*, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it *displeased* him that there was no judgment" (verses 13-15).

Truly, our Creator is displeased with *any* nation so given to deceit and falsehood.

A prophecy in Hosea also reveals how God feels toward any nation of liars: "... For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is *no truth*, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. [Many now even believe that God is dead!] By swearing, and *lying*, and *killing*, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood" (Hosea 4:1, 2).

The Prophet Jeremiah decried a similar time of national faithlessness: "And they bend their tongues like their bow for *lies*: but they are not valiant for the *truth* upon the earth.... Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly *supplant* [deceive], and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will *deceive* every one his neighbour, and *will not speak the truth*: they have taught their tongue to speak lies..." (Jer. 9:3-5).

Speaking of the utter deceitfulness to which human beings can descend, Jeremiah continues: "Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh *deceit*: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his

mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait" (verse 8).

Deceitful Religious Fables

Nowhere has deceitfulness been practiced with more cunning than in the arena of organized religion. The Bible warns that "Evil men and *seducers* shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13).

"... The time will come," said the Apostle Paul, "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears *from the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3, 4).

Isaiah prophesied of a rebellious, lying generation which would "not

**"And they bend
their tongues like their
bow for lies: but they
are not valiant for
the truth upon the earth....
they have taught their
tongue to speak lies."**

Jeremiah 9:3, 5

hear the law of the Lord" (Isa. 30:9). These people would say to their preachers: "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (verse 10).

Today, we live in a world where basic honesty is not properly exalted in the home, schools, or even in many churches — strange as that may sound.

A Christian-professing world has turned its back on the Word of God, has turned away from the truth and embraced fables. It is a simple fact, unadmitted by most, that many of the cherished beliefs and practices of mainline Christianity are not biblical truths, but are in fact rank fables.

It is high time that the peoples of the Western world awoke from their

slumber. It is time we realized that we have turned away from the laws of God.

The Father of Lies

But who is responsible for this wholesale religious deception?

Most Christians profess to believe both in God and the devil. But few professing Christians understand that Satan the devil has the power to send out evil, seductive, lying thoughts. He *broadcasts* his attitudes of deceit and hypocrisy. These "spiritual emanations," like spiritual radio waves, are planted by Satan in the minds of those who are *receptive* to his cunning, crafty deceits.

Satan does not believe in truth and integrity. Christ said: "... He [the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and *abode not in the truth*, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Satan is the invisible ruler of this world. He is, in fact, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). He is also called "the god of this world" who "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not..." (II Cor. 4:4).

This cunning spirit being is referred to as "the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12:9).

A God of Truth

In contrast to Satan, Moses described the Eternal God who manifested Himself to the nation of Israel: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut. 32:4).

There is no character trait which better exemplifies God than that of truthfulness; One whose word is dependable and reliable always. "In hope of eternal life, which *God*, that *cannot lie*, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2).

God loathes deceit, lies and hypocrisy!

He says: "... He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Ps. 101:7). Further, He declares that the "joy of the *hypocrite* is but for a moment" (Job 20:5), and the "hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13).

Good and Bad Examples

What kind of a person was Jesus Christ when He walked on this earth in human flesh — being tugged at by the pulls of the human mind just as we are? (Heb. 4:15.) The Apostle Peter said Christians should follow Christ's "example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). "Who did no sin, neither was *guile* [deceit] found in his mouth" (verse 22).

One of the character traits of Nathanael, chosen to be one of the twelve apostles, was his *honesty* and integrity. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no *guile*!" said Christ of Nathanael (John 1:47).

King David said: "I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love" (Ps. 119:163).

Christ could overlook (forgive) horrible sins — adultery, stealing, etc. — but one sin was especially repugnant to Him. He could not stand the sin of hypocrisy, deceit and falsehood (see Matt. 23).

Throughout His entire ministry, you find Him speaking out candidly against sins, customs and practices of those around Him. He never indulged in flattery or insincere praise!

When Ananias and Sapphira "agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" and connived to "lie to the Holy Spirit," the power of God struck them both dead for their blatant hypocrisy (see Acts 5:1-11).

Later, when a deceiver and a hypocrite named Simon, a sorcerer, feigned repentance and was baptized (because he thought this was the only way he could obtain the miracle-working power which he had seen mightily demonstrated by the apostles), he had a terrible curse pronounced upon him by the Apostle Peter (see Acts 8:9-24).

These are just a few of the many

instances in the Scriptures which reveal just how much God detests lies and hypocrisy.

Anciently, God's servant Joshua revealed to Israel that those who worship and serve God must do so "in sincerity and in truth" (Joshua 24:14). David said he who would be privileged to dwell on God's holy hill must speak "the truth in his heart" (Ps. 15:2).

The Doctrine of Truth

Jesus Christ was not teaching a new doctrine when he said: "... The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit *and in truth*: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit *and in truth*" (John 4:23, 24).

The Founder of true Christianity said: "Ye shall know the *truth*, and *the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32).

But the question is — do we really want the truth?

Pontius Pilate once asked: "What is truth?" (John 18:38.)

We need not be in ignorance. The Word of God declares: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The Bible also reveals: "Thy *law* is the truth" (Ps. 119:142), and "thy *commandments* are truth" (verse 151).

The Bible contains those essential and eternal truths which, if followed, would show man the true path in which he must walk.

Truth Will Yet Flourish

How can the nations achieve true peace and happiness? We can never achieve a Utopia until we learn to love *truth and mercy* and follow God's way of righteousness: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Ps. 85:10, 11). This will occur in the world tomorrow!

This Utopian prophecy will only be fulfilled when the "Prince of

Peace" establishes truth and judgment upon this earth worldwide. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isa. 9:6, 7).

We can thank Almighty God that Satan, the father of lies, will not be permitted to mislead the nations or lead them in the ways of deceit, lies and hypocrisy in the soon-coming, thousand-year millennial age (see Rev. 20:1-3).

What About You Now?

Present trends do not indicate that our nation will voluntarily turn from this spirit of deceit and hypocrisy. But you, as an individual, *can repent* of the guile and dishonesty in your own personal life — and you will be greatly blessed for so doing.

Do not take lying lightly! God says that "... *All liars* shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Of course, God can and will forgive even the most inveterate liar — if he really repents and begins to tell the truth.

The Patriarch Abraham — normally a man of truth — told the same lie twice under heavy temptation. God forgave him, and he is assured of a very high office in the Kingdom of God.

Do you want to live forever? God promises: "The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment" (Prov. 12:19).

Follow Paul's exhortation: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds" (Col. 3:9).

True Christians are to follow Christ's example: "We are meant to hold firmly to the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ" (Eph. 4:15, Phillips).

Begin, right now, thinking, speaking and *living* the truth! □

JESUS CHRIST said: "...If you will enter into life, *keep the commandments*" (Matt. 19:17). So there would be no question about which law He was referring to, Jesus proceeded to enumerate *five* of the Ten Commandments (verses 18, 19).

Among Jesus' final words in the New Testament (recorded in the last chapter of the book of Revelation), He said: "Blessed are they that *do his commandments*, that they may have right to the tree of life..." (Rev. 22:14).

Jesus' words are plain enough, but somewhere along the line most professing Christians have missed the point. To many, the very mention of the Ten Commandments conjures up something harsh and repressive. Perhaps it is best summarized by the lyrics from one well-known hymn: "Free from the law, oh, happy condition..." A common teaching of today is that Christ died to "free us" from the law given by the harsh God of the Old Testament. Some even refer to it as "bondage" — a sort of moral straitjacket with which an unyielding God seeks to restrain mortals from everything that makes life enjoyable.

But is this true? Is God's law a burden? Is it *against* your best interests? Is the law *bad, wrong, evil*? Was the law given to oppress and enslave? Is it wrong to keep the law today?

God's Word long ago predicted that men would call those things which are evil good and that which is good evil. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness. . . . *they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts*, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 5:20, 24).

True to form, men today have things exactly backwards. They claim the law is a burden, a curse, and should not be kept today. But Paul was inspired to write: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). What law? The law that says "Thou shalt not covet" (verse 7). And it is *this* law that Paul calls "spiritual" (verse 14) — and spiritual things are eternal!

Now, according to the Bible, what is it that places people in "bondage"? There are a number of clear and unmistakable scriptures that reveal the answer — and again the truth is the exact *opposite* of what most people have assumed.

In II Peter chapter 2 an amazing

IS GOD'S LAW "BONDAGE"?

by Ronald Beideck

prophecy is found concerning what would be taught in the world today. Peter wrote that false teachers would arise, propounding "freedom from the law." In the context notice that these men are those who "cannot cease from *sin*" (verse 14). (I John 3:4 gives the definition of sin: "the *transgression* of the law.") They have transgressed God's laws and have "forsaken the right way" of life that God reveals (verse 15). Further, they have turned from "the holy *commandment* delivered unto them" (verse 21).

In verse 19 Peter writes: "While they promise them *liberty* [freedom from the supposed bondage of God's law], they themselves are the *servants* [slaves] of *corruption*: for of

whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in *BONDAGE*."

Did you notice *who* are the ones in bondage? Those who have *rejected* the law and have become the "servants of corruption." These men *promise* freedom, but in reality they have rejected *true* freedom — they become slaves to, they are overcome by, their *own sins*!

The Apostle Paul wrote: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of *sin* [remember the definition of sin? — I John 3:4] *unto death*, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16.) If you serve sin, you become a *slave* to sin!

Far from being bondage, James calls God's spiritual law "the PERFECT law of LIBERTY" (James 1:25).

David wrote: "So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

And I will walk AT LIBERTY: for I seek thy precepts" (Ps. 119:44, 45).

Clearly, it is *sin* — breaking God's perfect law of liberty — that enslaves and oppresses.

Rejection of God's spiritual law is the sum total of what is wrong in the world today. The misery, suffering, heartache and wretchedness that you see around you is the direct result of *sin* — the result of man seeking his own way — the way that *seems* right, yet ends in *death* (Prov. 16:25). The entire world is mired in oppressive *bondage* because it has rejected those spiritual laws that were given for man's good!

What did Jesus Christ teach on this subject? What is the "bondage" that Christ came to free us from? Does Jesus' teaching agree with the scriptures that we have already read?

Turn to John the eighth chapter. In verses 31 and 32 Jesus said: "If

ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you FREE."

Free? Free from what? This is the same question the people asked Jesus. "They answered him, We ... were never in BONDAGE to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (Verse 33.)

Notice the reply in the next verse. "Jesus answered them ... *Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*"

Of course! Isn't that exactly what Peter and Paul said? The "bondage" Jesus came to free us from was sin — the misery and servitude that results from the transgression of God's law.

Jesus said that *if* we would continue in His word we would become free. Now exactly what *is* Jesus' word or teaching that will make us free?

In John 15:10 Christ said that He kept the commandments. In the same verse He instructs His true followers — those who call themselves "Christians" — to do the same. Why? Certainly not because the law is oppressive or burdensome in any way. Jesus said in verse 11: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that *your joy might be full.*"

Christ said: "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. . . .*" Instead of abolishing God's law because it was "bondage," He came to *magnify* the law in its *spiritual* intent (Isa. 42:21; Matt. 5:17-28). He lived a life free from sin as an example for us — "that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21, 22).

Does it make any sense that Christ would abolish a perfect, eternal spiritual law that was given for man's good and joy? Jesus knew that obedience to the Ten Commandments was the way to *freedom* from sin — the way that leads to a truly abundant life, happiness and blessings.

That law is merely love, and love

is an outgoing concern, not an incoming lust. It's the way of love. It's the way that love should be expressed — love toward God and love toward neighbor.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote of the commission Jesus Christ would fulfill: "... To preach good tidings to the meek ... to bind up the brokenhearted, *to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*" (Isa. 61:1; see also Luke 4:18).

Jesus Christ is soon going to return to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords to release all mankind from the bondage and slavery of sin. How will He begin liberating mankind? By reeducating the world and restoring the knowledge of God's perfect laws! "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: *and the isles shall wait for his law*" (Isa. 42:4).

What will be the result when the law is restored? "To open the *blind* eyes, to bring out the *prisoners* from the prison, and them that sit in *darkness* out of the prison house" (verse 7). This is figuratively referring to "prisoners" of sin who will be freed. The light of God's truth will shine upon this darkened world, and those who have been spiritually blinded will have the knowledge of God's ways clearly revealed to them (Isa. 60:1-3; 11:8; 42:16).

This present world is in the snare of the devil, taken captive by him to do his will (II Tim. 2:26). At Christ's coming Satan will be bound so that he cannot deceive the nations. The spiritual blindness that covers all nations will then be removed (Isa. 25:7). Spiritual ignorance and superstition will be replaced by the true knowledge of the true God. The Utopian paradise that mankind has always longed for will finally be ushered in when the nations begin obeying God's truth, His laws and His ways that bring prosperity, blessings and peace.

Surprising to many, the God who gave the Ten Commandments to ancient Israel is the same Being who became Jesus Christ of the New Testament. (This important truth is thoroughly explained in our free reprint "Who — What — Was Jesus Christ Before His Human Birth?")

The Israelites who heard the Ten Commandments thundered from Mt. Sinai were being reminded of a great spiritual law that had been in force since creation. (Though there is not room to explain here, this is proved in our free article "Were the Ten Commandments In Force Before Moses?" Write for it if you have not yet received a copy.)

But what was Christ's *motive* in giving this law to Israel? Was it a law that He would later need to come to *free* us from?

In the fifth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, the Ten Commandments are listed. In the same chapter, Moses exhorts the people: "You shall walk in all the ways [including the Ten Commandments which he had just recited] which the Lord your God has commanded you. . . ." Why was it so important that they keep God's commands? Was the law given to man by a harsh God of the Old Testament to be a cruel yoke of bondage? Notice: "... *That ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess*" (verse 33).

In the next chapter we find the same reason repeated: "And the Lord commanded us *to do* all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, FOR OUR GOOD ALWAYS, that he might preserve us alive. . . ." (Deut. 6:24).

The law was given for man's good, for his well-being and so that he could live a long and prosperous life. The Bible actually reveals a *way of life* based upon a spiritual law that is as moving, as active, as real as the law of gravity. When you break that spiri-

tual law it exacts penalties. When the law is obeyed, it is the way that leads to peace, happiness, success — the way that guarantees automatic blessings!

This theme is so important that God repeats it over and over — especially in the book of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 4:1, 40; 6:1-3; 10:12, 13; 32:46, 47). Notice the *promise* that is attached to the fifth commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; *that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee . . .*” (Deut. 5:16).

Do you desire for yourself the greatest happiness and the most abundant life possible? Certainly, we all do. Solomon wrote, “Righteousness tendeth to life” and “In the way of righteousness is life” (Prov. 11:19; 12:28). What is the “way of righteousness”? In Psalm 119:172 “righteousness” is defined as the keeping of God’s commandments.

The way of life revealed in God’s Word — summarized by the Ten Commandments — leads to long life, length of days and every good thing that people want (Ps. 34:12-14; Prov. 3:1, 2).

The promises and blessings for keeping God’s living laws still apply to all nations and individuals who will obey today. They include understanding and wisdom (Ps. 111:10; 19:7-11), mental health and peace of mind (Ps. 119:165), safety and security from enemies (Ex. 23:22; Lev. 25:18, 19; 26:6-8; Deut. 28:7), agricultural prosperity (Deut. 7:11-14; 28:8-12; Lev. 26:3-5; Isa. 1:19), happy family life (Ps. 128), healthy children (Deut. 28:4), freedom from sickness and disease (Ex. 15:26; Deut. 7:11, 15), to name just a few.

Aren’t these the things that you want? Can you imagine a world where *all* people enjoyed all these blessings? God wants to pour out His richest blessings — but it is *sin* — the *transgression* of God’s law —

that withholds good things from us! (Jer. 5:25.)

In His Word, God sets before us the way to life, good and blessings — as well as warning us about the way that leads to death, evil and cursings (Deut. 30:15, 19; 11:26-28). The way to life is obeying God’s commandments; the way to curses and everything that will harm you is disobedience. You can read about all these curses (as well as the blessings) in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26.

God wants each person to make the decision that will be to his good and happiness. He says, “*Choose life*, that both thou and thy seed may live . . . for he is thy life, and the length of thy days” (Deut. 30:19, 20).

God *commands* to choose life — He gave His law so that man would know the way to life — but He allows each individual the freedom to make his own decision. He says to “choose.”

You want happiness. You want to be happy above all things. Everyone does. You want to lead a life that is comfortable, pleasing and pleasant. You would like to lead a life that is full and abundant and interesting — as a matter of fact, a little bit exciting all the way along — wouldn’t you? And you want a life where everything is pleasant, where there are no pains or suffering.

You don’t want a life of boredom. You don’t want a life of sorrow, pain or suffering. You want a happy life, and you would love to feel well, jolly and joyful — happy all the time.

You could have a life like that. Everyone could.

This entire world could be like that — if we only understood the way!

God Almighty in His great love for humanity set a law in motion. That law was designed to produce just that kind of life for you.

The Apostle Paul tells us what sin is in Romans 7:7: “What shall we say then? Is the law sin?” People think that the law is all wrong, that

it’s sin. Paul continues, “God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law.” In other words, by the law is the *knowledge* of sin, as Paul had said previously in Romans 3:20.

The law gives you the knowledge of what sin is. It directs and guides you as to what you ought to do.

Is God’s law bondage? The Apostle John answers: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: *and his commandments ARE NOT GRIEVOUS*” (I John 5:3).

Perhaps the answer appears to be too simple. It doesn’t require a conclave of religious leaders, exegesis of Hebrew and Greek scholars, or the opinions of doctors of divinity. The answer has been there all along. Anyone can read the numerous scriptures on this subject in his own Bible.

The Creator of mankind says He has *revealed* the way that is *GOOD* (Micah 6:8). He has not left man without this important revelation. He says: “I am the Lord thy God which *teacheth thee to profit*, which leadeth thee by *the way thou shouldest go*.” God’s ways were given for our profit and benefit. They are the ways that lead to the greatest satisfaction and happiness, the way of life that is *best* for you. Continuing in the same passage, God says in the first person: “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! *Then had thy peace* been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea . . .” (Isa. 48:17, 18). Man has rejected God’s perfect law — and that is why there is so *little* peace, so *little* good, in the world today.

But you as an individual can begin experiencing the *rewards* of obedience. Request our free, fully illustrated booklet *The Ten Commandments*. It goes into detail, expounding each point of God’s living law, showing how it is applicable to your everyday life. Write for it today — let the *truth* make you free! □



Is money such a great evil? Is it something the Christian shouldn't really want? Does God dislike luxury? Just what should a Christian's attitude be toward material prosperity?

by Charles Hunting and David Ord

"MONEY isn't everything," you hear people say.

And it's true. Money — material prosperity — isn't *everything*. There are some things in life which don't require money. Sunshine is free. Fresh air is free — unless you happen to live in downtown Tokyo or Los Angeles, that is.

But when people say money isn't everything, they usually aren't referring to those things which are freely available to all. They usually mean that they don't consider material things to be all that important.

Usually, of course, it's those who don't have all that much of what people call "the good life" who make this statement. Those who *have* money don't seem to view it the same way! The wealthy often look upon their fine things as something they just *couldn't live without*.

But how does God look upon "the good life"?

If anyone ever had "the good life," it was King Solomon of ancient Israel. He amassed more wealth than probably any other person in all of human history!

Solomon had every material comfort imaginable. "I made me great works," said Solomon. "I builded me houses; I planted vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made

me pools of water..." (Eccl. 2:4-10).

This king designed parks and put great lakes in them, planting all kinds of exotic trees. He even established a large zoo which may well have rivaled the great animal collections of today.

Solomon also had hundreds of servants. He had his own resident orchestras, choirs, entertainers and dancing girls. He drank out of pure gold goblets. He had everything money could buy and more! In his

day, silver was counted of little worth in Jerusalem! (I Kings 10:21.)

And Solomon, who really did *experience* the good life, said that "money answereth all things" (Eccl. 10:19). Or, as *The Living Bible* has it: "Money gives everything."

Solomon didn't see happiness and abundant living as merely a "state of mind." He believed material prosperity to be something good and a power we ought to really enjoy. (Of course, he understood too that material wealth of itself does not automatically bring happiness and peace of mind — Eccl. 2:10, 11; 5:11.)

But was Solomon right? How does God look upon material prosperity?

What About the Poor?

The world is filled with poverty. Most of the earth's population lives in tragic squalor. Starvation is a daily way of life for countless pitiful human beings.

Yet many in Western society bask in comparative affluence. They live in fine homes, frequently enjoy excellent steaks, and drink fine wines. They often travel in expensive, beautifully appointed cars. They live in finery rivaling that of royalty.

Is that *right*? Would God approve?

Shouldn't that money — the wealth enjoyed by so many in our Western society — be shared with the poor?

The common "Christian" conception presents God as One who would never approve of beauty and fine quality. People often speak of "God's poor." The idea of any man of God being wealthy or enjoying the material comforts of life is utterly repugnant to many professing Christians.

But does this common concept square with such statements as Matthew 26:6-13? Let's examine Christ's teaching.

A woman came to Christ with "an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his dis-

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say

**"MONEY
ISN'T
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ciples saw it, *they had indignation*, saying, To what purpose is this WASTE? For this ointment might have been sold for *much*, and GIVEN TO THE POOR."

After all, weren't people *starving*? Weren't the poor begging at the gates of the city?

But what did Christ answer? "... Ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."

Granted, this was an exceptional case. But if Christ was against all wealth and precious possessions on principle He would never have acceded to this.

Of course, it is our Christian duty to care for the poor — and there are many of them. But does this make it wrong for us to enjoy fine quality? Does God hate the rich, the successful and the prosperous?

God's Servants Prospered!

If He does, what about the great men of God who prospered?

Abraham will be in God's Kingdom — he is the "father of the faithful" (Rom. 4). There were poor in Abraham's day, yet Abraham was a very WEALTHY man! "And Abram was *very rich* in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (Gen. 13:2). Further, God promised Abraham that if he were obedient, He would make him even *more* prosperous.

When Abraham sought a wife for his son Isaac, Abraham's servant told Rebekah's parents: "... The Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become *great*: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses" (Gen. 24:35). When they agreed to the marriage of their daughter, "the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother *precious things*" (verse 53).

Was Jacob prosperous? The Bible tells us that "the man increased *exceedingly*, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses" (Gen. 30:43).

How about Joseph? God made him second only to Pharaoh over all Egypt, arrayed in regal splendor! "God hath made me lord of all Egypt," said Joseph to his brothers, "and ye shall tell my father of *all my glory* in Egypt..." (Gen. 45:9, 13).

Job, whom God termed the most righteous man of his time, "was the *greatest* of *all* the men of the east" (Job 1:3). After God had brought him through great trials, humbling him, "the Lord gave Job *twice as much as he had before*" (Job 42:10-12).

Yes, God's servants prospered! And in every case, notice it was *God* who gave them their wealth. If He didn't approve of wealth, why did he give it to them?

New Testament Teaching

Certainly there were times when God's servants didn't have every comfort in life. Sometimes they were even destitute, in order to get the Work of God done. But in most cases the Bible shows clearly that *God wants us to prosper*.

There were times when Christ had no place to lay His head. But, apparently, He also owned a house, and there are several references to this house in the Gospels. After His crucifixion, soldiers cast lots for His clothing, which is a very clear inference that it was of fine quality (John 19:23-24).

The New Testament clearly teaches that we shouldn't *set our hearts* on material possessions (Luke 12:15). We are not to TRUST in riches, but in our Creator.

Yet notice what John told God's people: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest PROSPER..." (III John 2). Was this just *spiritual* prosperity? The next part of the verse explains: "... that thou mayest prosper and be in health, *even as thy soul prospereth*." Good health is *physical*, and John wanted them to *prosper* physically just as they already were spiritually.

Christ Himself *promised* prosperity to those who are really willing to obey Him. And in most cases that

prosperity is to be expected *now* in *this* life: "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive *an hundredfold now* in *THIS time*, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

Notice, however, that there are times when people *do* have to go without the material blessings in life. Christ said some will have to *give up* lands and houses. But God's desire is to give us *far more* than we ever give up, right now in this age!

This doesn't mean that we will never be tested by financial problems. God gave financial laws which could produce national prosperity. But because the world has not followed those laws, God's people do sometimes suffer financial hardships along with the nation in which they live. This is not God's will, but the result of a national sin. He still intends that we *prosper*, and He can intervene to make this possible for His people.

Two Opposing Philosophies

Why does God intend that we prosper and enjoy the good life, while millions are in abject poverty?

Many professing Christians, not understanding God's purpose, have felt that they should *give up* the material comforts of life and give a great deal toward "causes." Of course, it's not *wrong* to give to worthwhile causes.

But many seem to feel that *they* should do what God Himself has not seen fit to do — to intervene in the world's miseries and alleviate all of this world's suffering.

Why does God allow poverty?

Why do so many young mothers, blinded by poverty-caused disease, sit in gutters in Calcutta or Cairo with small babies in their arms — babies whose only future is the same terrible fate?

Consider, for a moment, the two basic — and opposite — *ways* of life. The one is the way of *give*, the other the way of *get*. The world has chosen the latter — and for almost 6,000 years now it has been reaping the harvest it has sown, a harvest of poverty, hunger, and squalor.

But why doesn't God Himself do anything about the sickening plight of teeming millions?

An atheist had just this criticism. He was more righteous than God! *He* wouldn't allow such squalor if he were God. He wouldn't bask in heavenly affluence while people starve. He would *do* something about it! He said that while such conditions exist, there is no God worthy of homage.

But humanity *chose* the way of *get*. It *chose* to break the laws which would *cause* prosperity and well-being, following instead the way of getting and taking, which is contrary to God's law and the *cause* of every evil in the world today.

The world is following Satan's way — not God's (II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). It is his world, practicing *his* philosophy of life — and reaping the *effect* which that way of life causes. Satan is the "god" (II Cor. 4:4) which this world worships — a god of cheapness, shoddiness and *inferior quality*. He would have us "honor" him with cheapness, drabness and poverty. He would like to see everyone worship him by a life of deprivation and poverty!

When our first parents committed the original sin, Satan exposed their minds to the concept of *getting away with* sin. He told them that they could violate God's express commands without suffering the penalty. So humanity follows the way of GET — the way which results in wealth for the few and utter degrading poverty for millions — then seeks by humanly devised organizations and "causes" to alleviate the plight of the poor.

But all of man's efforts to eliminate poverty have proved futile because they fail to deal with the real *causes*.

Understanding God's Purpose

Why don't we have universal prosperity *now*?

It isn't God's purpose to change the world *now*. Speaking prophetically of Christ, Isaiah said that "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench . . ." (Isa. 42:2-3). That is, in this age. Christ isn't about the business of solving the world's problems — and He hasn't commissioned His Work to do that either! He *will* set His hand to end poverty and squalor when He returns.

God is allowing us to go our own way — to follow the wrong philosophy of life — so we will ultimately learn that this way brings only suffering. God is not preventing mankind from paying the penalty of broken law. He intends that we *learn* that sin doesn't pay. God says what man sows, he must reap (Gal. 6:7). And He doesn't intend that His people be a part of the world's desperate effort to remove the penalty of sin *without repentance* and a return to God's way.

So *why*, then, were we called in this age?

To preach the gospel and to reveal *God's way of life* to the world!

Thousands of years ago, God called an entire nation out of slavery and revealed His way to them. And for what purpose? "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments," God told them. "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the *sight* of the nations, which shall *hear* all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them? . . . And what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:5-8.)

Israel was to reveal God's *way*, based on God's *law*, to the world. And it was to be a *two-pronged at-*

tack. The nations would *hear* of that way, and they would also *see* it in action so they would know that it was wise and right. Israel was to be a *living example* of that way!

The idea of a whole way of life based on the biblical principle that it is "more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) is totally foreign to today's world. But it *works*!

Unfortunately, Israel didn't have the ability to go that giving direction of life. God said of them: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!" (Deut. 5:29.)

That physical nation failed miserably to show the world God's way. They just didn't believe what God told them. They simply didn't believe God's way would really work.

God's Present Work

So God called a new group of people — His Church and Work — to live a *different* life and to reveal His way to the nations. And that is why we have been called now!

And once again God has a two-pronged approach. The world must *hear* God's way, and it must also *see* it in action — it must see the proof that this way really works!

God is doing His Work of showing the world His way in a *dual* manner. He is doing it on an *organized* level, and on the *individual* level.

God's Work is preaching the gospel — God's way — to the nations (Mark 16:15). And it is also *showing* the world God's way by its example. As the Apostle Peter put it: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the virtues [margin] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God . . ." (I Pet. 2:9-10).

God's Work proclaims the gospel worldwide so that the nations can

hear of God's way. And Ambassador College reveals God's way in living application. Its campuses are living witness of the fruits of God's way of *give*. They reflect *God* to the world.

Ambassador College is an institution of character and quality. It is producing a harvest of peace and happiness. Its campuses are meant to be places of physical beauty and quality, showing the world how God intends humans to live, in sharp contrast to the filth, the depravity, the squalor and poverty which Satan's philosophy of life has produced the world over.

All of the financial and material resources of this worldwide Work would be less than a drop in a bucket if they were all given to attempt to solve the world's troubles today. They would go absolutely *no-where!*

But used to reflect the great God — to show the world a different pattern of life and the results of that different way — the campuses of Ambassador are a witness to the world. They are showing the real solution to poverty, the solution Christ will enforce to bring prosperity and abundance worldwide.

Your Part NOW

God has called us individually to show His way to mankind, as well as collectively through His Work.

Christ explained our individual part in this witness. He said our *lives* are to reflect God's way as a shining light in a dark, dismal world (Matt. 5:14-16). We are to show the world by example that God's way of "give" really works.

When we obey God, we *prosper*. God's law is the *cause* of every good thing. This is the kind of life we shall live for all eternity in God's family. We are in training for that future *now*. God intends that we learn to appreciate quality and fine things.

The Right Balance

The way we are to follow is the way of giving, serving, sharing and

helping. It is the way of love, and of outgoing concern.

To practice that way, we *should* have concern for the poor. Many scriptures tell us to be of a *giving attitude*. When we have that attitude, God desires to shower down upon us *every* good thing; He is far more willing — do we really believe this? — to give than we are to receive! (Matt. 7:7-12.)

What is the greatest gift we can give to the world? Simply the knowledge of the *way* that will produce prosperity, health and happiness.

God does not intend that we try to remove the penalty of sin from humanity. As we prosper, and as we have opportunity, we are to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10). We are to put our treasure into God's Work, so that more of the world can hear of the one way of life which will finally erase poverty and suffering from the face of the earth (Matt. 6:19-21).

A right attitude and willingness to sacrifice for God's Work are the keys to the proper use of money. God loves a *cheerful* giver — one who is willingly practicing the way of give.

But you *can't outgive God!* And when we have this right approach, then we shall be prospering.

Paul tells us plainly that the Christian life is one of prospering: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully *shall reap also bountifully*." He says that we shall be "*enriched* in every thing to *all bountifulness*, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God" (II Cor. 9:6, 11).

Does God hate the successful and the prosperous?

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly But his delight is in the law of the Eternal . . . *whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*" (Ps. 1:1-3).

"For the Eternal God is a sun and shield: the Eternal will give grace and glory: *no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly*. O Lord of hosts, blessed is

the man that trusteth in thee" (Ps. 84:11, 12).

"The righteous shall *flourish* like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon" (Ps. 92:12).

But God warns, through David, when we are prospered, against setting our hearts on the prosperity.

If all men would put their lives under the government of God and live by God's laws, all men would soon be prosperous! Conversely, then, poverty is the result, directly or indirectly, of transgressing God's laws.

Jesus, however, put the matter in its true relationship when He commanded us to seek first the Kingdom of God — that is, to submit our lives to the *government* of God — to obey His commandments! — to live the kind of life He directs in His Word — and He promised that when we have first done this, the material prosperity shall be added.

The Abundant Life

Finally, let Christ Himself show the right balance: "Give, and it shall be *given* unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

God's way is the *abundant* life. The world has sown sparingly — it has followed the get philosophy. It has been built on competition, and on getting for self. It is now reaping sparingly.

But God has called us to reveal the give philosophy to the world. As we walk that way, not coveting money, yet using and *enjoying* material possessions to the full, God blesses us and causes us to prosper.

Yes, it's the attitude of Satan that is really behind the idea that "money isn't everything!"

Money, rightly directed, really does "answer all things." It can be a tremendous power for good. God wants us to enjoy the good life far *more* than most have ever realized. □

WHAT OUR READERS SAY

Is Christ Divided?

I read your article in the July *Good News*, "Is Christ Divided?" by Garner Ted Armstrong. I am sure this article will help people to understand that Christ is not divided. I have been a subscriber of *The Good News* for a year and it has helped me to grow spiritually and has opened my mind and eyes to God's wonderful truth. It has answered many questions that I've had. I pray that God will give wisdom and knowledge to you and all who write articles to help us understand — and grow in grace.

Mrs. Sandra S.,
Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania

In the July issue of *The Good News*, you mentioned in your article "Is Christ Divided?" about the name of the Church. I agree, but what about Isaiah 56:7 and Matthew 21:13?

Albert E.,
Sylmar, California

• Both scriptures refer to the physical temple of God then standing in Jerusalem. The expression "Church of God" is mentioned twelve times in the New Testament. That is the true name of the true Church. For a full explanation, write for our free booklet "Where Is God's True Church Today?"

She Only Had "Halfway" Knowledge

I am thrilled to have more light on the meaning of the parables as explained by Brian Knowles' article in the July GN. I thought I understood these parables, but his articles reveal I had only "halfway" knowledge.

Mrs. Marion E. A.,
New Port Richey, Florida

An Apology Due?

I owe you an apology. I asked to have my name removed from your mailing list. Right after that I read the article about picking the splinter out of my brother's eye when I had a log in my own eye. That's me, for shame. Please put my name back on your list.

Charlotte B.,
Pearblossom, California

How They Found the Church

I would like to relate to you how happy my husband and I are these days. We requested personal counsel about four months ago, and when we didn't hear from a minister of God's Church, we were a little upset. We read in *The Worldwide News* of a family in Denver who were members, and contacted them. They put us in contact with the minister here and he was wonderful. We have been attending Sabbath services and Bible study ever since. I wish to thank God for showing us a way to reach His true Church.

Mr. and Mrs. William H.,
Denver, Colorado

I am writing to let you know that I was visited by two Church of God ministers, Mr. Roy Holladay and Mr. Ray Lisman. It

was a most pleasant visit, and may I add they are two wonderful ministers. All my questions were answered. We attended our first Sabbath in Richmond, Virginia, and I just say they were the most wonderful people I have ever met. We received the warmest welcome and I would not have missed the service because I got to hear the last message that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong delivered in Manila. I have to say it was the most inspiring message of God from the first sin to the whole plan of salvation. God bless him and the whole staff at headquarters. If only the whole world could have been listening, how wonderful it would have been. I sincerely thank you for sending my request to the ministers that visited me and made it possible so I could find the place to be with such a warm and happy family of people on God's Sabbath, and every Sabbath that I can possibly attend from here forth.

Mrs. Frank D.,
Earlsville, Virginia

Baptisms

Because of your wonderful father and his unswerving loyalty to God in building this Work and making it known to me — I was baptized last week! I can't tell you how much it means to me!

Ruth R.,
Holton, Kansas

I want you to know that on June 18, 1974, I was baptized by the minister, Bill Rapp, in Phoenix. So now I am a member of the true Church of God. (And personally speaking, "I love it.") This is the "biggest" event in my life. I think it is the greatest.

Elmer V.,
Phoenix, Arizona

• If you would like a private appointment with one of God's ministers, please consult the box on page 9 for details.

The God Family

Thank you for the most fascinating article on the God family. I love articles like that because it helps me see the reality of the coming Kingdom of God and God's plan so much more! Many times in our hectic everyday lives, it's easy to forget many of the details about God's plan for eternity that we've heard in Sabbath services or at the Feast. Sometimes I find myself going the way of discouragement and the future looks less real. Then I read articles such as this one and my memory is refreshed again and I become very elated with joy and eagerness for the Kingdom to come soon. I deeply desire to be a part of God's family more now after reading this than ever before!

Mrs. Jeanette B.,
Raytown, Missouri

Update: Canadian Work

As always, I enjoyed tremendously your June issue pertaining to your tremendous expansion in Canada. On page 18 Mr. Dean Wilson, your reception office and the Noreasco Building are quite impressive. It is wonderful how the good Lord blesses your

Work. I am infatuated particularly with your Canadian expansion. Our good neighbor to the north, Canada, deserves an inspiring group of Christians such as your Church of God. God bless you richly, and may there always exist strong bonds between our United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

Clarence G.,
Reading, Pennsylvania

Games Christians Play

I thought I'd write again and let you know just how much I enjoy *The Good News* magazine. When I read articles like "Games Christians Play," I realize that I'm not as good as I thought I was. People sure do need to quit deceiving themselves and do some self-analysis. Most people can't see their own sins for looking at everyone else's. I'm no exception. The more honest you are with yourself the more you become aware of your own faults and wrong motives.

Mrs. Jack N.,
Bessemer, Alabama

I have just finished the great article "Games Christians Play" and it sure has given me food for thought. I have been guilty of playing the shell game myself, as well as each form and phase of being the world's greatest pretender. I am trying so hard to overcome this terrible sin; it's the hardest fight of my life, but with the help of God and your fine staff of fellow workers of *The Good News*, I know I can overcome one more sin and put it out of my life.

H. E. C.,
Houston, Texas

Overseas Letters

May I congratulate you for your Work which is so sincere and so needed. I have attended your two lectures by Charles F. Hunting in Birmingham [England] and I thought that they were extremely good and true and am so pleased that I attended.

J. I.,
Staffordshire, England

After reading the May 21st co-worker letter, I was overjoyed to hear of the success of the campaign in Manila. It really makes me understand the responsibility all of us in God's Church have in supporting God's Work in tithing faithfully, praying earnestly and being unselfish. Thank you for all the service that I have received.

S. A.,
Bermuda, Caribbean Islands

I am quite happy that God has made it possible for me to once again contribute my tithe to His great Work. It's a great privilege! And how impressed I am by the major strides that have been taken in bringing God's gospel to the nations — something surely needed by this enigmatic world of teeming millions, food-starved (not only physically but spiritually as well). Really, this is indeed a great opportunity God has given us to use our talents (pounds). I'm absolutely glad to give whatever I can.

A. T.,
Dominica, West Indies

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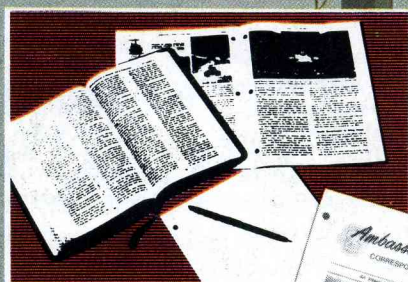
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FOUNDATION
OF KNOWLEDGE

**GET
WISDOM
GET
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Prov. 4:5



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