

MARCH-APRIL 1989

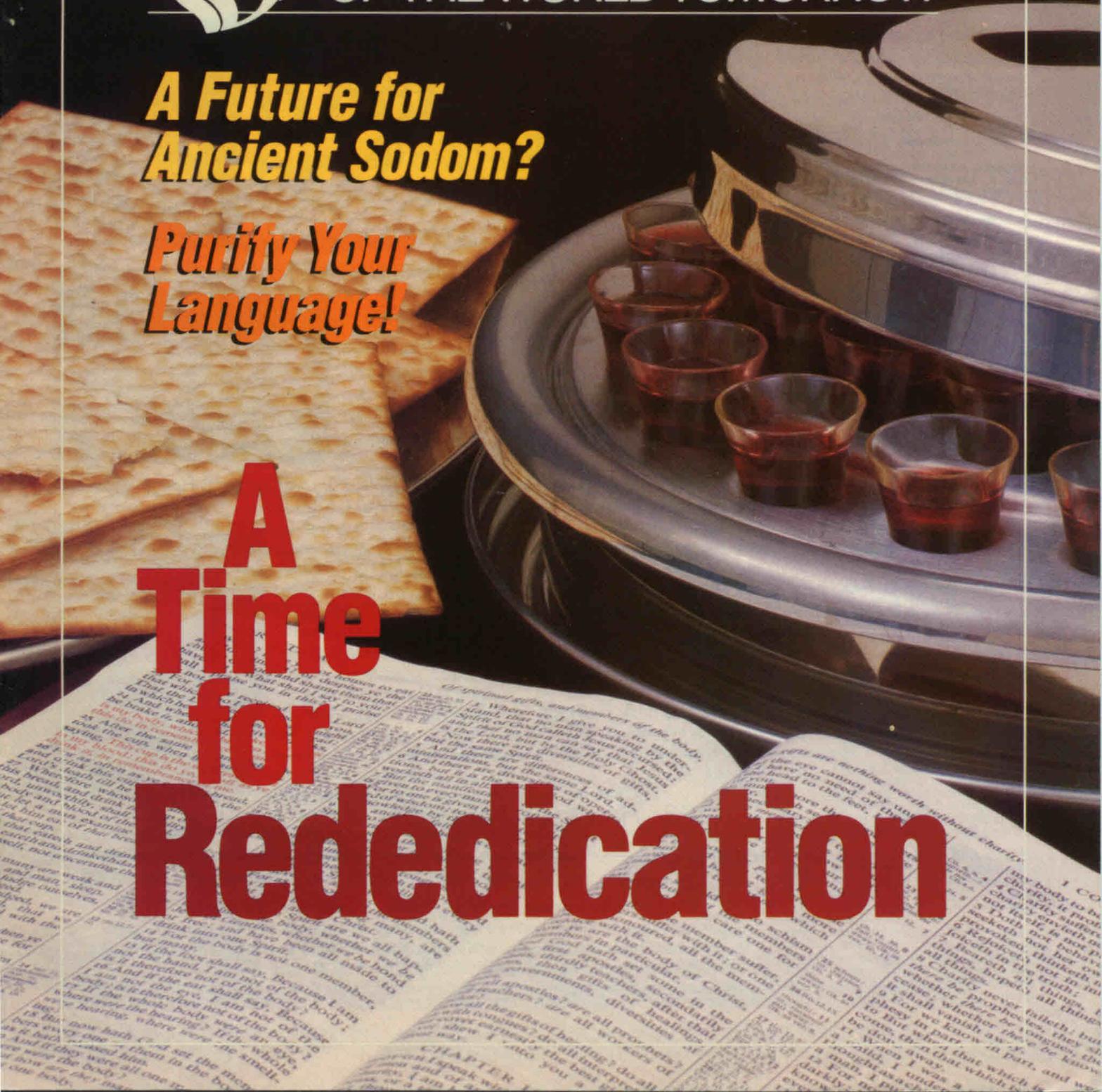
The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

**A Future for
Ancient Sodom?**

**Purify Your
Language!**

**A
Time
for
Rededication**



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OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

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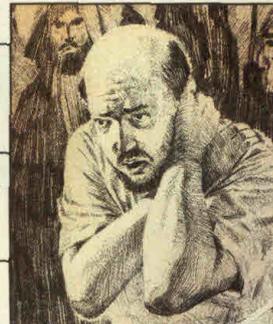
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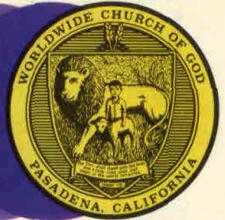


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COVER

Most people overlook the spring festivals Jesus Christ commanded His followers to keep. Instead they embrace the ancient fertility rites of Easter, which has nothing to do with Christ's tremendous sacrifice! This season is a time for rededication to God's truth. Photo by Warren Watson.

GOOD NEWS PERSONAL



Does Easter Tell the Whole Story?

Easter is considered the holiest time of year by most Christian churches. Yet Jesus Christ *never kept it*, and never commanded that His followers keep it.

The celebration of Easter actually *obscures* the wonderful TRUTH of what Jesus' life, suffering and death were all about, and the marvelous beauty of God's unparalleled LOVE and magnificent *plan* of salvation for all mankind! Sound crazy?

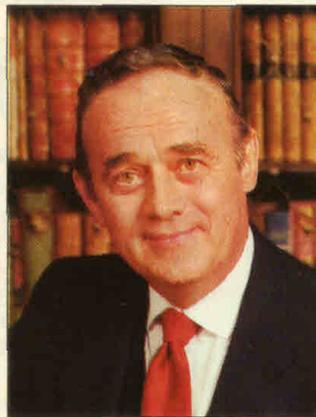
Look at the facts for yourself. Let's believe what *God* says, not what people tell us.

In John 13:14-15, Jesus commanded the disciples: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

What had Jesus done? He had washed their feet, and He had instituted the New Testament Passover with unleavened bread and wine as symbols of His broken body and His shed blood. Face it! He did not keep Easter. He said, "Do as I have done."

So what should Christians do? Should we do as Jesus did? Or should we follow a practice based upon ancient fertility rites of spring—like hunting eggs laid by rabbits and watching the sunrise—and named after a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility?

Some say: "But it doesn't really matter. As long as we're doing it to worship Jesus, it's all right." But if it doesn't really matter, why did Jesus go to the trouble of telling His disciples, "Do as I have



done"? Why did He chide the Pharisees for following their own human traditions instead of the commandments of God? He said, "They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men" (Mark 7:7, New International Version).

Has Jesus changed? Or have we just assumed that because everybody else is doing it, it must be what God wants us to do?

The real truth about Jesus' life, crucifixion, death and resurrection, as well as what He has been doing at the right hand of God as High Priest and Intercessor for these past 2,000 years, is the most profound and vital knowledge a human can possess. And it has nothing to do with ancient pagan symbols of fertility.

When Jesus told those who would follow Him to "do as I have done," He meant what He said.

Be sure to read the articles related to the spring Holy Days in this issue of *The Good News*. It will help you see what the Bible really says about your Savior—the deep significance of what He did and why, what He is now doing and what it all means for you today.

True Christianity is far more than a mere set of beliefs. It is a way of life. And if you are a Christian, you need to know all you can about Jesus and about what He taught.

To further help, we'd like to give you a free copy of our penetrating new booklet *Who Was Jesus?* Just detach and return the request card in this issue of *The Good News* to receive your free copy, or write to our mailing address nearest you.

Joseph W. Teach

Pastor General
Worldwide Church of God

LETTERS

"When Christians Clash"

Thank you very much for the article "When Christians Clash..." (November-December). I have been attending God's Church for over 33 years (I was born in the Church) and I believe this topic has been and still is the most misunderstood and misapplied of any....

Christians must be like iron sharpening iron and confront our problems with each other instead of having the "live and let live" attitude of the world.

Robert Worthen
Tyler, Tex.

Helped by reading article more than once

I read the article "Overcoming Isn't Easy!" (September-October) as soon as I received it, and for some reason I didn't get the full impact of it until I re-read it six weeks later. The six areas in which to strengthen your spiritual commitment by being involved with what God wants of us really helped me to have a clear picture of what I need to be concentrating on in my life....

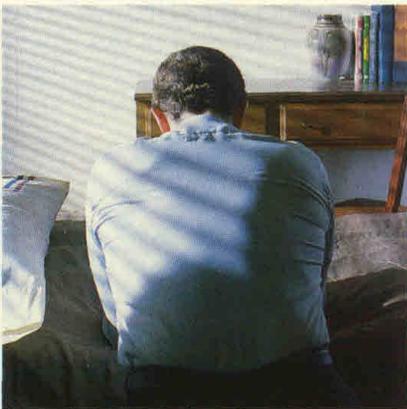
If other readers of *The Good News* would read this article and all other Church of God literature several times, I am sure it would increase the already tremendous impact that God can have in directing and strengthening our everyday lives.

Ned Meacham
Yakima, Wash.

Praying in detail

I wrote this letter to thank George M. Kackos for his very helpful article "Are You Praying in Detail?" (September-October). I feel that I cannot let this feeling of gratitude just slip away without commending him.

I am the type of person he is describing on the negative side. Aside from



G.A. Belluche Jr.

occasional fervent prayers that I had made, I usually prayed in a way which is exactly what he said: short, unimaginative, dull prayers mumbled from a fogged mind just before I flop into the bed.

But now, with God's help while reading this article, it became clear to me how to pray effectively.

Reader
Calero, Philippines

"Till Death Do Us Part"

"Till Death Do Us Part": Thank you very much for such an encouraging article (May-June). It was only a week after "my better half of me" was buried, and I have felt so empty and strange... that article came just in time when I needed something to give me encouragement to live through.

Rosa M. Marin
Guaico, Trinidad

Unlike other religious magazines

I cannot begin to tell you how much I appreciate your magazines *The Plain Truth* and *The Good News*. It is so refreshing to be able to turn to a religious magazine and learn about God and the Bible.

I've read other so-called religious magazines, but they're either full of advertisements or so full of their church's politics and activities that they leave no room for God whatsoever. They're really without value.

Diane Kelsay
Fallbrook, Calif.

Something to believe in

I look forward with much anticipation to each coming issue. At last there's something I can believe in.

S. Gilberg
Sardis, B.C.

It is remarkable that your firm has been liberal enough to have sent *Plain Truth* and *Good News* magazines to people all over the universe without charge for over 50 years. I know of no other Christian organization that matches your accomplishment.

Lee Andrews
Indianapolis, Ind.

Who do you suppose would ever have thought, especially me, that a mere magazine would save their life? Well, yours did around 20 years ago. I was thinking about committing suicide. I was walking out the door and happened to

look on the table and there it was. Praise God and you. Pass the word on.

Reader
Asheville, N.C.

Reader encouraged

I am an employee of PT and T, a counter clerk assigned in Antipolo Rizal. Despite this employment opportunity, I could still find no contentment. My daily routine work is to receive one to two telegrams. Sometimes I get none.

Honestly, my job is quite boring. Well, you may ask other counter employees like me and they will tell you the same thing.

Well, not long ago, at last, I became less bored and became active again with my work when I read "There Is a Way Out of Discouragement!" and "The Power of Encouragement" (September-October, 1987). I thank God for sending me a friend who introduced me to the magazine. The word *encouragement* helped me recover again from being impatient with my work.

Thel S. Diaz
Manila, Philippines

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A Time for REDEDICATION

*Passover
and the Days of
Unleavened Bread
remind us of God's
mercy in revealing His
way of life to us.*

By Joseph W. Tkach

How merciful God is! Have you ever stopped to think about what God has done for each of us?

As we keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread each year, we should rehearse ever more meaningfully the supreme value of the shed blood and broken body of Jesus Christ.

We call Jesus our Savior. We call Him the Captain of our salvation. But what is He saving us from? Why do we *need* salvation?

Saved from what?

God tells us that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ paid that penalty for us. But sin carries other penalties as well: unhappy lives, broken families, war, terrorism, crime, poverty, disease, starvation—all a part of the *here and now* penalty of broken law.

The apostle Paul speaks of slavery to sin (Romans 6:6). Peter speaks of the "corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Peter 1:4). What great mercy

God has extended to us to open our minds to the *way out* of the disastrous results of life without Him! And a way out for suffering humanity as well. The time is coming when the *whole world* will be delivered, even as God has begun delivering us now.

We will have a part in bringing

about that deliverance after Jesus returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth. At that time we will serve Him as not only begotten *but literally born* sons of God!

We have the unfathomable *blessing now* of being able to enjoy the fruit of His holy spirit. As we submit to God's rule in our lives, allowing His spirit to lead us, we can experience the "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23) that are the product or fruit of that spirit.

These are the *opposite* of the natural inclination of our human minds. They are the opposite of the *way of rebellion* chosen and followed by the devil, and with which he has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

There is indeed a vast gulf between God's way of give and the devil's way of get. God's way is based on what He is—LOVE. The devil's way is based on what he is—a rebel. This vital difference must be burned into our minds so that we never forget it.

We must choose the way God has commanded—the way that leads to *life* (Deuteronomy 30:19). And for all eternity we will *never* turn back from that way nor compromise with it.

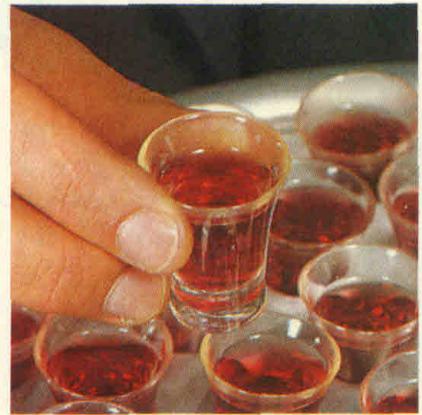
We will *know* what the fruit of sin is because we have seen it, suffered it and been *redeemed and delivered* from it!

These festivals remind us

God has commanded His people to keep the Passover each

year. At this time, we are deeply reminded of the enormous sacrifice of Jesus Christ's own life, after He suffered horrible beating and pain.

Then, for seven days, we symbolize *coming out of sin*, having removed physical leaven, symbolizing the vanity or worthlessness



G.A. Belluche Jr.

of living the devil's way of self-glory, self-aggrandizement, self-desire, self-will and the preservation of that selfish life at all costs.

God has shown us how to avoid the natural consequences of sin by obeying Him. He has shown us the way to avoid the emotional devastation of unresolved guilt by *believing* that He forgives us upon repentance, applying Jesus' payment of sin's death penalty in our stead.

God has truly saved us from a fate worse than death, as well as from death itself.

Yes, the perfect Jesus Christ is indeed the Captain of our salvation! He leads the way to unparalleled happiness forever!

In fact, He *is* the Way! He says: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Let's rededicate ourselves to following that way—and let's rejoice in the magnificent plan of redemption and salvation God has extended now to us and eventually to all humanity! □

'For God So Loved the World...'

It's a well-known scripture: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Few really understand the significance of that sacrifice. Almost no one remembers its proper memorial day. Yet, Jesus Himself commands true Christians to commemorate His sacrifice every year through the Passover.

A yearly reminder

The apostle Paul, writing to the Church of God in Corinth, said:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'

"In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

The Passover is a yearly reminder of the awesome sacrifice made by God the Father and the Son for sinful humanity. Do we fully grasp the magni-

tude of this most important event of all human history?

The early apostles did. They walked with, talked with, touched and ate with Jesus. They were tremendously moved by Jesus' torture and crucifixion. They actually saw God in the flesh—their Creator—hanging in ignominy on a stake. And

dying. The apostles fully understood that God had come down from heaven to struggle through life as a human.

Paul, who once persecuted the Church, also took up "the message of the cross" (I Corinthians 1:18), preaching it through persecution and adversity. He told the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2).

To Paul, the death of Christ was a vital part of the Gospel or good news. "For I delivered to you," Paul told the brethren, "first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3).

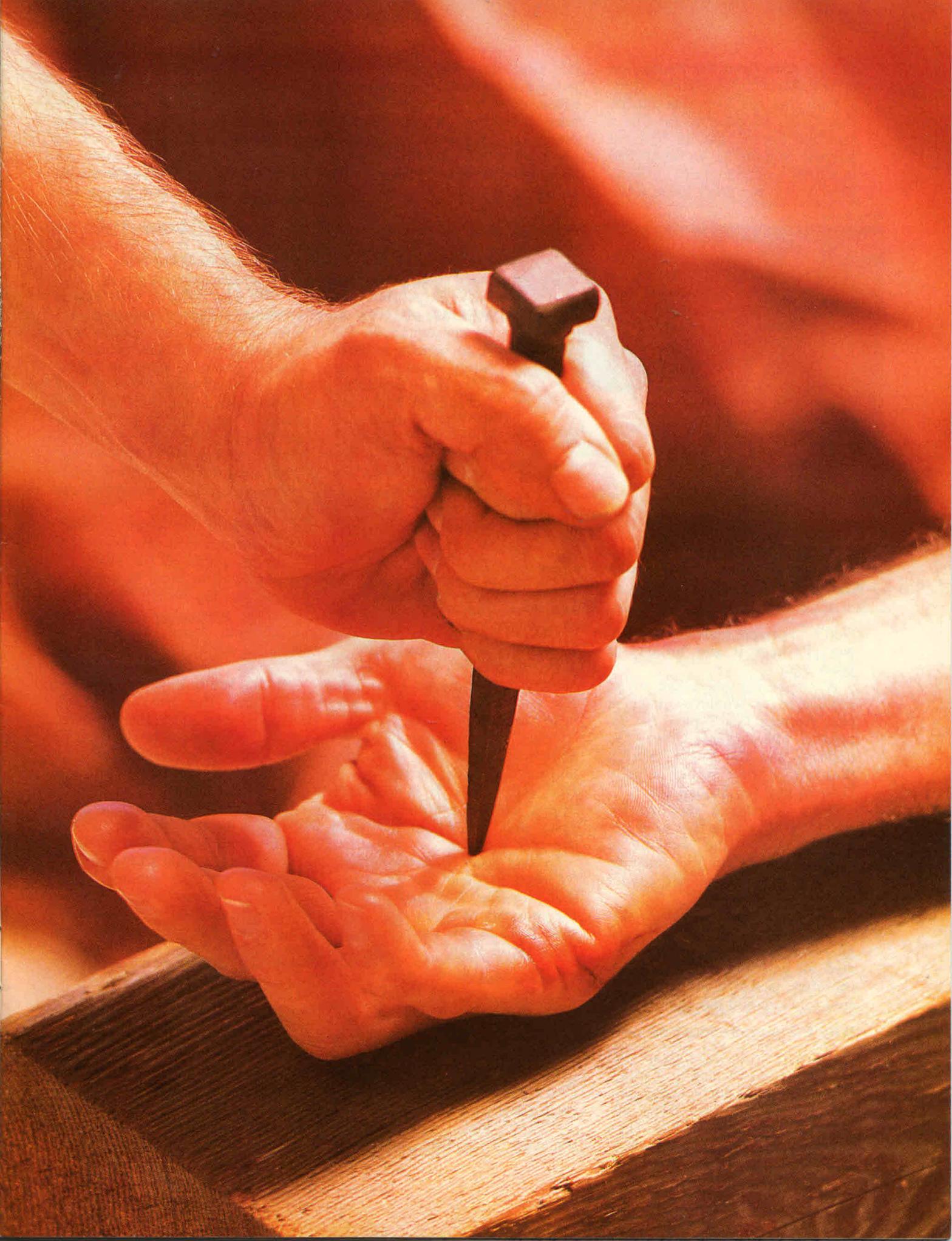
Most important decision ever

This Passover season, let's take a look at what had to be the most risky decision ever made by God. This decision committed the God Family to what we in God's Church have come to call "the mystery of the ages."

God was determined to create, from humans, new members for His Family. These humans, God knew, would have the potential to sin, and thus would need a Savior or sacrifice. Jesus was this

***We remember
Jesus' death
every Passover,
the festival that
commemorates
the God Family's
awesome decision
to provide us
with a sacrifice
for sin.***

By Paul Kroll



“Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Paul told the Ephesian church that God’s decision to provide a sacrifice for sin was an “eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:11). We don’t know when

Warren Watson



“God ran the greatest risks with the highest stakes possible . . . when Jesus was a human”
—World Tomorrow presenter David Albert

God’s supreme plan got underway. Perhaps it was billions of years ago.

A staggering need had to be considered at whatever point in past eternity God’s plan was finalized. The supreme God of the universe and the Logos realized that one of them would actually have to pay for human sin.

Why demand a sacrifice for sin? The answer is that God decreed that sin (the breaking of God’s law—I John 3:4) must be paid for by someone. Sin cannot simply be “excused.”

The death penalty must be satisfied. Either every sinner must pay or a single life—which created all existing human life and therefore is worth more than its sum total—could pay the penalty.

Why the penalty must be paid

But why be so strict about sin? Why not just overlook it, if someone is sincerely sorry about having sinned? Why not bring humans to repentance and then write off sin—just forget about

it? God determined that the penalty for sin must be paid because, most importantly, humans must understand the terrible consequences of sin. Sin, or going one’s own way in opposition to God, is so horrible it must never be contemplated—especially by a future member of God’s Family.

God knew humans would need to understand that sin is totally detestable and universe-shaking in its consequences. Sin is so serious it absolutely required a sacrifice of a God being.

Payment could not be easily dispensed with, God decreed. The member of the God Family who was to be sacrificed in payment for sin should actually have to risk His own eternal life in the process.

Sending one of their own in human flesh to die for sin

would underscore that the God Family is true to its own laws. If you violate God’s law, there is a penalty that someone *must* pay. It’s not enough simply to say: “I’m sorry. I won’t do it again.”

Jesus’ sacrifice also helps us understand that our very existence is dependent on the love of God and Christ. It is meant to inspire eternal gratitude toward Jesus and the Father for their supreme sacrifice.

In this sober Passover season, we need to focus our minds on that sacrifice. We need to grasp the enormity of God’s decision to send Jesus to this earth in potentially sinful flesh.

The big risk

David Albert, a presenter on the *World Tomorrow* telecast, has spoken on this important subject in the past. Here is how he expressed the seriousness of God’s decision to provide a Savior for the human race:

“There was the time when someone in the Godhead had to

reckon with the necessity for Christ’s death. Who did it first? I don’t know. But it’s quite something to think about. Sometime in past eternity it had to occur to God that there was simply no way around it. Christ or someone would have to die for human sin.

“What did God think when He thought that? And how did He communicate it to Christ? It must have been a very heavy, very serious conversation.

“We can imagine God saying to Jesus: ‘If we’re going to deal with mortal human beings, who are going to sin, the penalty of eternal death is going to be incurred. But it will have to be paid by someone other than these humans if they are to fulfill their purpose and live with us forever. And that has to be one of us.’ That must have been the heaviest conversation in the history of the universe.

“Think of the risks involved. Christ is put into this body that God has prepared for Him. He comes down to earth in the flesh. Suppose He sins? That, of course, was always possible throughout Jesus’ entire experience on earth.

“Then what? Jesus dies for His sin. We’re down to one God being in the universe. God doesn’t have any other options. God has one shot at the plan of salvation. It is Christ. The plan for humanity effectively stops at that point.

“How can God Himself come down to be the Messiah for humanity and leave the controls of the universe? That’s unthinkable.

“God ran the greatest risks with the highest stakes possible during those 33½ years when Jesus was a human. All the chips were bet, in a manner of speaking, on that particular game plan.”

History’s central event

No event before or after Jesus’ life and death runs the same type of risk. Not the creation of life. Not the establishment of ancient Israel as God’s people. Not the Second Coming of Christ. The fulcrum event of human history

The fulcrum event of human history occurred over 1,950 years ago. Jesus lived a sinless life in human flesh. Then God actually died. Celebrating the Passover allows us to, in a sense, participate in this crucial event.

—the event of the ages—occurred over 1,950 years ago. Jesus lived a sinless life in human flesh. Then God actually died.

Celebrating the Passover allows us to, in a sense, participate in this crucial event. To understand the magnitude of God the Father's decision, let's take a look at the Father's part in the plan of salvation.

Paying the penalty

We read that "what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3).

God's plan required that sin be condemned. What does this mean? Sin was condemned in that Jesus showed it was possible, through the holy spirit, to live in obedience to God.

Sin did not need to have dominion over humans. Jesus proved this by His sinless life.

The plan also condemned sin in another way. The effect of sin—its penalty—which, for all practical purposes, held man to eternal death—could be condemned through a perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus accomplished this by



His death. God "made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us" (II Corinthians 5:21). God had to endure the excruciating mental agony of condemning His Son at the moment of death. That's when Jesus became sin for us.

That's why Jesus cried out at the point of death, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). It took supreme love for God to offer His Son throughout 33½ years of incredible risk. Then He had to turn His back on Jesus, as it were, in Jesus' greatest time of need.

Paul wrote about that incredible outgoing concern: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

But what was it like for God to become a human? And not just any human.

Jesus could never sin during His life. At its end, He had to suffer a gruesome and nauseating death. Perhaps we can catch a glimmer of God's great love by looking at what Jesus and God had to live through.

For a moment, let's focus on Jesus' feelings during those last days and hours before He had to

endure a humiliating and painful torture and death.

As Yahweh, the eternal God of the Old Testament, Jesus had inspired the writings that detailed exactly what would happen to Him. Chapters 52 and 53 of Isaiah are among the most poignant. Some excerpts:

- "His visage was marred more than any man" (Isaiah 52:14).

- "He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

- "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (verse 5).

- "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter" (verse 7).

- "He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors" (verse 12).

Jesus, as it's said, had a dirty job, but someone had to do it. And He was the only one who could. If Jesus had refused to go through with His part, salvation would not be possible for humans. And it was His choice.

Jesus' own choice

Jesus said: "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:17-18).

Yet Jesus also said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38).

Jesus as Yahweh or the Lord had inspired the psalmist to write about Him: "Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7).

It wasn't easy to do God's will (which was also Jesus' will). As the time for Jesus' crucifixion drew near, His mind focused on the agony ahead. At one point, He cried out: "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour" (John 12:27). The mo-

ment of truth had arrived. While we recognize Jesus was in control, He was also in human flesh and subject to pain and mental anguish. Jesus felt this human distress intensely just before His arrest.

“And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.’ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will’” (Matthew 26:37-39).

Jesus didn’t want to go through it. Yet He finished the job He had been given to do on this earth. While the end of His life was most traumatic, it wasn’t His only concern.

Jesus, throughout His life, realized He was at great risk of sinning. His life was no idle “fun and games.” He was on a deadly serious mission. Not only was humanity’s life at stake—so was His own.

Jesus learned obedience

Paul tells us that Jesus suffered and learned: “In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:7-9).

That’s incredible. Jesus Himself learned obedience. Was He not perfect? Yes, but after His sojourn on earth, He understood obedience in a way He had not as a spirit being.

As Dr. Albert put it: “It’s possible to demonstrate things to God about obedience that are difficult if not impossible to convey as a spirit being. Christ learned new dimensions of obedience to God in the flesh above and be-

yond anything He knew when He was in the spirit.”

Perhaps that can be of some encouragement to us. Our greatest test is now—in the flesh. As Dr. Albert said: “I suspect it will be much easier to obey God in the future in the spirit than it is now in the flesh. We are at a high-water mark of our demonstration to God of obedience and suffering, just as Christ was when He was in the flesh.”

Jesus learned what it was like to be a human in a way the God Family did not fathom before. So Paul wrote: “We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

That’s not to say the God Family didn’t show mercy before Jesus’ earthly sojourn. The Hebrew Bible or Old Testament is full of God’s compassion. But now Yahweh had personally experienced human life. He understood, as the expression goes, “how the other half lives.” He saw life through a human mind and body.

As a result, Jesus is the perfect High Priest to finish the plan of salvation. To qualify, Jesus was made “for the suffering of death”

with the object of “bringing many sons to glory.” God had “to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:9-10).

Jesus gave up everything He was to become a human.

As Paul put it: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same . . . in all

things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest . . . for in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (verses 14-18).

Jesus was human. He became tired, hungry, thirsty and dirty, and He had to go to the bathroom. He had emotions, experiencing anguish and sorrow. Yet Jesus was willing to endure pain and suffering so that other humans might be born into God’s Family.

God’s love for us

Jesus told His disciples, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13).

Why would God—who was and had everything—want to risk it all for someone else? And to risk it all while the objects of that



Illustrations: Gustave Doré

Jesus, throughout His life, realized He was at great risk of sinning. He was on a deadly serious mission. Not only was humanity’s life at stake—so was His own.

risk hated Him, mistreated Him, misunderstood Him and were generally unthankful?

That's why Paul said we should "know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19). Paul told the Ephesians to "walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:2).

Anyone called to be God's child is admonished to follow Jesus' selfless example and "look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Based on Jesus' selfless example, we see what kind of attitude and action we should strive for.

Paul also tells us: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (verses 5-8).

Jesus died a humiliating death. Here was very God being spit upon, laughed at, jeered, tortured and then hanged on a stake, enduring the death of a common criminal.

Paul wrote, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law [its death penalty], having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Galatians 3:13).

God was illegally executed by sinful humans. As Peter said, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree" (Acts 5:30).

It was a shameful, humiliating, pitiful death. Yet God was willing to be mocked and die. Meanwhile, another God being with the power of the universe under His control was willing to watch in silence.

So Paul urged all Christians that they should be "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of

our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:2-4).

Jesus' glory today

God the Father, honoring the unfathomable sacrifice Jesus was willing to make, has designated Him to be the chief executive of all things pertaining to human salvation:

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth... All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all

der the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-10).

Let's imitate Jesus

The unspeakable sacrifice of Jesus and God the Father for us weak and sinful humans should inspire us. It should encourage us to strive in our lives for the perfection that is in both the Father and Jesus Christ.

As Paul told the church in Rome: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that

The unspeakable sacrifice of Jesus and God the Father for us should encourage us to strive for the perfection that is in both the Father and Jesus Christ.

things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself" (Colossians 1:16-20).

Every human who wants to have his or her sins forgiven and be eligible for eternal life will have to respect, honor and love Jesus.

Paul wrote: "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those un-

good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

In this Passover season let's remember "that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:6).

We observe the Passover memorial once each year, remembering what Jesus and God did for us. Throughout the coming year, let's love Jesus and God with the same love with which they first loved us.

As Christians, we cannot show any greater gratitude to the God Family than to practice this motto in our lives:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5)! □

Why Did Jesus Need a Sword?

*Just before His death,
Jesus asked the disciples to buy weapons.
Was this to fight those who came to take Him?*

By Philip Stevens

Jesus' final Passover with His disciples was over. He had taught them much in those last few hours together, but now after singing a hymn together it was time to leave for the betrayal Christ knew was coming.

Just before the group left, Jesus said, "But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a sack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one" (Luke 22:36).

This seemed a strange command from someone who had just spent a considerable amount of time discussing love. Why buy a sword?

Did Jesus intend that His followers arm themselves to defend Him in the events soon to occur in the Garden of Gethsemane? Did Jesus really believe that one or two swords would prevent Him being taken prisoner? And in this way, would He somehow be able to change the plan He

and the Father had worked out to deliver human beings from their sins?

To answer those questions,

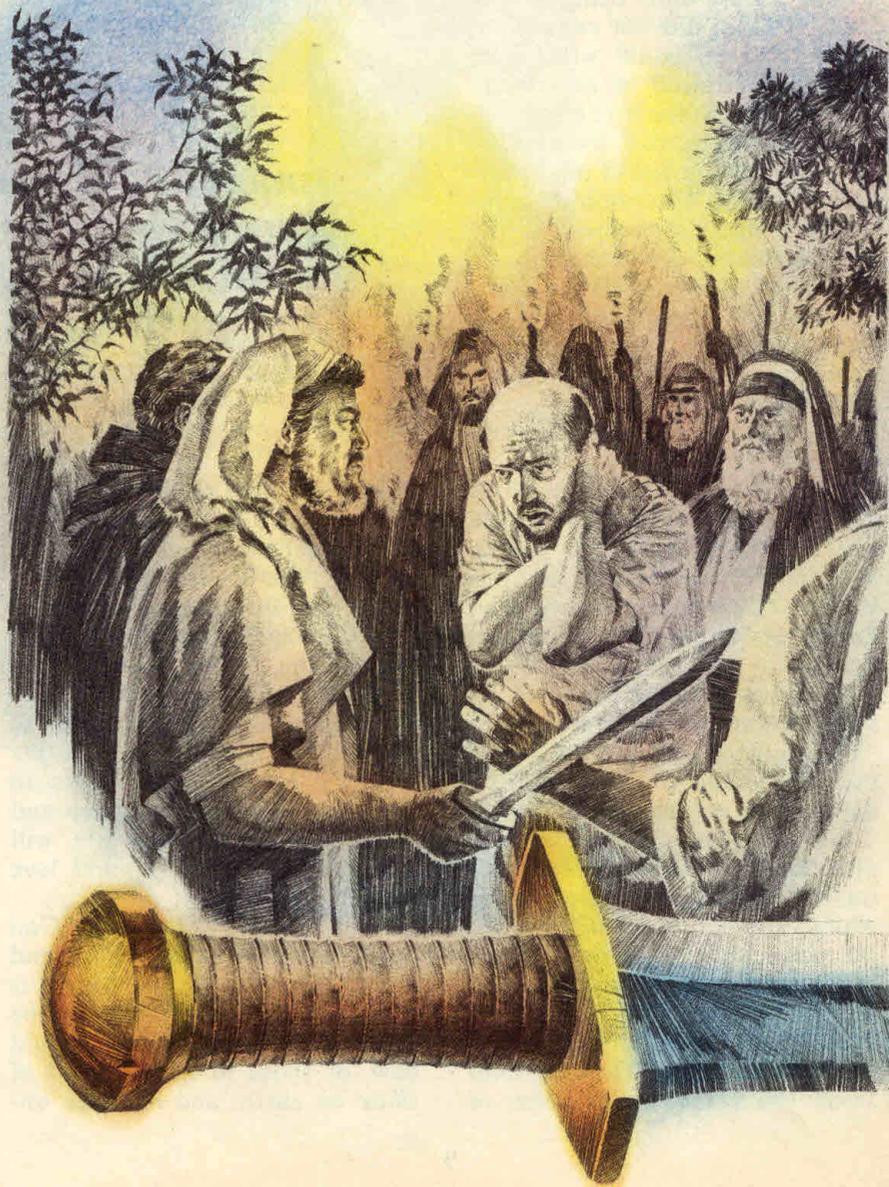
let's look ahead to a few hours after Jesus made that statement.

The betrayal

Jesus and His disciples had gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane, where they encountered Judas and his armed cohorts. Using Judas' infamous kiss as their cue, the gang members attempted to arrest Jesus (verse 47). Look what happened next.

"When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?'" (verse 49).

Clearly, the disciples felt the weapons were to be used. And without waiting for an answer, one of them (John's account reveals it was Simon Peter) used



The disciple Peter felt justified in using his sword to protect Jesus. But Jesus rebuked him for cutting off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. So why did they need two swords?

his sword to cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest (verse 50).

Was this why Jesus had instructed the disciples to buy a sword—to defend against this mob? Let Jesus Himself answer.

“Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). And to emphasize that He intended no violence toward the mob, Jesus immediately healed the ear of the servant (Luke 22:51).

No instruction to use

Jesus’ instruction to the disciples in Luke had been to buy weapons—not to use them. Jesus pointed out He could readily summon help from multiple legions of angels if He needed to escape from this crowd. But that was not part of God’s plan (Matthew 26:53-54). Jesus had to be taken, tried, unjustly found guilty and then executed if man’s sins were to be forgiven.

No, Jesus didn’t intend the sword or swords to be used in defense—or offense.

The reason Jesus told His disciples to equip themselves with at least one sword was so prophecy could be fulfilled: “He who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ For the things concerning Me have an end” (Luke 22:36-37).

Prophecy fulfilled

The prophecy Jesus quoted is Isaiah 53:12: “And He was numbered with the transgressors [the Amplified version states, ‘He let Himself be regarded as a crimi-

nal’], and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

By dying on the cross when He didn’t deserve to die, Jesus did bear the sins of many—in fact, the whole of humanity. And once in heaven at the right hand of God, Jesus did, and does, intercede on our behalf (Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:25). So the final two thirds of the prophecy are clearly fulfilled, but what about the first

with Jesus seemed to bear out that conclusion.

But they were wrong. By bearing arms this way, Jesus was considered a criminal, and that fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy.

Some have used this example to justify arming themselves in the name of religion. This verse gives no such authority. On the contrary, Jesus made it plain that those who take up arms are likely to suffer the fate they intend for

It was inconceivable to the mob when they came to arrest Jesus that someone they’d been led to believe was a troublemaker would not put up a fight—and the armed disciples seemed to bear out that conclusion.

part? That’s where the sword comes in.

In response to Jesus’ instruction to go and buy swords, the disciples said that they had two weapons. Jesus indicated that was sufficient (Luke 22:38). By leading a group of men armed with two swords, Jesus could be branded by the authorities as a common criminal.

In fact, when the mob came to arrest Jesus they, too, were armed as though expecting trouble (Matthew 26:47). To them, it was inconceivable that someone they’d been led to believe was a troublemaker would not put up a fight—and the armed disciples

others. As we’ve seen, the only reason Jesus gave the instruction to buy a weapon was to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah.

Indeed, as Jesus plainly displayed by His own action, we should rely on God for defense when under attack.

Rather than allow for Christians to arm themselves, this verse is another clear indication that Jesus Christ set Himself to follow the predetermined plan of salvation through to the very end. Right to the last minute of His life, Jesus Christ was intent on being faithful to His Father.

And for that, we can all be extremely grateful. □

Ken Tunell



Purify Your Language!

How careful are you about the language you use? Here are some important points you may not have thought of before!

By Douglas G. Peitz

How important to God is the proper use of language?

It is so important that in His coming Kingdom He wants a pure language!

"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord," says Zephaniah 3:9, looking ahead to the Millennium.

This language will need to be taught in the world tomorrow, and its rules and principles upheld. As corulers with Christ (Revelation 20:6), part of our job will be to teach and uphold the pure language.

Do you realize that God wants us to prepare now to teach the pure language in the world tomorrow? There are steps we can and should take so we can be ready.

But before we see what those steps are, let's consider some of the qualities of pure language.

Qualities of pure language

The foundation of pure language is God's Third Commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

This command covers more

than most people realize. Not only does it prohibit direct misuse of God's name, but also the indirect misuse through euphemisms and other terms of vulgarity and disrespect that dishonor both God and man, such as racial slurs and obscenities.

As Paul said: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).

Also eliminated from the pure language of the world tomorrow will be terms of pagan origin, which often encourage pagan concepts and thoughts. Languages today are filled with these expressions, reflecting the nearly 6,000 years of man's rejection of God and his worship of false gods.

We can also look for words describing evil to drop from the pure language. Words drop out of use because they are no longer needed or because their meaning has been forgotten.

Imagine the words that will drop out of use in the world tomor-

row—words such as *war*, *divorce* and *rape*.

This will not be completely accomplished, unfortunately, until after the Great White Throne Judgment period when we are all in God's Family and sin has ceased.

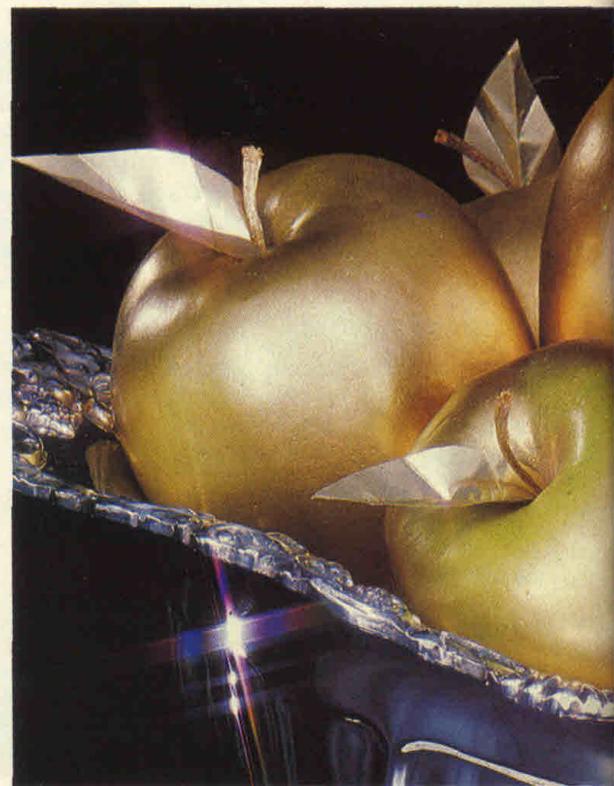
Language in the world tomorrow

There is yet much more! The pure language will not be contradictory nor ambiguous. Gone will be the many cases of misunderstanding and confusion that arise today from multiple and conflicting usages of words.

Words such as *bad* to describe excellence and *free love* for fornication all have misleading connotations that pervert our understanding of good and evil. This will not be the case in the world tomorrow.

As Isaiah said, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20). Words will describe accurately and precisely all objects and concepts.

Also, the rules for grammar, spelling and pronunciation will be consistent. God is consistent. He does things decently and in order



Hal Finch

(I Corinthians 14:40). The pure language of the world tomorrow will reflect God's character.

For example, in the English language today there are at least six different ways to pronounce *ough*, as illustrated by the following words: *through*, *though*, *ought*, *bough*, *rough* and *cough*. We can assume such inconsistencies will not exist in the pure language.

The pure language will also be comprehensive. Today all languages limit our range and depth of expression. Even Paul expressed his frustration over sometimes not being able to describe how he felt (Romans 8:26). Because limitations vary from language to language, translation is difficult. The many different translations of the Bible make this obvious.

Language conveys understanding. God has infinite understanding (Psalm 147:5), and He desires to impart understanding to mankind (Proverbs 2:6). He also wants people to communicate clearly and completely to Him and to each other.

Therefore, the pure language will be comprehensive. There will be no more "joy inexpressible" (I Peter 1:8). All thoughts will be expressible.

Finally, the pure language will be perfectly expandable. It will be a living language, and living languages grow. For instance, *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, second edition, unabridged, added 50,000 new words just 21 years after its first edition.

But unless a language expands perfectly, it loses its purity. *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, second edition, by H.W. Fowler, states: "The [English] language has not been neatly constructed by a master builder who could create each part to do the exact work required of it, neither overlapped nor overlapping; far from that, its parts have had to grow as they could" (page 625).

God's government and way of life will never cease to grow, and God, the master builder, will require the pure language to ex-

pand infinitely without losing its purity.

But all of this will be futile unless the rules are upheld. God needs individuals who respect language and who will diligently teach and uphold the pure language. So what should we be doing now as Christians to prepare to uphold and teach the coming pure language? There is much we can do!

Steps to take now

● *Obey the Third Commandment.* It is essential that we learn to use language now the way God expects. And we must begin by using God's name reverently.

Some people would never directly use God's name in vain, but many carelessly do so by the use of euphemisms. A euphemism in this respect is any expression used as a substitute for the name of God or Jesus Christ.

For example, *gee* and *gee-whiz* are used as euphemisms for Jesus, and *golly*, *gosh* and *goldarnit* are used for God. These and similar terms violate the Third Commandment and must not be used by Christians.

A Christian should also eschew racial slurs and obscenities. Disrespectful and foul language causes strife and animosity, tearing down society. Christ said, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). God wants language to be a tool to edify and unify the world.

● *Respect the rules of language.* Although no language is pure today, all have rules that should be respected. We should use proper grammar and pronunciation, and educate ourselves to overcome our shortcomings. We must show God now that we respect language and will use it properly.

● *Let your yes be yes and your no be no.* God wants us to say what we mean and mean what we say (Matthew 5:37). Lying and deceiving are misuses of language that God condemns.

The Ninth Commandment states, "You shall not bear false

witness against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16).

Language is a gift from God and a tool. It should not be used for evil.

The positive effects

In Genesis 11 the people were united under one language, and it enabled them to accomplish tremendous things:

"And the Lord said, 'Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them' (verse 6).

Language is powerful! But God realized that human beings influenced by Satan would follow evil purposes, so He confused their language:

"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (verse 7).

God wants language to be used properly.

How different will be the world tomorrow! Satan will be bound, Christ will rule and we will be motivated by God's spirit. God can then unleash the power of the pure language with marvelous results. Magnificent works will be accomplished as talents are combined and used for the good of all.

Foul language will be unknown. God's name will not be taken in vain, but always referred to with the utmost respect. Never again will we wince at a racial epithet or a dirty joke. Language will be used to edify.

And imagine how satisfying it will be to express ourselves fully. As Solomon said, "A world fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

It will be tremendously gratifying to be able to express godly thoughts perfectly.

Then, nothing will be withheld from man, for not only will we have a pure language, but we will have pure hearts as well.

Let's prepare now to become stewards and teachers of the pure language! □

Here is encouraging biblical strategy for those whose mates are not members of God's Church.

By K. Neil Earle



Pleased to Dwell?

If your mate doesn't share your deepest religious beliefs, it can be frustrating, to say the least.

Is there a mistake somewhere? A celestial malfunction on heaven's computer system, perhaps?

"It just isn't fair," some say. "If God has so much power, why, oh, why hasn't He called my husband?" Others explain: "If only my wife were in the Church, life would be so much simpler, especially for the kids. Why are things so far out of line?"

There's no doubt about it,



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these are good questions. And sometimes there are heavier overtones—in not a few cases, violence, pain and lasting wounds. “A man’s foes will be those of his own household,” Jesus prophesied (Matthew 10:36).

But God addresses this issue in His Word. Squarely. First of all,

let’s remember that many Bible personalities had unbelieving mates. There was Lot (Genesis 19:26), Job (Job 2:9-10), Abigail (I Samuel 25:3), David (II Samuel 6:20), Hosea (Hosea 1:2), Lois and Eunice (II Timothy 1:5). And in most cases God’s servants were effective in spite of tough situations!

The essential attitude

Paul spelled out the basic guidelines for nonmember mate situations. After counseling the unmarried and giving instruction to married couples in I Corinthians 7:8-11, Paul addresses “the rest”:

“If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband [God blesses the whole family for one mate’s obedience—especially the children, as we shall see]. . . . But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches. . . . Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called” (verses 12-14, 17, 20, King James Version).

The guidelines break down to: Make the marriage work, if at all possible. Go the extra mile. Fast, pray and counsel. Do your part to remain calm if trouble arises. If your mate shows by overall fruits over time that he or she is pleased to dwell with you, make it a happy marriage.

And that, happily, is the way it is in most cases in the Church of God. Many of these marriages are as happy as any, and there are even special blessings for the children in such homes. The scripture showing that our children are holy (set apart by God) applies specifically to members with unbelieving mates. Read it in I Corinthians 7:14.

But there are other realities as

well. There are cases, also, where actions and attitudes reveal no sincere determination to live together in peace with a Church member. And a peaceful relationship was Paul’s criterion for the marriage continuing: “If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace” (verse 15).

This gives a member some room to maneuver, especially where physical or spiritual life is threatened. Even a constant state of bickering, sniping and other emotional abuse means one partner is not really seeking peace! Such cases must be judged by the fruits.

But a word of caution: Be sure to seek wise counsel in these tense situations. The ministers in God’s Church are experienced in these matters.

The fact is that many nonmember mates set excellent examples and, not unlike Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, are in sympathy with the goals and purposes of the Church of God. Such mates deserve the unstinting praise and appreciation of the rest of the family.

Remember the basics

But rose bushes have thorns, and there are bound to be times when stresses and strains, many of them unintentional, arise. Many wives could identify with the Shunamite woman in the time of Elisha. When she needed aid from God’s servants quickly, her husband balked: “Why are you going to *him* today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath” (II Kings 4:23).

This is the “Not another Church function?” scripture. Sound familiar?

But take heart. God lays on us nothing greater than we can bear (I Corinthians 10:13). If there is a down side to this situation, accept the suffering involved as a disguised compliment: God knows you have the ability to handle this with His help.

Don’t waste time bemoaning your fate or overly romanticizing

marriages where both mates are members. The truth is, life is getting more challenging for all of us in God's service. Your reaction and example might well help your mate make the right decisions in the prophesied time of trouble just ahead.

With so much at stake, you need to map out a strategy as to how to react when flash points

Take heart.
God knows you
have the ability
to handle
this situation,
with His
help.

occur. Before all else, you must have come to spiritual stability on this whole issue.

The first question to ask is: Have you fully yielded to God's sovereignty in your life? You must leave the timing in your life in God's hands (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Tick off these basics in your mind when you are frustrated by your situation or see yourself heading for trouble. Remember, God is in charge. He alone calls people into His Church (John 6:44). If He could buckle proud Pharaoh or deflate pompous Nebuchadnezzar—legends in their own minds—He can bring anyone else to repentance in His own time.

God *could* call your mate. If He hasn't, then obviously He is working out a greater purpose in your life—a purpose that includes more than your personal comfort and convenience. God knows best. If you're really convinced of this, then you have laid a bedrock basis for your hopes. God gives faith—and wisdom as

well, the wisdom to take the diplomatic offensive and accentuate the positive.

Accentuate the positive

Many people go through life shallow, naive, unaware, insensitive. A person with a nonmember mate cannot afford to. You must be on the alert to find compensations, thinking out resourceful ways to ease through difficult patches. Like the worldly holidays. If Christmas and christenings are sore spots, then be on the alert to make anniversaries, graduations, long weekends and family gatherings extra special.

Make Friday nights exciting, positive family evenings. Starting on a photo album might help. Or sharing wholesome music with each other. This could spark conversations on trends, style, morality, changing times. Remember, you are Jesus Christ's ambassador to your family (II Corinthians 5:20).

Who will your children remember as the happy, upbeat family member, the one they want to pattern their lives after? Example counts far more than memorizing 100 scriptures and not living by them.

When wires get snarled, ask God to show you your part of the problem. Remember, a Christian is imitating the Prince of peace. Love means saying you're sorry. A lot.

Sometimes a card, a letter or a gift can do wonders during times of tension. That's better than forcing a hurt mate to open up when he or she is not ready. "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1).

And pray for your mate. *See his or her point of view.* Study the Bible for piercing insights into human relations.

His marriage was the message

Did you know that even God had marriage problems? His wife, Israel, was unfaithful (Jeremiah 3:8). Often. So in the early 700s B.C., God determined to give His wayward people one last demonstration of His willing-

ness to forgive. The prophet Hosea was hit with unprecedented invasion of privacy: To depict Israel's sordid state, Hosea had to marry a harlot.

Yes, that's right. Hosea's marriage to unfaithful Gomer was a demonstration of God's love: No matter how low she sank, the prophet would take her back after real repentance.

And Gomer (her name meant "complete idolatry") lived up to her breeding as the daughter of Diblain ("sensual pleasure") (Hosea 1:3). She craved jewelry and fine things (Hosea 2:5). To get them she sold her favors as a high-priced call girl (verses 7, 10, 13). Single-parent Hosea sent his children to plead with Gomer (verse 2), but she callously spurned them.

But there is no escaping God's law.

The seedy life behind the veneer of the world's oldest profession left its mark. Gomer became a painted, tainted rose. She soon passed her peak. And then the bottom dropped out. Desperate, she tried to sell herself to the local slave market. But she only fetched 15 shekels, half the going rate for a healthy slave.

How do we know?

Because Hosea himself paid her price (Hosea 3:2).

He took her back?

He took her back. The prophet pardoned his wife, the prostitute. In spite of the pain and shame, she was ready to try again (Hosea 2:16). And Hosea took her back.

"How? How could he do it?" some wonder.

Because as a man of God, Hosea knew that the God Family regards no offense as unforgivable upon real repentance. Hosea knew the question was never: Will God forgive? It was always: Will my wife repent?

It still is.

Hosea's was an extreme non-member mate situation. His marriage was a model for us. We all have a lot to live up to if we serve the God of Hosea.

Hosea's marriage is a message for all time, for all marriages. Do we all get it? □

Answering Your Child's Questions About Sex

BY DEXTER H. FAULKNER

PART EIGHT

Children of various ages might ask hundreds of different questions about sex. Different situations can also occur. These few here can serve as guidelines.

As we examine these, you should get some feeling for the types of questions and situations to expect, how to react to them and what kind of answers to give your children.

Different situations

• *What to do when Baby plays with his genitals.* Last issue we touched on this question from the point of view of what the parents' attitude should be.

Certainly, Baby should not be punished for this. The baby can be distracted by gently lifting his hand and perhaps holding and cuddling the baby.

For most babies this will not be an intractable problem. If Baby persists, perhaps a gentle "no" and a firm removal of the hand from the genital area will help.

Parents should be watchful that as the child grows toward



puberty, the habit of masturbation doesn't develop. Proper vigilance, example and instruction should keep masturbation from becoming a problem in, say, the teenage years.

• *When the child wants pregnancy explained.* When there is a pregnancy in the family is a wonderful time to make the toddler or young child feel a part of the growing family. This is a mar-

velous opportunity to educate the child.

As I write this article, my daughter-in-law is pregnant. She has a 2½-year-old child, Stephen. He feels Mommy's tummy and listens for the heartbeat. He's been taught how a baby is conceived and how it grows (as much as he can understand, of course). As well, he knows where the baby will come out.

My son and daughter-in-law have taught Stephen that he was exactly where the new baby is now—and not that long ago. Stephen is informed that the new baby will have to be taken care of just as he was.

Stephen is being prepared for an addition to the family, an addition that will take Mommy's time, time that Stephen will now have to share with the new arrival. Stephen is learning not only about sex but about being part of a family and giving.

• *What about nudity?* Children should be taught that the human body has private (not evil) parts that God meant only mommies and daddies to see. And they should learn that adults other than you—especially strangers—shouldn't see them

without clothes, unless Mommy and Daddy approve. Obviously, there are exceptions—a locker-room situation where boys or girls shower together is one.

Children can learn modesty without acquiring a feeling that their bodies are evil.

• *If children begin playing "mommy and daddy."* It's natural for children to want to mimic their parents. This, coupled with a natural curiosity about their bodies, can lead children to play such games. Little children may even attempt to undress and play with each other.

Parents should be aware that their children may try to engage in such play. Distract them into some other activity. Beginning at the earliest time in a child's life, be sure he or she learns that sex is something designed for adults who are married—just like Mommy and Daddy.

• *Sex-education classes at school.* As a parent, you have the right and responsibility to monitor what your children are taught about sex at school. If you have any questions or disagreements, you also have the right to take these up with the school principal. Most schools welcome parental input and are rather chagrined at the low level of parental interest in such matters.

Don't hesitate to point out to your children where any sex education they receive at school deviates from godly values.

Other considerations

These are a few of the questions and situations with which you will have to deal. Here are some other issues to be ready for. Remember: To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

• What to teach sons and daughters about menstruation.

• How to explain nocturnal emissions or "wet dreams" to your son.

• What to do when your child becomes intrigued with toilet activities.

• How to be sure your child is

comfortable with the opposite sex.

Some books list dozens of the most common questions that children ask at various ages. Much of the advice is good. But some advice contradicts godly values about sex.

One such area involves masturbation. Many experts maintain that discouraging masturbation gives the child a negative view about his body and sexuality.

However, this advice is wrong from a biblical perspective. If the child is taught about sex without parental embarrassment, and in love, no such problem should develop. The child should see, through the example and teaching, that sex is God's gift. Sex is meant to be shared in love *only* between a husband and wife. Masturbation is a selfish stimulation exercised alone.

The teenage years

The parent should also prepare for the teenage years. The questions will then be of a different magnitude. The 13-year-old may ask: "But why can't I go on a date? All my girl friends can."

As parents you will have to

be worrisome for parents. Will their 14-year-old daughter come home one day and announce she's pregnant? Parents should be prepared for the worst. But if they've been diligent in previous years and have formed a loving, trusting relationship with their children, there's little chance that such a tragedy will happen.

Parents of teenage children might worry, saying: "But I didn't teach them anything. Our marriage was a bad example." It's never too late to start. Just don't panic and make the wrong moves.

See life from your teenager's view. He or she must endure incredible pressure. Today, virginity is considered a disease by many teenagers—both boys and girls.

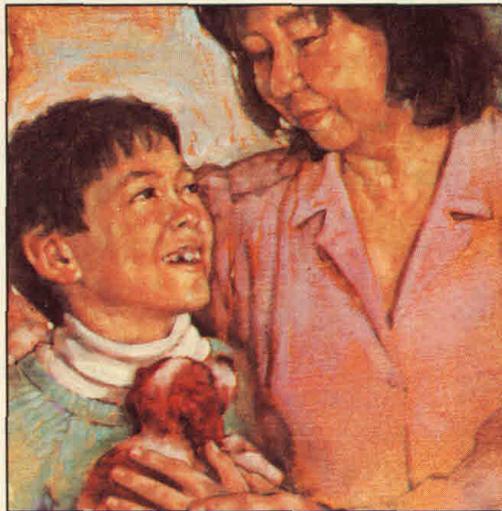
The pressures to engage in sex are enormous: "You mean you're still a virgin?" "If you love me, you'll do it." "Just a few kisses won't hurt." "You mean your parents won't let you come to my party?"

Moral support

Obviously, a teenager needs the strong and loving support of the family if he or she is going to buck the crowd on sexual matters. Give your child a healthy self-image so he or she doesn't feel the need to prove anything to anybody.

Put positive peer pressure to work. Find people with like values—ones who say sex is beautiful in marriage *only*. Try to encourage your teenagers to keep company with boys and girls who will underwrite the beauty of virginity and the sanctity of sex.

As you can see, teaching your children about sex is a vital, long-term proposition. It's a lot of work and sometimes a struggle. But as every successful parent will tell you (and so will their children), it's all worth the effort. □



Illustrations: Dan Andraesen

deal with such questions as: When should your teenagers be allowed to date? What can he or she do on a date? Who can he or she date? The teenage years can

Protect Your Child From Sexual Abuse

“A dramatic increase in sexual abuse of children was disclosed yesterday.”

“The report . . . charted a steep rise in recent years in the sexual abuse of children in both Europe and the Third World.”

“These findings suggest that as many as 40 million people, about one in six Americans, may have been sexually victimized as children.”

These quotes underline one of the saddest developments of this modern world—the skyrocketing rise in reports of child sexual abuse.

What is sexual abuse?

According to the Independent Order of Foresters, sexual abuse is defined as “the exploitation of a child for the gratification of an adult. Sexual abuse includes exhibitionism, fondling, intercourse and the use of a child in the production of pornographic material.”

A broader definition is forced or coerced sexual behavior between a child and anybody else, of any age.

Perpetrators and victims

Unfortunately, the image of the “weirdo” lurking in the park is not really representative of the type of person who molests children.

According to Linda Ward Russell of the Southern California Training Center, 85 to 90 percent of the people who sexually abuse children are people their victims know. They are most often either friends of the family, family members or someone in authority over the child, such as a teacher or clergy member. Only a small percentage of abusers are strangers to their victims. Most abusers are male.

Who are the victims? According to an article in the February 1987 *Psychology Today*, most child sexual abuse happens to children between ages 9 and 12. Most victims are girls.

Boys may be victimized more often than was previously known, how-

ever, because they are more reluctant to tell anyone about sexual abuse.

Protect your child

What can you do to protect your child from the tragedy of sexual abuse?

First, be aware of what your children are doing and who they are with. Know who their friends are. Be careful about choosing babysitters. Investigate anyone who offers your child a job that involves working in his home. Give your child information about sexual abuse in the same manner you give other safety information, like what to do if there's a fire in your home. Reassure the child that things like that are unlikely to happen, but you want him or her to be prepared and able to protect himself or herself in case it does.

Children who resist, run away, scream, protest strongly or threaten to tell their mother have a better chance of stopping abuse or ending abuse that might have been repeated many times, according to Diana E.H. Russell, author of *The Secret Trauma*.

Listen and watch for clues from your child that might indicate fear of a particular individual. If he or she suddenly becomes fearful of being left alone with someone, try to find out why. Make sure your children know they can come to you to talk about anything that upsets them.

According to experts, the more specific the definition of sexual abuse, the less frightening and confusing the situation will be for the child.

Tell your children that there are certain parts of their bodies (those covered by their bathing suits) that other people should not look at or touch. Also explain that they should not be made to look at or touch anyone else's body in those areas.

These points can be taught as family rules, and a child can use this in his or her defense by saying, “I'm

not allowed to do that,” or: “Stop that. I'm going to tell my Mom.” From there, you can tell the child that it might not be a stranger, but someone he or she knows. If you don't have a specific person in mind, just make sure your child knows that you want to know if someone touches him or her in a way that makes him or her uncomfortable.

And tell your child that no one should try to make him or her keep secrets from you about touching.

Have a plan of action for the child to follow if someone does approach him or her. Make a list of people he or she can go to to ask for help.

What are the signs of abuse?

If a child is being sexually abused, his or her normal behavior may change. He or she may become depressed, have trouble sleeping or eating or become angry, withdrawn, anxious and afraid. He or she may be afraid to be separated from you and cling to you.

Experts look for two other factors that often indicate, when they occur together, that sexual abuse is occurring: 1) Sexual preoccupation (or knowledge that is inappropriate for the child's age) and 2) Physical complaints, such as rashes, headaches or stomachaches that have no medical explanation.

If your child tells you that he or she has been abused, say you are glad he or she told you. Do not pressure the child, but draw him or her out with careful questions.

Tell your child that you believe him or her—fear of parental disbelief often keeps children from reporting abuse. Case notes have shown that few children lie about sexual abuse. Tell your child that the abuse was not his or her fault. Make it clear that you do not blame the child, as most children will feel guilty about what happened.

You may want to have your child examined by a doctor. Try to find a doctor who has had some experience dealing with abused children and who will be sensitive to your child's feelings. You may also need to contact the local authorities to report the abuse. In many areas, professionals (such as a doctor who examines your child) are required to report sexual abuse to the authorities.—By Kathy Johnson □

What Kind of Attitude Is That?

By John Halford

One of the best—or worst, depending on your point of view—features of modern office buildings is that they can be changed around so quickly. They are designed so that the partitions, doors and walls can be moved easily, so that in a matter of hours a familiar work space can be totally rearranged.

This is all very well if you are the kind of person who thrives on change and who gets excited about any new development.

I've got a good friend and colleague who doesn't, and recently he suffered a major trauma.

Some reorganization made extensive alterations necessary in the building where he works. They were good moves and helped the operation run more smoothly. But my friend, a deeply dedicated and hard-working employee, didn't like them. He found himself doing the same job, but on a different floor, with a different office, different furni-

ture, a different color scheme and a different view out of the window. About the only thing that was the same was his telephone number.

He didn't appreciate this new arrangement, and it showed.

Shortly after he had moved in I heard someone say, "Mr. So-and-so doesn't seem to be in a very good attitude about his new office, does he?"

The person was wrong. My friend was in a *very* good attitude about it. He just didn't like it.

It is a common mistake to think that a Christian's life is meant to be spent in a climate of perfect tranquility and lack of tension—a sort of emotional tropical island where warm, blue waters wash against sparkling, white sands, with palms waving in the gentle breeze and not a cloud in the sky. If you find yourself in emotional weather that is more akin to a traditional London fog, with a blizzard forecast for the afternoon—well, something must be seriously wrong. How can you be in the right attitude?

But we all do have those troublesome times, don't we? And often we seem to have them when everyone else is happy.

Emotional weather

Circumstances affect people in different ways—rather like the weather. Most of us don't like a lot of cold, rainy days or extreme heat waves. But unless you live in a very unusual climate, the weather is going to deal you days you like and days you don't, and you have to learn how to cope.

It is the same with the emotional weather of life, especially when that life is spent working and living with others. Many things happen. Some you will like, some you will not.

It is obvious from his letters that the apostle Paul spent many days when the circumstances were not to his liking. In his second letter to the Corinthians he shared his thoughts:

"For we do not want you to be

ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life" (II Corinthians 1:8).

And again in II Corinthians 4:8-9, "We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken;



Kirk Botero

struck down, but not destroyed." These problems were not his fault, but perhaps if we had met Paul on one of the days when he was "perplexed," "struck down," "burdened beyond measure" and "despairing of life," we might have been tempted to think, This man doesn't seem to be in a very good attitude.

And, of course, we would have been wrong.

Paul was still functioning as an apostle and minister. He was still concerned for the welfare of the church at Corinth. His letter shows that although he was in circumstances that he found discouraging, he had not allowed himself to bog down in despair or self-pity. He weathered the emotional storms.

Getting to know you

In your life, you will from time to time face some trying circum-

stances. It does not mean, necessarily, that you have done something wrong, or that God is displeased and is punishing you. However, it may be that He is allowing circumstances to try you, so that He can learn about you.

How often we forget, in our evaluation of ourselves and others, that we are all different. Some people thrive on action, but when things settle into routine, they become frustrated and irritable. Others like their lives to remain in a state of organized, predictable equilibrium, fearing and resenting any hint of change.

There must have been both types among the ancient Israelites, and the years spent wandering in the wilderness must have given each group some bad days.

Look at what happened: "Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. At the command of the Lord the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the Lord they would camp" (Numbers 9:17-18).

But the Israelites never knew how long they would be in one place: "When the cloud was taken from above the tabernacle a few days; according to the command of the Lord they would remain encamped . . . when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night . . . Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey" (verses 20-22).

Sometimes they had barely unpacked and it was time to move. The adventurous would have loved it. Other times, they could get really settled in a place, to the relief of the stolid and to the frustration of the eager.

The experiences of wandering in the wilderness had a purpose:

"And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

And that is why, today, God allows circumstances in our lives that leave us frustrated and unhappy. He does not tease or tempt us, but He must learn about us and know the kind of decisions we make—not only when the going is good, but also when we are under pressure.

Are you really committed to being a peacemaker, striving to work in harmony and cooperation with others? Are you a person who can say, as Christ did, "Not my will, but your will be done," even if that means giving up something you want very much?

You aren't really proving that if everything is going your way. Anybody could be in a good attitude then. It is when you are fighting moodiness, depression, resentment, frustration and hurt pride that you show what is really going on inside you.

Civil war

It *is* a battle, and it isn't won all at once. The carnal mind is hostile toward God (Romans 8:7) and doesn't give in without a fight.

As Paul wrote in Galatians 5:17, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." It is civil war—*you* and the holy spirit against *you* and human nature.

You are the battleground—and sometimes you can't help looking like it. When you are having "one of those days," the last thing you need is for others to think that you are not in a good attitude! They don't see the problem. Maybe for them there isn't a problem! But you are going through inner turmoil, asking God to help you, praying for spiritual reinforcement maybe several times an hour, as you try to cope with the shifting moods of

the struggle. With God's help you eventually win. But until the war is won, you may not be as happy or cheerful as others would like you to be. But you *are* in a good attitude.

What is an attitude?

It's worth looking more closely at that word *attitude*. We usually use it in the context of a mental condition. Thus happiness, cheer, and joy signify a "good" attitude, and frustration, anxiety, preoccupation and a feeling of "I don't want to talk about it" seem like symptoms of a "bad" attitude.

But not necessarily. Don't be so quick to judge.

An airplane has to be in the right attitude to take off safely. Flaps are down, engine power carefully controlled, speed just right. You'll notice that the pilot doesn't use that time to chat with the passengers. That's not when the hostesses serve drinks. It doesn't mean they don't like the passengers. But everything is concentrated on getting the airplane off the ground safely. Some right attitudes need totally focused attention for a while.

So, back to my friend in his new office. He was in a good attitude. He didn't like his new situation, but he was working on it. He hadn't thrown a fit or refused to come to work. He was trying hard to do his job. He was doing his best not to let his mood affect other people.

He had undoubtedly prayed for an extra measure of tolerance and self-control so that, in his frustration, he would not cross over the boundary that separates temptation from sin. He had expressed (to trusted friends—not to *everyone* in a way that would sow discord) that he was having a struggle with the new arrangement, and we who knew him prayed for him.

In other words, knowing that the day ahead would be a battle, he had taken up a good position (or attitude). Surely God was pleased.

Those are the days when you show God what you are made of. □



Hal Finch

Are you growing the way you should as a Christian—in character, love and service to others? If not, it may be because you're not using a powerful spiritual tool!

By George M. Kackos

Feeling the afternoon sun on His shoulder, He moved farther down behind the massive boulder that had been His refuge for several days.

Jesus Christ felt physically drained. His throat ached from dryness. He looked forward to nightfall, when the temperature of the desert air would drop.

But He knew the cold of the night would not take away the knotting, twisting pain in His stomach.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus Christ fasted for more than a month—40 days and 40 nights. That's difficult to imagine.

For most of us, it's not only difficult to imagine, fasting is not something we want to think about much at all, whether we are talking about for one or for

40 days. Let's face it. Who wants to feel bad? Who wants a headache or a stomachache, or to watch his or her energy and strength evaporate as the hours pass?

All these things can happen when you fast!

So why fast? Why deny yourself food and water and make yourself miserable physically?

Without convincing answers, your desire to fast will also evaporate! You'll want to avoid using the very tool that can open up the way to life's greatest blessings.

What do you want most in life? To grow in righteous character and learn spiritual truth? To receive God's help with problems? To do God's Work and serve others?

These are life's greatest blessings—far more important than mere physical satisfaction!

But, sad to say, we often fail to live by God's values. The temporary, self-centered values of this

world destroy our desire to live by God's will. The weaknesses of the flesh overwhelm us and make us prisoners of lusts and wrong habits (Matthew 26:41).

At times we feel helpless to change our ways. Like a powerful magnet, Satan draws us to his false values (Ephesians 6:11).

We need God's help.

Why fast?

Through fasting, you will receive the help to resist Satan's values and live by God's values. Fasting illuminates your weaknesses and reveals God's greatness. No longer will you be as easily victimized by the fleshly pulls that strangle your spiritual growth.

How do we know? Read these inspiring words:

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free and that you break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6).

Fasting develops in you love and respect for others:

"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?" (verse 7).

As a result of fasting, you will reap a bumper crop of blessings: Your understanding of God's Word will increase and your prayers will receive answers. "Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you. . . . Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'" (verses 8-9).

Just think of what this means! Your agonizing problems could be resolved. You could rid yourself of negative attitudes. Your selfishness could be replaced with God's love.

Your relationship with others could improve. You could obtain divine guidance in decisions you need to make. God could be moved to perform mighty mira-

cles for His Work, for others or for you. But how do you use this powerful tool?

Set aside time

Effective fasting requires time—time away from your everyday responsibilities. You need time to get close to God.

Failure to set apart this time can defeat the purpose of fasting. Ideally, you should use time away from your regular job. Of course, some duties have to be performed. But the point is, don't fill the time with unnecessary work projects or entertainment.

One day without food or water is an acceptable fast; two or three days may be appropriate on occasion (Leviticus 23:28, 32, Esther 4:16). Fasting longer than two or three days should be done only after seeking competent health advice.

If you have a medical problem, a limited amount of food or water may be taken—check with a health professional for guidance.

Since fasting should be done in response to a need in your life, someone else's life or God's Work, the duration and frequency may vary. But realize this vital point: Fasting should not be reserved for emergencies only; it should be done as often as is necessary to stay close to God.

Humble yourself

Fasting is not penance. Neither is it a "hunger strike" to force your will on God or other people. Those who fast this way will fail (Luke 18:9-14).

The purpose of fasting is to humble yourself before God, to gain a deeper insight into God's will and to utilize His power to fulfill His will. By growing in these areas, you will experience more answers to your prayers.

But how do you humble yourself? How do you gain insight into God's will? How do you tap the power of God?

You begin by seeing your physical weaknesses, through the discomfort of fasting. You realize that your existence is totally dependent on physical nourishment.

You then transfer these

thoughts to your spiritual condition, and think about the weaknesses and flaws in your character. Realize how essential God's power is for spiritual success.

Try to determine what God wants you to see about yourself. Don't assume you already know. Our minds are deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9) and will go to great lengths to prevent us from seeing ourselves as we really are.

Ask God to give you this insight, but don't stop there. Ask yourself penetrating questions that will reveal your real values.

What are your problems?

Are you putting God first in your life? Is this reflected in your prayer life, Bible study and support of God's Work?

What about your relationship with others? What is needed to improve your marriage, solve your child-rearing problems or resolve a dispute with someone?

Where do you need to grow in the fruits of God's spirit? What bad habits or sins have you been justifying? Could it be you've subtly developed a negative, fearful or prideful attitude that you're not aware of?

Don't be satisfied with general, vague answers to these questions. Be thorough in your self-examination. Be specific. Be brutally honest. See yourself as you really are (II Corinthians 13:5).

Use God's Word as a guide in seeing yourself. Study subjects that are relevant to your situation. Select articles and booklets from our publications that will help you see God's will.

Don't overlook prayer

Prayer is a vital dimension in fasting. Throughout the Bible, prayer and fasting are mentioned together.

The ancient prophet Daniel humbled himself before God and prayed for the sins of Israel: "Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" (Daniel 9:3). As Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel appeared to him to give him understanding of

a pivotal vision—the 70-weeks prophecy (verses 20-27).

Daniel confessed his people's sins (verses 5-19). He was honest and straightforward about the long list of wrongs against God.

You, too, should confess your sins to God. Don't cover them up or pretend they're not there. Ask for strength and deliverance from your difficulties. God says He has mercy on those who own up to their sins (Proverbs 28:13).

By properly combining the tools of meditation, fasting, Bible study and prayer, you can gain humility, knowledge of God's will and strength to overcome sins and weaknesses.

When you have gotten close to God, ask Him for the blessings that you or others need. In doing so, remember to thank God for the many blessings you already have. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

So what about it? Are you convinced that fasting is worth the effort? Do you see the tremendous value—the wonderful blessings—that could be yours?

Think about it: Is there anything more important than being close to God? Is there any greater purpose than doing God's will now, in this life, and entering God's Kingdom at the return of Jesus Christ?

Ask yourself: What is holding you back from drawing closer to God? Are you having problems proving where the true Church of God is? Are you unwilling to act on the truth that you already know because you fear the opinions of others?

What about the Sabbath? Is your fear of losing your job keeping you from obeying God's test commandment?

Do you lack faith in God's promises to help you? Are you having problems praying, overcoming smoking or controlling your emotions?

No matter what the problems, fasting can help you overcome them and enjoy the abundant life that Jesus promises. □

A Future for **ANCIENT SODOM?**

The people of the ancient city of Sodom were so wicked that the entire city was destroyed. The book of Genesis records that fact—but that is only part of the story.

By Michael Morrison

No one has found the ruins of the ancient city of Sodom. No one knows whether there is anything left to find.

The city, according to preserved accounts, was near the southern end of the Dead Sea, perhaps near the hill that has the Arabic name *Jebel Usdum*, which means “mountain of Sodom.”

Some think the city is now under the salty waters of the Dead Sea. That might be an appropriate place, for Sodom is dead. That is certain!

Why was Sodom destroyed?

Many people have assumed that Sodom was destroyed solely because it was filled with sexual immorality. It is, perhaps, a logical assumption—if the only part of the story they’ve read is the Genesis account. But the Bible has much more to say about Sodom than that.

Let’s start, not with the Genesis account, but with a conclusion found in a book written nearly 1,000 years later. The prophet Ezekiel compared the people of Jerusalem with the people of

Sodom: “Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away” (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

God, through Ezekiel, tells us why Sodom was destroyed. Sexual immorality isn’t mentioned explicitly here. Let’s now look at the account in Genesis for the explicit abomination of the Sodomites.

The story begins when God and two angels appeared to Abraham. Abraham had an unusually close relationship with God, and was called God’s friend (James 2:23). On this occasion God told Abraham and his wife Sarah that they, though old, would have a son (Genesis 18:9-14).

Then God shared with Abraham another reason He and the angels were in the area: “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me” (verses 20-21).

Sodom’s reputation had gotten

so bad that God Himself came down on a fact-finding mission.

Abraham, perhaps concerned for his nephew Lot, who lived in Sodom, bargained with God until God agreed to spare the city if only 10 righteous people could be found there (verses 24-32).

Then two angels, who appeared as men, went into Sodom and were met by Lot, who insisted that they spend the night in his house.

“Before they lay down, the men of . . . Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally’” (Genesis 19:4-5).

The men were so intent on immorality that, even though the angels blinded them, they still tried to find the door (verse 11).

The angels warned Lot to take his family and leave the city. His sons-in-law refused to leave, and even Lot was so reluctant that the angels had to force him, his wife and two daughters to go (verses 12-16).

In perhaps the worst punishment any city has ever been given, God destroyed Sodom completely (verses 24-25).

A completely corrupt society!

Were Sodom and Gomorrah the worst cities in history? Certainly not. Immorality, including homosexuality, was common in other cities of the ancient world, yet God didn’t destroy them. Ezekiel even told the people of ancient Jerusalem that they were *worse* than Sodom (Ezekiel 16:46-52).

Sexual immorality was only one aspect of Sodom’s sins. Foremost among those sins was the attitude of pride, of complete rejection of the Creator’s guidelines, of complete tolerance of, even insistence for, all varieties of moral experimentation. The com-



Lot and his daughters escape, but Lot's wife looks back at the destruction of Sodom, depicted in this woodcut by 19th-century illustrator Gustave Doré.

Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago . . . it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you' ” (verses 20-22).

The Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon did not repent of their idolatry. If God had sent Jesus to them in earlier ages, they would have repented. Jesus knew what would have prompted them to repent, yet God had not done it.

Why? Wasn't God trying to save them? Apparently not. God didn't even send a prophet to warn them. Instead, He allowed Tyre and Sidon to be punished by conquering armies.

And what about Sodom? Jesus gave another comparison: “And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you” (verses 23-24).

If Jesus had performed miracles in Sodom, the city would not have been destroyed. Jesus implied that the people would have repented. They would have real-

plete corruption of Sodom's society had affected both young and old, rich and poor, from every quarter of the city. No one thought it wrong to be lazy or gluttonous; no one cared about the poor and needy; no one thought any thing or any behavior “wrong” (verses 49-50).

Sodom's sins sound similar to parts of the Western world today. But this article is not written to repeat what Ezekiel knew long ago. This article is to tell the rest of the story—the *future* of the ancient Sodomites.

Why Jesus forewarned cities of His day

Jesus spent a large part of His ministry in Galilee, a region

north of Jerusalem. He went about all the cities and villages, teaching and preaching and healing every sickness among the people (Matthew 9:35).

The people wanted to be healed, but most of them didn't want to repent; they didn't want to change the way they were living. Instead of changing their life-style, they criticized Jesus (Matthew 11:16-19).

So Jesus compared them with some non-Jewish cities—first some Phoenician cities, then Sodom:

“Then He began to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you,

ized the folly of thinking they could decide for themselves what was right and wrong.

But it didn't happen. God wasn't, at that time, trying to save them. That is the clear implication of Jesus' comments.

Is God fair? Most certainly! God knows that the people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom (and most everyone else, for that matter) have not yet been given an opportunity to really understand what He wants of them. They were not told to repent or to change their life-style. But they will be told.

When?

Ancient Sodom has a future

Jesus referred to a "day of judgment" that the people of Sodom would be in. The people of Tyre and Sidon would also be there, and the people Jesus spoke to, and the people of ancient Nineveh and the queen of the South (Matthew 12:41-42).

Jesus gave a few examples of various peoples of various ages—representative of all mankind—all of whom will "rise up in the judgment." Just as surely as all have died, all will again be made alive (I Corinthians 15:22). Everyone will be brought back to life in a resurrection from the dead.

"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [the

first to be resurrected], afterward those who are Christ's [faithful Christians] at His coming [when He returns to earth]" (I Corinthians 15:23).

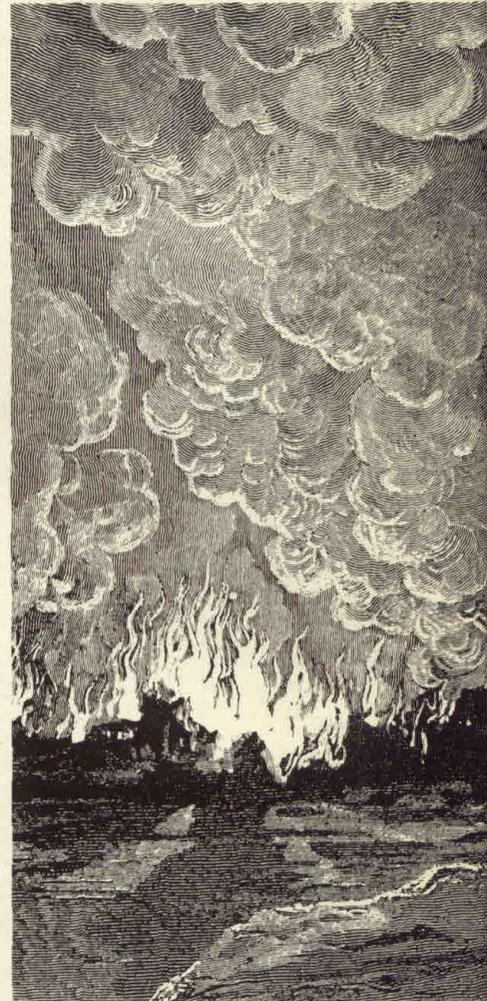
More than one resurrection!

Revelation 20:5 mentions a "first" resurrection. Those who are resurrected when Christ returns—those who are Christ's—will rule with Christ for 1,000 years (Revelation 3:21, 20:4). During this 1,000 years of righteous rule, the good results of living in harmony with God's laws will be made obvious.

Revelation 20:5 also tells us that there will be another resurrection: "But the rest of the dead [this includes the people of Sodom] did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5). So the ancient people of Sodom will live again—in a resurrection at the end of the Millennium!

The prophet Ezekiel tells us more about this resurrection. Although his vision was about the ancient Israelites, it also applies to the people of Sodom, for they will all rise in the same resurrection to judgment, said Jesus.

God states: "I will . . . cause you to come up from your graves . . . I will cause breath to enter into you . . . I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you



shall live" (Ezekiel 37:12, 5-6). This is a resurrection to mortal life. The people are made—a second time—of flesh and blood. They are physical, not spiritual.

And what happens then? "Then you shall know that I am the Lord" (verses 6, 13). "I will put My Spirit in you" (verse 14). They did not have God's spirit before; they did not have an opportunity for salvation. But in this resurrection, they will be given God's spirit, taught about God and allowed, for the first time, to know the Lord.

Their first chance for salvation

Revelation 20:12 tells us more: The apostle John, in vision, "saw

God knows that the people of Sodom (and most everyone else, for that matter) have not yet been given an opportunity to understand what He wants of them. God didn't even send a prophet to warn them.

the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

The people of Sodom will be in this judgment. And by what standard will they be judged?

By the "books" or, as the original Greek says, *biblia*—the same word we use to describe the Bible. God will judge them the same way He judges His people today: by evaluating how well they live by His instructions (I Peter 4:17).

Some people have assumed that this judgment consists of merely reviewing the peoples' sins and pronouncing a punishment. But "judgment," as used in the Bible, is actually a process, not just the conclusion. God's people today are being judged that they might *avoid* punishment (I Corinthians 11:32).

God is merciful, always willing to forgive if people repent. The ancient peoples, since they didn't understand who God is or what He wants, never had a chance to repent. So they will be given an opportunity.

That can't be done instantly. It takes time. For example, Jesus said the queen of the South would "condemn" the people of His generation (Matthew 12:42).

To be able to do that, she must first learn about what is written in the "books." She'll need time to learn about God's laws and His mercy, time to learn what the ancient peoples did and time for her to come to a conclusion.

She, by understanding, will then be able to repent; indeed, Jesus implied that she would. She will be forgiven, and given her chance for salvation.

Like the queen of the South, everyone in this resurrection will be given time—time to learn God's way, and time to show

whether they will choose to live God's way. That is the opportunity God's people today are given—one that those ancient peoples did not have.

In this resurrection to judgment, the "Book of Life" will be opened. The people who will have flesh-and-blood life will be given a chance to conform to the attitude and behavior God requires for His gift of eternal, spiritual life.

People of Sodom will repent

The people of Sodom will learn that there is a God who has something to say about the right way to live. They will be taught

Jesus referred to a "day of judgment" that the people of Sodom would be in. The people Jesus spoke to would also be there. Some people have assumed that this judgment consists of merely reviewing the peoples' sins and pronouncing a punishment.

that right way, and many, probably most, will repent.

After all, they would have repented if Jesus had performed miracles in their day. But Jesus did not; God wasn't trying to save them at that time. But He will be in this future time, and, with most, He will be successful.

What the ancient peoples lacked—an understanding of what God wants—they will be given in this future resurrection. They, like the queen of the South, will learn about the miracles Jesus performed, and they will surely repent when face to face with their Judge.

Repentance is the most critical part. God won't give anyone eternal life who insists on living the

way that produces misery. People have to change from the way that hurts, to the way that helps.

The people of Sodom will have to change their attitude—from pride to humility before God—from rebellion to obedience—from rejection of moral standards to acceptance of them.

If they change, they will be forgiven, and they won't have to be destroyed a second time. They will not experience the "second death" described in Revelation 20:14.

The people of Sodom nearly 4,000 years ago didn't have a chance for salvation. So God, who is perfectly fair toward

everyone, will give them one—but only one—opportunity.

They, like most people, will understand the lessons of history much better after it's all written. When they are resurrected, they'll be able to see the results of thousands of years of disobedience. They'll be able to compare the temporary pleasures of immorality with its long-term pains. And they'll learn about the 1,000 years of righteousness, and its peaceful, satisfying results.

God knows that most people will choose His way of life—when they are given a clear choice. This is explained in our free booklet *Is God Trying to Save the World Now?* Write for your free copy. □

Jesus Christ promised, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

If you want to be among that group—if you want to help administer the government of God in the world tomorrow—and if you want to enjoy the blessings that real meekness will bring you now, in this life—you need to express this important fruit of God's spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

How? The Bible tells!

Moses and Israel

"I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!" said God to Moses, speaking of ancient Israel. "Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation" (Exodus 32:9-10).

What would *you* have done, had God been talking to *you*?

The Israelites had caused Moses no end of trouble. Even after seeing God's power firsthand, they lacked faith. They complained all the time. They showed no respect for Moses as their leader. They had rebelled before and would again. Now God proposed to destroy Israel, and start a new nation through Moses.

What would *you* have done?

Moses didn't think about himself. He cared more about Israel's future. He refused to take a self-righteous stance. He relegated himself under God's power and rule. He told God he was willing to give up eternal life if God was not willing to spare Israel!

"Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Oh, these people have sinned a great sin . . . Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written' " (verses 31-32).

Is it any wonder the Bible tells us, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3,

Fruits of the Spirit

How to Inherit the Earth!

One of Jesus Christ's best-known promises says the meek will inherit the earth. But what does it really mean to be meek?

By Norman L. Shoaf

King James Version)? What about *you*? Do you know what it means to be meek? Do you see why you should be?

Saul forgot

Contrast Moses' state of mind with that of Saul, whom God later placed over Israel. When Saul was about to be proclaimed king, it seems he thought so little of himself that he hid among some equipment and had to be sought before the ceremony could be held (I Samuel 10:21-24).

But Saul lost this viewpoint. He began to think more of himself than he should have. He stopped letting God work through him and started taking matters into his own hands, directly disobeying flat commands from God. God had to reject him as king!

Samuel told Saul: "When thou wast little in thine own sight wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? . . . Because thou hast rejected the

word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (I Samuel 15:17, 23, KJV).

Why Lucifer fell

A meek person cheerfully submits to being ruled by God and by those God places in power.

But a person who tries to exalt himself and advance his own selfish cause will not submit to being ruled. Thus he cannot learn to rightly rule others—and he forfeits any chance of serving in God's government, now or in the coming Kingdom of God!

That's exactly what happened to the archangel Lucifer.

When God created him, Lucifer was "the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." God told Lucifer, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created" (Ezekiel 28:12, 15).

Eons ago, God gave Lucifer charge over one third of all the angels, and put him on earth to prepare the earth for human life. But Lucifer decided to reject God's rule over him. He turned his angels against God, too. He decided to mount an

assault on heaven itself! God repelled the attack, casting Lucifer, who became Satan, back down to earth. Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

God told Lucifer: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'" (Isaiah 14:12-14).

God found iniquity in this once beautiful and brilliant but now fallen archangel (Ezekiel 28:15). Why? Because "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor" (verse 17).

Lucifer became proud and vain. He lusted for more than God had chosen to give him at the moment. He resented God's rule over him. Self-righteousness and self-importance entered his heart. He decided to take matters into his own hands and lashed out in violence.

Lucifer lost the quality of meekness! He thus disqualified himself from being used further by God. He set himself to always oppose God and so can never have a part in God's government. He lost the privilege of ruling over the earth and is soon to be replaced by Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). No one filled with Satan's nature qualifies!

Jesus was meek

God sent Jesus to earth, in part, to die and pay for the sins of humans, all of whom, from Adam on, have followed Satan's way instead of God's. Jesus came willingly—meekly!

Paul told the Philippians—and, by extension, all God's people today: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus cared more about our interests—about *your* interests—than about His own. He felt no self-importance. He cheerfully fulfilled His part in God's plan—and thus made salvation possible for you.

Isaiah wrote of Jesus: "Surely [confidently, trust-

ing God to make everything work out right] He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter . . . He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth" (Isaiah 53:4, 7, 9).

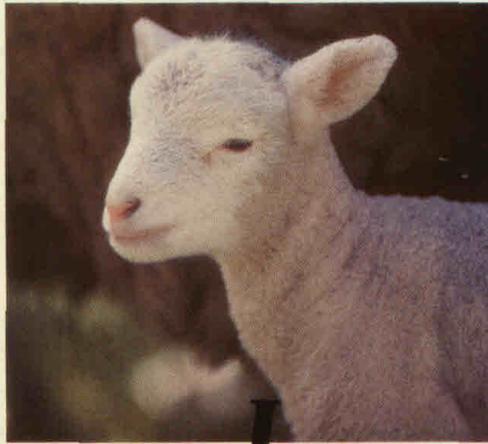
That is the spirit of meekness!

Express meekness in your life

How can you express the godly character trait of meekness in your own life? Let's look at what the Bible says about a few specific cases.

Have you had a misunderstanding with someone? What should your approach be? "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another" (Colossians 3:12-13).

Peter Miller, Image Bank West



Jesus allowed Himself to be led "as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). He cared more about your interests than about His own.

Does someone you know have a fault? Should you condemn and judge—or recall the mercy God and Christ have had on you? Paul advises, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1, KJV).

Do you often find yourself in arguments with others? Have gossip and slander brought you grief? Titus 3:2 says to "speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (KJV).

Should you argue religion with others, or try to force your beliefs on other people? No, but Peter writes, "Be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15).

What should your basic motivation toward life be? "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).

Get the point? Meekness, one of the beautiful fruits of God's holy spirit, should be basic to all your inner thoughts, and should be behind every action you take.

Being meek means you won't think more of yourself than you should. It means you will place the best interests of other people above your own selfish desires. It means you will be gentle and humble toward other people. It means you will cheerfully submit yourself to God's government and to God's purpose in your life.

Being meek means you will inherit the earth! □

COMING IN THE GOOD NEWS

◆ Why You Need the “Other Helper”

If Jesus were still on earth today, wouldn't your life be a lot easier? You could talk and counsel with Him personally when you have problems. But Jesus said it was for our benefit that He left the earth! Why?

◆ How to Know What God Wants You to Do

Impatient about something? Feel like taking matters into your own hands? Here is how to know God's will.

◆ When You Need A Friend . . .

Do you feel lonely and discouraged, or even isolated from other Church members? It's time we come to grips with this very real problem in the Church of God today!

◆ Helping Your Child Face Peer Pressure

Here is encouraging advice from a father and grandfather on how to deal with the monster called “peer pressure”!

◆ Last—But Not Least!

Why should you exercise self-control? How does self-control anchor all the rest of the fruits of God's spirit? Our nine-part series concludes.