

The

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Good News



Pentecost-
the Feast of Firstfruits

The Good News

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EDITOR IN CHIEF: **Herbert W. Armstrong**
MANAGING EDITOR: **Dexter H. Faulkner**

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR: **Dennis R. Robertson**
ASSOCIATE EDITORS: **Scott Ashley, Sheila Graham**
ART DIRECTOR: **Gene Tikasingh**

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PUBLISHER: **Herbert W. Armstrong**
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COVER: Bundles of freshly cut grain stand waiting, much as God's chosen ones—His firstfruits—will at the coming of Christ. Photo by H. Armstrong Roberts.

Letters

Minicomments

MINICOMMENT on "MINI-STUDY": GREAT!! Thanks.

F. J. Louwinger
The Hague, Netherlands

Thanks to you all for having the *GN* magazine once again. It's just what we need in times like these . . . [And] what a pleasure and help the "Ministudy" was. Some of us sat down and [did] it the same as we used to do the B.C.C. [Bible Correspondence Course] . . . What a wonderful way to come in direct contact with God's Word.

Frank Harris
Ballarat, Australia

GN a pleasure

What a great pleasure it is to once again have the *Good News* magazine to read . . . I wish to express my sincere appreciation first to God for inspiring Mr. Armstrong to create *The Good News* and to Mr. Armstrong for his labor in perfecting it, then to each member of the staff who must work long hours, in many instances, to make this beautiful quality magazine available to each of us.

Mrs. T. Van Orsdol
South Pasadena, Calif.

We have thoroughly enjoyed the February issue on the family . . . Also enjoyed the "Close-Up" article on one of our own Church members, Mrs. Esther Arenz. We hope you will continue this type of article, so we can get to know some of [the] Church members around the world.

Thanks too, for the "Ministudy." This is so helpful for our individual Bible study, but also as a family Bible study.

Mrs. William Elley
Farnam, Neb.

Our latest *Good News* magazine arrived in the mail yesterday. After dinner my wife and I sat together on the sofa, slowly paging through each article. Again the issue is packed with timely, relevant and deeply meaningful articles.

Alex and Eva Peck
Pasadena, Calif.

PERSONAL

BY HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG

This Feast of Firstfruits corrects the most universally believed false doctrine in Christianity! What is the TRUTH?

What Does PENTECOST MEAN to You?

DO YOU KNOW what is the most universally believed *false* doctrine in the Christian world? God's *annual* Sabbaths were given to keep the true Church in the true knowledge of our Maker's master plan.

The one original, yet persecuted Church of God, stands alone in keeping these annual festivals. And it *alone* has that basic UNDERSTANDING.

That universally believed false doctrine is that all humanity is LOST — consigned to an eternally burning hell — unless they “get saved” by accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior *NOW!* They say that we, NOW, are in the *ONLY* day of salvation — that when Christ returns to earth the door to salvation will be CLOSED! Unless you are “saved” NOW, you are LOST!

Just last night I heard the world's most famous evangelist tell a massive audience (on television) that we, now, are in the *ONLY* day of salvation — that tomorrow may be too late. Many are frightened into “making their decision for Christ.”

That false belief implies that when Jesus Christ returns in supreme POWER and GLORY, He will be helpless to save you! On the contrary God's Word says Jesus is coming, 1) to restore the government of God, setting up the KING-

DOM OF GOD, and 2) to call ALL people still living to salvation and eternal life.

What is the TRUTH?

What, then, is the TRUTH that the Feast of Firstfruits is given to teach us?

It teaches us the very opposite of what this world's “Christianity” believes.

It teaches us that we of the TRUE Church are the “FIRSTFRUITS” *ONLY* — the FIRST to receive salvation through Christ. It teaches us that *all others* are NOT YET CALLED. It teaches us that as Jesus said, “NO MAN CAN come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44).

But isn't God the Father desperately trying to draw *all* humans NOW? Emphatically *no!* — *not yet!* Was God unjust? No! Never!

Notice what God did, right after our first parents rejected God as their RULER, their Revealer of knowledge and as their Savior with the gift of everlasting life.

“And the Eternal God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, *lest he put forth his hand*, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Eternal God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned

every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:22-24).

Thus, ALL MANKIND WAS BARRED from access to God or receiving eternal life — all but the comparative FEW God would *specialy* call for some performance leading to the Kingdom of God.

In effect, God said to MANKIND through Adam and Eve: “You have made your own decision. You have rejected me as your God and your Ruler, Revealer of knowledge and Savior. Therefore I have cut you and the whole world that will spring from you off from all contact with me. Go and *form your own governments, your own religions*, your own production and dissemination of knowledge. However, I shall reserve the prerogative to specially call into my service such as I shall choose, *for a part* in preparing for the Kingdom of God. Otherwise, the world that will develop from you is CUT OFF from all contact with me for 6,000 years, when the Kingdom of God shall be established, ruling ALL NATIONS!”

Far from trying to get every human saved spiritually during the 6,000 years, God CUT OFF all humanity — save the comparative FEW He would specially call.

THAT IS WHY Jesus said, “*No man can come to me*” during this 6,000-year period, *except God the Father specialy calls them* — and He has called this few *not just* for salvation, (Continued on page 28)

Now It Must Be Revealed How the Worldwide Church of God Began

The Church of God was founded A.D. 31, by Jesus Christ. It has continued through every generation. But how was the present era raised up? Here are vital facts of which many now in the Church are unaware.

By Herbert W. Armstrong

NOW IT MUST BE revealed — the true story of how Jesus Christ prepared His servant far in advance — and then called him in poverty, hunger and threadbare clothes — of the struggle to raise up this era of God's Church in financial stress and on sheer living FAITH!

As a young man in my 20s, I had been eminently successful in the advertising profession, earning while still in my 20s an income comparable to \$150,000 a year in today's dollar value.

I was then unconverted and proud

— ambitious and full of self-confidence. I did not then know the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, Lord and Master and coming King!

The living Christ well knew that before He could effectively use me, I had to be humbled, subdued, CONQUERED by Him. I know now that God had guided my life *from the beginning*, preparing His future servant for His purpose — even as He had prepared Moses, Job, the apostle Paul and others, in advance. Even in my birth, rearing, early business life, He was guiding me.

Of English ancestry

I was born of humble but substantial and stable parents of solid Quak-

er stock. Our ancestors had emigrated from England with William Penn, a hundred years before the United States became a nation. They had settled in Pennsylvania, succeeding generations moving to Ohio, then to Indiana where my father was born, then Iowa where I was born.

My forebears are traced in a family genealogy, maintained by a special foundation, back to Edward I, and from there back to King David of ancient Israel. Thus it has been revealed to me that in fact I am of the House of David. I was reared in a Protestant Sunday school, but at age 18 I lost all interest in religion. God's time to call me to His service was not to come for another 16 years.

The living Christ well knew that before He could effectively use me, I had to be . . . CONQUERED by Him. I know now that God had guided my life *from the beginning*, preparing His future servant for His purpose.

But in "the last days" when Christ comes in power and glory, the *House of David* through Christ will rule the whole world. Is it not consistent, then, that Christ has called one of the *House of David* to reestablish God's government in His Church? And, since Christ will rule "with a strong arm," might it also be significant that He chose one named "Arm strong" to reestablish the government of God in the Church in these last days?

Ambition sparked early in life

At age 16, my first summer vacation employer away from home sparked in me the flame of AMBITION to make something of my life — and with it, the willingness and determination to work hard and pay the price of success.

At age 18, a book called *Choosing a Vocation* put me through a self-analysis, leading to choosing the advertising profession.

I had developed an intense driving energy. I studied nights, learned by experience daytimes.

By age 25 I was well established with my own office in Chicago's downtown Loop as a successful publishers' representative in the banking field. My business contacts were with officers of the nation's great banks in South LaSalle Street and in Wall Street, New York — and with presidents and board chairmen of many Midwest industrial corporations.

I was married at age 25 to the wife I was later to know God had selected for me — a marriage that lasted 50 years — until death did part us. She was the help I needed.

But the great flash depression of 1920 — when I was 28 — put my major clients (industrial corporations) into receivership. Ninety percent of my income was lost in the depression.

Conquered by Jesus Christ

I had had a business training to be needed later in the Work of the living

Christ. And I had become proud. God did not make His calling known to me at that stage. First, Christ took me through a humbling experience. By 1926 I was in Portland, Ore., reduced to poverty, hunger and threadbare clothes. Then a pair of supremely important challenges came. God's time had come to call me.

I was taken through the humiliating experience of finding that everything I had believed, or perhaps better stated, taken for granted, about God and the Bible, was proved wrong. By spring, 1927, my mind had been swept clean of what religious beliefs I had carelessly assumed, and Jesus Christ had come into my life. Self-confidence was replaced with a living FAITH. I was in desperate financial straits. I had taken a real beating. I had been CONQUERED by Christ Jesus, repentant, baptized and a totally new life begotten within me.

In the spring of 1927, I was baptized and had received the supreme gift of God's Holy Spirit. God's TRUTH was being opened to me. God had now called me and put me in His Work.

I was used by Jesus Christ, in 1933, in raising up the parent Church of the Worldwide Church of God. I had hitchhiked — or walked — to hold services in a one-room country schoolhouse eight miles west of Eugene, Ore. My one pair of shoes had holes in the soles. I said, in a sense of humor, "I have a suit for every day of the week — and this is it!" My wife was wearing her younger sister's cast-off clothes. Our children had been sent to school hungry. It was then the midst of the Great Depression of 1929. Church brethren took up a collection to buy me a new suit of clothes.

By living faith

But now GOD was using me! I had started on the air at cost of \$2.50 per week for radio time. The money

came BY FAITH! Everything, from that time, came by living FAITH.

God gave miraculous answers to fervent prayer. The sick were being healed. Cancer victims were healed.

No operation could have started smaller. But God blessed it, and it grew at the rate of 30 percent per year for 35 years.

In 1947 God had used me in founding Ambassador College — on sheer FAITH! The Church of God began to GROW — steadily.

I had to realize God was dealing with me in principle, as He had dealt with Job. God allowed Satan to take away every material thing Job had, to bring him to God — but then after Job was humbled and brought to repentance, God DOUBLED Job's former wealth — and he had been the greatest and wealthiest man in the East.

Also my experience resembled that of the apostle Paul, in principle.

And now, after 46 years since the founding of the present era of the true Church of God, the ever-living Christ continues to give us severe tests of faith.

As God's Church, then named the Radio Church of God, began to grow, God led me to incorporate it in such a manner that I would always be UNABLE to profit financially from its growth.

From small beginnings

It is doubtful whether any institution in human history started from as humble and small beginnings. When GOD starts something on His power alone, it is BIG from the beginning. For example, the creation of the UNIVERSE — the creation of the earth. But when God starts something through humans, it usually, like the grain of mustard seed, starts the very smallest and most humble, and then grows as the spiritual character of the humans develops.

I had rejected a "salary" of \$3 per
(Continued on page 24)

BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS

"Wolves in sheep's clothing," Christ called them. Will you be misled by a soft and fleecy exterior? Here is help from God's Word to see through the disguise.

By Robert E. Fahey

God reserves His strongest condemnation for those who claim to be speaking for Him, but are actually leading people away from the true God.

"Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, *I am against them* that prophesy false dreams . . . and cause my people to err by their *lies*, and by their *lightness*; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all . . . for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts, our God.

"Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly *forget* you, and will *forsake* you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence; And I will bring an *everlasting reproach* upon you, and a *perpetual shame*, which shall not be forgotten" (Jer. 23:25-40).

Christ's warning

Throughout His ministry, Jesus Christ gave repeated warnings to avoid false teachers. In the Sermon on the Mount He cautioned:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their *fruits*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:15-20).

Christ said we should look at the *fruits*. What fruits should we exam-

ine? Obviously not those in which a wool-covered wolf could most easily pass himself off as a sheep. We should expect a false prophet to attempt, with all his heart, to look like a *real one*, or what he thinks is a real one. As Paul wrote:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if *his ministers* [Did you know Satan has ministers?] also be *transformed* as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:13-15).

We should expect a warm and ready smile. We can be confident of an outward expression of accommodation — at least at first. We should also expect humility — lots of humility.

So those "fruits" are untrustworthy. What next?

Perhaps we should consider "good works" such as missionaries, converts, hospitals, drug clinics or free meals for vagabonds and vagrants?

Surely if they preach in the name of Christ, *that* is good fruit, isn't it? No, not necessarily, according to Jesus Christ. Right after telling us to *beware* of false prophets and to look at their fruits, He continued the Sermon on the Mount by saying, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Referring to Christ as the Lord is not conclusive proof of good fruit. Doing what God says is.

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied *in thy name*? And *in thy name* cast

out devils? And *in thy name* done many wonderful works? [preaching, hospitals, missionaries] And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you.*"

Startling as it may seem, many people who have used Christ's name, who have accomplished many beneficial works, often at great sacrifice to themselves, were never recognized by Him as His servants. They used that name *falsely*! He continued, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (verses 22-23). Instead of doing the will of the Father, they did iniquity.

What is iniquity?

The word *iniquity* in Matthew 7:23 was translated from the Greek word *anomia* — literally *against law* or *lawlessness*. Christ said that He never knew and would send away those that work *lawlessness*.

False prophets find it troublesome to define sin. If forced to do so, they usually try to express sin as vaguely and unspecifically as possible. They reason that there is no point in losing followers by condemning what their congregations enjoy doing or bluntly refuse to change. Most will even refuse to consider the Bible definition in I John 3:4, "Sin *is* the transgression of the law." Leader and layman alike want *nothing* to do with God's law. Under any circumstances. Period.

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets," the founder of Christianity said. Yet most people that come *in His name*, claiming He is Christ, think exactly that. He continues, "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot [not one little bit], will pass

from the law until all is accomplished [everyone is keeping it].

"Whoever then relaxes [let alone *breaks*] one of the least of these commandments and teaches men [to do] so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17-19, Revised Standard Version).

God's law expresses God's will. It shows the way He wants us to go. He does not want His law relaxed, diluted or slackened. He wants it kept fully, from the heart (Rom. 6:17-18).

In spite of Christ's words, many will claim that they are "free from the law" or "the law is done away." The Ten Commandments, to some, need not be kept. If that be true, it would mean the "faithful" are free to have another god before God the Father. They may take His name in vain, crush His holy Sabbath underfoot, steal, lie, commit adultery and covet until they turn bright green — all without guilt or sin. No wonder Christ will tell them "depart"!

Yet that is the ungodly doctrine many have been taught.

Laymen are not without some blame. "This is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:9-10). For pastors of godless flocks, it is easier to change the message than the members. Many nonbiblical observances are now called "Christian" for that precise reason.

Yet the main responsibility God lays at the door of the false prophets.

"There is a *conspiracy* of her [the nation's] prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

"*Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and the profane [God has set some days as Holy Days]; also, the first tenth of all income is holy to Him [Lev. 27:30], neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean*

[God did not intend all animals for food] and have *hid their eyes* from my sabbaths [God says the seventh day — why does anyone attempt to keep the first?] and I am profaned among them" (Ezek. 22:25-26).

Legalistic?

Occasionally, a minister who upholds the law is accused of being legalistic. Every minister should be known for godly mercy. But mercy does not mean relaxing the law of God. It means God granting forgiveness for the repentant, those who acknowledge their sins and strive to turn from them.

On the other hand, God denounces the false prophets for not showing the right, but unpopular way. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned from their evil ways and from the evil of their doings" (Jer. 23:21-22).

When God created mankind, He knew we would need a lot of forgiving. That is why Christ was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). Christ's blood covers our sins, not when we wallow in sin (knowingly continue to break God's law), but when we forsake sin, ask His free gift of forgiveness and begin to obey Him.

False prophets don't give the straight story about sin. They give their own ideas about what sin is. A true minister knows that God defines sin, not man. And the law of God is that definition (Rom. 3:20).

Inside the Church

Not all false prophets come from outside the Church. Some were formerly faithful servants of God, but swerved from the "straight and narrow" path.

The apostle Paul called the ministers of Ephesus together during his last visit to that ancient city. He knew that false prophets would soon descend upon the flock of God. So he alerted the leaders to the dangers that both pastors and flock would face.

"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you [overseers], to care for

[feed] the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." These wolves would mostly come from outside the Church.

But worse, "*and from among your own selves* will arise men speaking perverse things [distorted doctrine] to *draw away the disciples after them*" (Acts 20:28-30, RSV).

Faithful pastors protect the flock from those who would spoil them. But some of those called and ordained in God's true Church would covet Christ's sheep. So they would *turn* from the teachings and the teachers they had originally acknowledged. Then set up their own government, with themselves at the top. That is *treason*, one of the most vicious attacks the flock of God must endure.

A faithful minister would always submit to those leaders whom Christ chose, trained and put in authority over His Church. Christ's words are especially clear. "A person who speaks on his authority is trying to gain glory for himself. But he who wants glory for the one who sent [commissioned] him is honest, and there is nothing false in him" (John 7:18, Good News Bible).

Christ faithfully honored, obeyed and glorified the Father who sent Him. The apostles of Jesus Christ, whom *He sent* into all parts of the world, responded to Him in the same spirit of honor and respect. They in turn were to ordain other men to various Church offices under themselves to see to the spiritual needs of the people as God added to the Church.

Except for Judas, all the apostles remained faithful to the One who sent them. But that was not true of some of the individuals whom the apostles ordained and sent. Paul said some would turn from serving the needs of Christ's flock under the government of God to serving *their own interests* instead.

Peter's warning

Peter alerted the Church of the same danger. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers (Continued on page 26)

Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged." Yet, just a few verses later in that same Sermon on the Mount, He said, "You shall know them by their fruits."

The first statement is clear. But at the same time, the second implies that some form of judgment or assessment takes place in the mind of a Christian. What is the real difference between these two concepts? The answer to that question underscores one of the toughest challenges to a Church member. It focuses on a fundamental quality of character essential to every begotten son of God!

Commanded not to condemn

When Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1), the term obviously referred to judgment in the sense of condemnation or pronouncement of guilt. It is plain in the verses that follow that no one is really capable of such judgment because we *all* are blinded to some degree by our own shortcomings.

Regardless of accomplishments in this life, no one has the prerogative to sit in spiritual judgment of others. Indeed, Jesus Himself did not come to judge (condemn): "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). The word *condemn* in this verse is derived from the same Greek word that we

have already seen in Matthew 7:1.

There are a number of reasons why no man should sit in judgment (condemnation) of another. One important reason is expounded by the apostle Paul in Romans 2. The chapter begins with the same thought as Matthew 7:1. "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whosoever you are that judges . . . for you that judge do the same things." The term *judge* refers to condemnation as shown in the context. This is again the same Greek word as used in Matthew 7:1.

As the apostle discusses the subject, he says in verse 4, "Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

This verse directly relates to II Peter 3:9, which says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Space to repent

It is a natural reaction to lunge quickly into accusation when we see the wrongdoing of others, all the while being blinded to our own shortcomings. But as we point the finger, we fail to remember that God is aware of all and has chosen not to intervene at the moment. He is literally giving us space to repent.

In addressing the Thyatiran church in Revelation 2, God spoke of "that woman Jezebel" and mentioned her sins and pollutions within the church. He said, "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not" (Rev. 2:21).

The point is obvious. God has given us all "space to repent."

God is not willing that any should perish. It is not our right to condemn a brother. In so doing we might be invading that space to repent that God has personally dealt to each person. Besides, all of us have some type of beam in our eyes that prevents us from seeing clearly.

Develop ability to discern

Many reasons could be cited for not condemning another. The scriptural teachings are quite clear. But by the same token, Christians have

By Leslie E. Stocker Jr.

Judge Not

It is not our right to condemn a brother. In so doing we might be invading that space to repent that God has personally dealt to each person.

an obligation to use their minds wisely and develop their judgment to the point of discernment.

Paul wrote: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

"And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2).

This, of course, requires constant study and contemplation of the Bible as well as the world around us. Paul found people of this mind when he visited Berea, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Notice. These people were not cynical or sneering, neither did they sit in condemnation. Rather, they received the apostle "with all readiness of mind." They were open-minded with respect to all that he presented. Then they went about searching the Scriptures to see if everything spoken and done was in accordance with the Word of God. They obviously sought to follow the apostle Paul as he followed Christ (I Cor. 11:1).

These Bereans were "more noble." They would have quickly followed the admonition with which Paul enjoined the Thessalonians, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21).

In keeping with Romans 12:1-2 and I Thessalonians 5:21, the Bereans were using a form of judgment that is *discernment*. This type of discernment — or judgment — is precisely what was described by Jesus Christ when He said, "You shall know them by their fruits." The context of Matthew 7:16-20 makes that plain.

Spiritual perception

We can also see the discernment illustrated as spiritual perception in I Corinthians 2:14-16: "But the nat-

ural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

"But he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

"For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

The spirit of God in us is intended to increase and sharpen our ability to *discern*.

The contrast between judgment that is condemnation and judgment that is discernment is colorfully illustrated by a rule held by one Church family. That rule prohibits the children from ever calling each other liars during some disagreement or argument. One child might say that the other has told an untruth or a falsehood, but not a lie.

You see, to call another person a liar is to imply premeditated resolve to deceive and bear false witness. It automatically implies guilt and malice of heart.

On the other hand, errors about fact occur frequently. People will often relate what they *perceive* to be the truth. But through incomplete information, poor communication and human distortion, many falsehoods are spoken in true sincerity and honesty.

To note such a falsehood or untruth is simply to deny its validity. To claim that it is a lie, however, is to imply guilt and violation of the Ninth Commandment. Such judgment belongs only to God!

Not an easy challenge

The challenge to us as Christians is not an easy one. During times of crisis, we have to resist the natural inclination to point the finger and imagine the worst. Yet, at the same time, we must use discernment, which is founded upon the Word of God.

To achieve this seemingly impossible balance one must exercise unswerving faith and confidence in God to accomplish all that He says He will.

David, whose life was beset by many harsh trials, came to have greater faith in God rather than condemning others with an avenging attitude. In the 112th Psalm, he described that man (person) who truly fears (respects and trusts) God:

"Light rises in the darkness for the upright; the Lord is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

"It is well with the man who deals generously and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice.

"For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered for ever.

"He is not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.

"His heart is steady, he will not be afraid, until he sees his desire on his adversaries" (verses 4-8, Revised Standard Version).

From the New Testament we understand exactly what a converted Christian desires for his enemy, namely repentance and a change of heart. To accuse and condemn would be inconsistent with that desire.

In one of his last messages to the Church at large, Peter said, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (I Pet. 4:17).

God the judge of all

It is true that God is the judge of us all. But *we* — within the house of God — must exercise discernment to keep our individual lives close to Him.

Earlier in the above passage, Peter cautions us: "And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins.

"Use hospitality one to another *without* grudging" (I Pet. 4:8-9).

To *discern* right from wrong, to give space to repent, to show love, to have faith that God is fully aware of and working with each individual — to do *these* things represents one of the toughest challenges for Christians of *all* times! □

Effectiveness in Prayer

In today's busy life it seems that there is never enough time to do all the things we want or need to do. When there is not enough time to go around, what do you neglect?

By Leroy Neff

Now, as never before, true Christians should be drawing near to God in prayer.

Yet some members of God's Church confess they have not prayed for days, weeks, months or even years. But why wait until it is too late for help? "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa. 55:6).

Just what is prayer?

Prayer is simply *conversing* or *talking* with God. And it is an important part in the worship of the Great Creator.

Prayer gives us an opportunity to express our thanks to God for the many blessings we are given in the physical and spiritual realm.

We have an opportunity in prayer to ask God for help, for guidance, for strength. And very importantly we may ask the same things on behalf of others (intercessory prayer).

Prayer is the completion of a two-way conversation between God and man. God speaks to us through His Word, and we speak to Him through prayer.

A condition of effective prayer

Before coming to God in prayer we must repent of sin. If we are living in sin and doing nothing about it, God will turn a deaf ear to our prayers — until we change our attitude (John 9:31, Isa. 59:2, Ps. 34:15, 17).

God will not hear sleepy-time, ho-hum prayers either.

"Ye shall seek me, and *find* me, when ye shall search for me with *all your heart*" (Jer. 29:13).

A half-hearted approach, with wandering thoughts, has no promise of ever being heard or answered by

God. We ourselves do not listen to someone who is rambling, half asleep and not making much sense.

The apostle James puts this thought beautifully: "The *effectual* fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

The Greek word translated *effectual* is *zelos*, elsewhere translated *zeal*, *ardor*, *fervent mind*. The word *fervent* is *energeo*, elsewhere translated *active*, and the source of our English word *energy*. So a prayer should have zeal and energy.

Don't worry about your physical surroundings, your problems or your limitations. Throw off those physical bonds and realize that the Great God of Heaven is listening.

Jesus' model prayer

Some people run out of things to pray about very quickly. One reason for this is they think prayer is only for asking, usually for themselves. But is that all it is? Consider the model prayer Jesus gave to His disciples.

To begin with, Jesus said to pray "after this *manner*" (Matt. 6:9; a parallel is also in Luke 11). He did not mean one should simply memorize and use these words over and over. He had just finished telling His disciples not to use vain repetitions (verse 7). The Living Bible words it, "Pray along these lines," and the Revised Standard Version, "Pray then like this." So Jesus' prayer is simply an outline of categories to pray about.

"Our Father." First of all, we note the words are, "*Our* father," not "*my* father." We are reminded there are others who share this family relationship. Then we need to be fully aware it is to that Great God on His throne

in heaven to whom we have come, yet to One who truly is our loving Father, with great concern for each child.

Still making sure we are properly mentally oriented, "Which art in heaven." God's throne is presently (still) located in heaven, perhaps beyond the farthest star, a distance so vast we are unable to comprehend it. And yet spiritually He is not far from any one of us (Acts 17:27).

Honor and praise to God

"Hallowed be thy name!" Our first request is that honor and praise be to God. We may here ask God to help each of us to hallow, respect, hold in proper awe, the Great God and His name. Then we may petition, "thy Kingdom come." As we see the myriad evils and troubles in this present world, we should be able with more fervency, day by day, to pray for the soon coming of God's Kingdom from heaven to earth.

We may also pray that the proclamation or announcement of that soon-coming Kingdom might be soon preached in all the present world so that this age will end and that new age dawn.

"Thy will be done on earth." God only intervenes in this present world as it suits His purpose, primarily in events that will lead to the fulfillment of prophecy. We may certainly pray for that. We are also exhorted to pray for civil rulers so that we may live at peace as much as is possible here and now.

Another major area where we desire God's will to be done is in His Church. We ought to pray for the leaders in the Church, various business and administrative personnel, the college and magazine staffs and,

of course, the worldwide ministry. Pray also for the effectiveness of the broadcast, the telecast, the literature and other means by which the Gospel is proclaimed.

"Give us this day." This request for daily bread is not just for food alone. And notice it is not for *my* daily bread but *our*. God wants us to be concerned and pray for other people and their needs too!

Lastly we should pray for ourselves and our needs, and that we might do those things that God wants us to do.

Ask for God's guidance in your life, in all the things you will do for the day. Pray that you might overcome yourself, Satan and the world in every right way.

Pray for forgiveness

"Forgive us our debts." In Luke's account this is worded, "Forgive us our *sins*." Here is an opportunity to ask God to forgive us the sins we commit out of ignorance or weakness, as we determine not to commit those same sins again.

And let's not forget the forgiveness of the sins of others as well. We ask God to forgive us "as we forgive" others. Such forgiveness is one of the major points of Christian doctrine.

"And lead us not into temptation." The word *temptation* might better be translated *sore trial*. What does this have to do with the much tribulation through which we must enter God's Kingdom? (Acts 14:22).

There are two main ways we learn spiritual lessons. One is by experience. Some say it is the best teacher. No doubt it is the most effective. But it is best to learn from God's instruction and save yourself unnecessary pain and suffering.

But God says, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:10). It is necessary for God to try all of us to find out in advance what is in our heart or mind, and whether or not we will follow the right ways in all circumstances. He may allow circumstances where our attitudes or lusts will become evident — *sore trial*. Actually it is not God who tempts us, but our own lusts (Jas. 1:13-14).

Matthew 26:41: "*Watch and pray,*

Three Times a Day

If you were an engineer at a power plant and had to solve the problem of a sag in a utility line, the solution would be obvious. Add a third pole as a prop, and the power flow would be uninterrupted.

This same problem can occur spiritually. For example, most Christians pray in the morning. That's the first pole. And almost all Christians pray at night. That's the second pole. But around midday the spiritual battle can rage the strongest. For increased spiritual strength add a third prayer.

You say you pray all day long — when you drive to work or while you do the dishes? That's not what I mean! It's fine to walk with God, but I'm talking about prayer on your knees, giving God your undivided attention.

Most of us eat three meals a day to be nourished physically. The Bible

example is prayer three times a day for proper nourishment spiritually.

David, "a man after God's own heart," set us this example. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17). Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed" (Dan. 6:10). This was his habit.

You can get off course by the middle of the day. The Holy Spirit needs to be replenished. Without this extra prayer you tend to forget that you are in a spiritual battle, and that you must frequently relate what you are doing to God's standards.

Since you began reading this, your mind has come up with at least half a dozen good reasons why you can't pray three times a day. Get on your knees and ask your Creator to help you see its importance for you personally. — By Ron Lohr □

that ye enter not into temptation." We may also pray that God will not consider it necessary to lead any of us into the great tribulation (Luke 21:36), or that "hour of trial that is coming on the whole world" (Rev. 3:10, RSV).

Ask God's protection

"Deliver us from evil." Notice this is not a prayer for *me* but for *us*. This word *evil* is translated more properly *evil one*. We here may ask God's protection from Satan and his demons.

We have seen that the first three requests relate to God (His name, Kingdom and will) and help us get our mind on God and His activities. The last four relate directly to our needs (daily bread, debts, temptations, protection). In conclusion we again direct our thoughts back to God, our Creator, because He has all power now and forever to bring these things to pass. And our final "Amen" affirms again the content of our prayer, saying in conclusion, "Be it so."

Other instructions

We are told to pray for all saints (Eph. 6:18). To "pray for us," that is

the ministry (I Thess. 5:25), to pray for all men including rulers and other authorities so that we might live at peace (I Tim. 2:1-2). Samuel, the prophet and judge, knew that it would be a sin for him if he did not pray for God's people (I Sam. 12:23).

After all these things, if you still think you need instruction on how you should pray, read in the Scriptures how other people prayed.

You may find a prayer list helpful as an aid to memory of things, circumstances, people, problems you want to pray about.

Jesus Christ said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23). What does it mean to ask in His name? It means we ask by His authority and by His permission.

We should come to God in prayer with faith and confidence. "Without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Jesus also said, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye re-

ceive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). If we did ask contrary to His will how could we have any faith that He would fulfill our request?

And if we ask only things that we selfishly want, God may not answer that prayer! "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jas. 4:3).

But if an otherwise acceptable prayer is not immediately answered, does this mean that God has gone back on His word? Absolutely not. God has not told us *when* He will answer. His answer for the present may be "No," or "Possibly I'll do it later, because now is not really the best time for you, considering all the circumstances."

And He sometimes tries our patience, so we may develop more patience, trust and faith in Him.

But there is an old saying, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." The parable of the importuning (persistent) widow and the unjust judge was given to make this evident. See Luke 18:1-8.

"And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" (verses 7-8).

Form and posture of prayer

Where should we pray? Christ told us to pray in our closet, that is, in a private place (Matt. 6:6). We can concentrate better on our prayer and the Father, without distractions to interrupt. And if we pray in secret He will reward us. In search of privacy, Jesus and others prayed in solitary places in the out of doors, the desert, on a mountain top, on the flat housetops common at that time and in an "upper chamber."

Some ask what physical position we should be in when we pray to God. People have strange and mistaken ideas, such as holding their hands a certain way, or women wearing a veil. But the Scriptures describe prayers given standing, kneeling or prostrate with the head touching the ground. Sometimes the hands are lifted, though not always. But nowhere is there any mention of holding the hands with palms together

with the fingers pointed upward as on so many religious pictures or artifacts.

Some people, because of physical infirmity, can't kneel or in some cases even stand. God's ability to hear and to answer their prayers isn't limited by such circumstances.

However, the usual posture in the Bible for private prayer is to kneel on both knees. Public prayer was in a standing position, with exception, notably Solomon's public prayer at the dedication of the temple (I Kings 8:54). In one unusual example David went to the tabernacle to pray after his request to build the temple was denied. On this occasion we read that David sat before God during his prayer (I Chron. 17:16-25).

To ask for our daily bread implies we should pray *daily*. But the Scriptures give us other evidence beyond this. David prayed three times a day (Ps. 55:16-17) at "evening, and morning and at noon." Daniel also prayed three times a day (Dan. 6:10). This apparently was related to the hours of prayer at the tabernacle and later at the temple, the hours of 3 p.m., 9 a.m. and 12 noon. You will find other references to these times in Acts 3:1 and 10:30.

Other scriptures on this subject instruct us to continue "instant [or constant] in prayer" (Rom. 12:12). In Ephesians 6:18, we are told we should pray always. In the words of Paul in I Thessalonians 5:17 our prayers should be "without ceasing." How can we pray this way? Silently, throughout the day, while we go about our daily activities. As Nehemiah did as he stood before King Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:4).

Avoid extremes

But avoid extremes. Some people in their zeal and enthusiasm pray more than they should. They become practically prayer-and-Bible-study hermits! Children and spouses are neglected while they spend long hours "*getting* in their prayer time." They are not *giving* as they should in outgoing concern for their family and the rest of the world. On the other hand, take heed to this appropriate saying: Seven days without prayer makes one *weak*!

The Bible nowhere states how long we should pray each day — just like

the financial offerings we give and the frequency or length of our fasting. God leaves it to us to decide, and watches to see what we will do.

Jesus when He knew He was going to be crucified within 24 hours, prayed for a solid hour, then went back to continue twice more (Matt. 26:38 and following verses).

On another occasion, when Jesus was about to make the important decision of selecting the 12 apostles, He prayed all night (Luke 6:12). So it should seem obvious that five, 10 or 20 minutes a day before our Creator God is insufficient.

God has promised help

Though we may stumble around in our prayers, God has promised to help us. After all, He inspired Solomon to write, "The prayer of the upright is his *delight*" (Prov. 15:8).

We learn from Paul: "Likewise the [Holy] Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself [itself, KJV] intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26, 27, RSV).

"Let us therefore come *boldly* [with confidence, RSV] unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

If we had an audience with a great ruler, or person of great influence on this earth, we would be very excited and probably feel privileged. Think how far greater it is to be able to come into the presence of God, the ruler of the vast universe.

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise" (Ps. 100:4).

"But in every thing by prayer and supplication with *thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

When you enter God's throne room, remember that Jesus Christ is seated at His right hand. Twenty-four great spirit beings are also there, with cherubim, seraphim and an innumerable host of angels as well. The driving force of the universe is listening. Pray with energy and zeal. □

‘And this Gospel shall be preached...’

Matthew 24:14

Sermon Summaries from Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God

A marathon is a special kind of race. It gets its name from the historic endurance run by a Greek soldier in 490 B.C. who, after making four trips to request help, ran from the village of Marathon to Athens, a distance of more than 22 miles, to report a crucial victory in a war against the Persians. After tremendous exertion, he delivered the message and fell down and died.

A marathon is no 50-yard dash. It is a long, grueling, torturing endurance run of usually 26 miles, 385 yards. A runner's primary goal: not to come in first, but to just finish the race. Everyone who finishes is a winner.

I participated in a 20-mile marathon during the 1978 Feast at Fresno, Calif. You learn a lot when you actually go through an experience like that. I want to share with you a number of spiritual lessons and analogies from that run.

The apostle Paul compared the Christian life with running a race in Hebrews 12:1-2 (Revised Standard Version): “Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [referring back to chapter 11's examples of righteous men and women of the past], let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

I don't think the apostle Paul had in mind a 100-yard dash where only one is the winner.

A marathon, like the Christian life, requires a tremendous amount of endurance (as we just read in Hebrews 12), because you're out there for hours (or years) going at it.

The apostle Paul used this analogy because the marathon was something the Corinthians were familiar with. There are many lessons to be learned from Paul's analogy.

Motivation

There is much pain when running a marathon. And unless you concentrate on your goal of finishing the race, you're going to let that pain get to you, and you'll think: What am I doing here? I'm going to give up and quit! And many runners do just that. Often when they have only a few more miles to go, they quit. A marathon runner must be extremely motivated to achieve the goal. And motivation — a desire to take and

maintain action — is just as important spiritually.

One of the most important things a runner can do before entering a marathon — especially God's spiritual marathon — is count the cost (Luke 14:26-29). Running a 20-mile race is not something you do on the spur of the moment. Being baptized and entering the Church is not something that is taken lightly either. There should be careful thought and detailed examination as to why you aspire to enter the race. And once it's started, there should be no turning back.

Training

The one element that often makes or breaks a competitive runner is training. Loss of sleep or lack of exercise can destroy a promising career. The same is true of the spiritual competitor.

“Every competitor in athletic events goes into serious training. Athletes will take tremendous pains for a fading crown of leaves. But our contest is for an eternal crown that will never fade. I run the race then with determination. I am no shadow-boxer. I really fight! I am my body's sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself be disqualified” (I Cor. 9:25, Phillips translation). For fear that because of lack of training you won't finish the race, you watch your diet, make sure you get your sleep and above all actually get out and run, jog, pile up the miles to build up your muscles and your endurance (breathing efficiency, capacity of heart and blood vessels).

Without enough sleep, proper foods, a regular exercise program and hour upon hour of running to build endurance (or praying to build faith and confidence) you're not going to perform as well. You'll get bogged down, discouraged and in a bad attitude.

There is uncertainty involved in training too. Can you win? Can you finish the course? Will all the hours of effort be wasted in the final minutes of the race? In God's Church, we don't know how much time is left. Often it seems like

Christ will never return. A world-class runner would not let negative thoughts disrupt his training or his race. Neither should a Christian, who has a promise from God that if he endures, he will win.

RUNNING THE SPIRITUAL MARATHON

Proper equipment

A third requirement is proper equipment. All a mar-

There should be careful thought and detailed examination as to why you aspire to enter the race. And once it's started, there should be no turning back.

athlon runner needs are good shoes with arch supports, socks, briefs and shorts. When you're running 20 to 26 miles, you're making 20,000 repeats of the same motion, which can easily cause a blister. Spiritually, we're told, "Let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely" (Heb. 12:1).

By the same token, you can't wear something real loose either. The biblical expression "gird up your loins" refers to that. When men wore robes they would gather the robe together and cinch it up with a belt, out of the way for running or fighting. Ephesians 6:13-14: "Take [put on] the whole [spiritual] armor of God . . . having girded your loins with truth."

Competition

I went to services in the morning, and they announced the marathon for that afternoon. I barely had time to get home and back. I'd eaten a fairly light breakfast, and I grabbed a handful of dried Granola, drank some apple juice and took off.

We got to the track, and guess how many were there to run the marathon? Fifteen! Out of about 6,000 at the Fresno Feast. That's significant too, because the same thing is true in a spiritual marathon, isn't it? God says, many are called and few are chosen. One of the organizers of the marathon led the first lap to show us the way. Jesus Christ is our pacesetter. In running this spiritual race with endurance, we look to Him.

We all ran the first lap at the same pace, at about 8½ minutes per mile. Into the second lap, I came to a sobering realization. I started getting tired and experiencing some pain. In spite of counting the cost in advance, I thought, I'm not going to be able to finish. Spiritually, that often happens to Christians after being baptized.

I had two choices — either keep up the pace until I just couldn't make it any longer and then drop out, or slow down and make sure to finish. My goal was not to try to beat anybody, but to finish the race. So I slowed down. Had I tried to compete with the guys up front, it would have prevented me from learning my own capabilities and limitations. And He says to us in I Corinthians 10:12 to compare yourself with others is unwise. Sometimes you have to slow down in order to make it through a trial.

At times a muscle just above my right knee would begin to cramp, and I would have to walk for a while, which is a very humbling thing to do. But it takes humility in God's way of life, too, to maintain your own pace even though you see others advancing beyond you and some passing you up. But if someone else is ordained as a deacon or elder and you're not, that has nothing to do with your race. You're not in competition with other people.

Periodic nourishment

Also extremely important in a distance race is periodic nourishment. It's like a Christian being fed spiritual nourishment. When running in 80-plus degree temperatures,

which is a dry heat, your body loses fluids. Though I drank a quart of orange juice and eight cups of water during that race, I lost eight pounds.

There were hydrants along the course, supposedly with water, but they turned out to be dry. Those can be compared to false churches in the Bible (Jer. 2:13).

One of the women there kept my orange juice for me part of the race. But she kept saying, "I don't know if I can stay for the whole race." It's a comforting thing where Christ says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). Whenever we need that periodic nourishment, Christ is there any time of the day or night. II Corinthians 4:16 says the inward man must be renewed day by day.

Finishing the course

The marathon is a private race. You don't have spectators sitting in the stands cheering you on. After a while a runner gets extremely tired. So do Christians. It's not that they want to quit, but they long for Christ to return.

Keep in mind Galatians 6:9, "Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart." Just keep on going, one step after the other, keep moving toward the finish at a realistic pace.

I got down to the final lap and hadn't seen anybody for a long time. As I stopped for my last cup of water, I asked, "Is anybody else still out?" And they said, "You've got fourth place locked up if you finish." What? Fourth place! Out of 15 runners?

One said: "So many people have come by here and got their cup of water, and that's the last we see of them. They just kind of quietly drop out." Tragically, that happens in God's Church. People don't say anything to anybody sometimes. Those people have taken their eyes off Christ.

The fifth-place winner was a girl. She had gotten tired and thought she had to drop out, but with a sudden burst of energy she finished in the dark with a flashlight. That shows real motivation and endurance.

A cookout was held after the race, but I just wanted to get home, take a shower and drink a few quarts of orange juice. There's going to be a meal after the spiritual marathon too. But I guarantee you I'm not going to miss the great marriage banquet of Christ.

At services the next day, the names of the finishers were announced. It was a nice feeling. But how does that compare to having Jesus Christ look you in the eye and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" and having your own name announced at that wedding banquet? The rewards you receive are for all of eternity, not just for a fleeting moment here on earth. □

Larry Walker is a preaching elder in Oregon, responsible for churches in Bend, Coos Bay, Eugene and Roseburg.



'Only Your Ability Limits You'

The IBM Corp. has recognized Henry Wilson as one of its top sales representatives in Canada. Bernie Nikolai began his successful business career with the Xerox Corp. before moving to Micom Data Systems not long ago. And John Martin is president of Empress Pearls, a corporation that employs several hundred salespeople.

These men have something important in common — they are all graduates of Ambassador College.



Henry Wilson

"I can only praise Ambassador College," says Henry Wilson, a 1967 graduate. "I could never be doing what I'm doing without AC."

Henry sees no limitation in having a liberal arts education from Ambassador College. "Only your ability limits you," he added.

He believes that beginning undergraduate studies with liberal arts provides valuable time for personal development and deciding the course in one's life before going on to professional training.

"I believe that if you have the true foundation, God will direct and bless you and help you to be a success in life."



Bernie Nikolai

After winning an excellent position with Xerox following his graduation in 1975, Bernie Nikolai wrote a letter to express his gratitude for the training he received at Ambassador. He told of successfully competing with men who had more advanced degrees and years of experience in business administration.

What did he believe put him ahead of the crowd?

"The speech training I received at AC and Ambassador Club was invaluable," Bernie said. "If there is an apathy toward club and speech class this year, tell the students the training they will get may mean thousands of dollars per year more in their pocket."



John Martin

"To those of us who have God's Spirit, our potential even here and now in this day and age defies imagination!"

If you ask John Martin about the value of an Ambassador College education, he will be quick to tell you it is anything but limiting.

With a master's degree from Ambassador, John was admitted directly into a Ph.D. program at the University of Oregon.

"Ambassador provides a broad background of maturing experiences, which can help direct you to a specific field," John said. "A liberal arts education lends itself especially to careers involved with people."

Deputy chancellor Raymond F. McNair summarized the impact of Ambassador College training on the careers of its graduates: "When they are taught to live and respect not only God, but their fellowman, then they are bound to be successful citizens of this planet. Because of the fine example of many graduates of Ambassador College, their employers have often said that they will hire as many graduates of Ambassador as they can get."

Ambassador College
PREPARATION FOR SUCCESS!



Illustration by Brian Knowles

The Parables of Jesus: **THE KINGDOM**

We learned what parables are and why Jesus used them. We also saw that there are three distinct sets or groupings of parables, each having a different theme. Last month we began to examine the first six parables of the first group. We will conclude the study of the six parables about the Kingdom of God in this article.

By Brian Knowles

And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:21-23).

This parable had an especially significant meaning for the disciples. Jesus had told them earlier: "Fear them [the people] not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops*" (Matthew 10:26-27).

The Gospel message is the light that shines in a dark place. Christ was the Light of the world (John 1:9). Christians are to light the world with their example and with their *message* (Matthew 5:14-16). It is the *work* and the *duty* of God's Church to proclaim the mysteries of the Kingdom of God to all the world.

Christ illustrated this important point by showing that if a person bought a candle it would be ridiculous to hide it (or snuff out its light) beneath a bushel basket! So it is with the message of the Kingdom. It is not something for a Christian to clutch to his breast as a personal talisman; it is not his alone to have and to keep.

It is a message that must be proclaimed. As Paul said, "... woe is unto me, *if I preach not the gospel*" (I Corinthians 9:16).

God has revealed to His people truths that were kept secret from the beginning of time. Even the mighty prophets of old were not granted the same insight into the plan of salvation that lay members of God's Church may have today.

Even *angels* desire to look into some of the things we may readily know (I Peter 1:10-12). "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"But *God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit*: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Corinthians 2:9, 10).

Can we hide such truth and light under a "bushel"?

God forbid!

The grain of mustard seed

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and cometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matthew 13:31, 32).

Again, we use Matthew's account. This parable shows that the preparation for the Kingdom of God has the smallest of beginnings. Yet that ruling Kingdom will ultimately fill *all* the earth.

Daniel wrote: "And there was given him [Christ] dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).

The saints will inherit this Kingdom with Christ. "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (verse 18).

What a magnificent destiny! What incredible glory! This is the marvelous future of all true Christians — to inherit *all* things as a part of the universe-filling Kingdom of God.

But look how small it all began! In all of Old Testament times, only a comparative handful of people were called to inherit the Kingdom of God. Men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Daniel and David. Women like Esther, Rahab, Sarah and others.

It was not until shortly after the death and resurrection of Christ that substantial numbers of people were called to the Kingdom of God.

On the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, 3,000 people were added to the Church; and from then on it grew or contracted in varying degrees throughout the centuries (Acts 2:41-47).

At this present time, God is adding to the Body of Christ those who are called to eternal life. By the return of Jesus Christ, thousands upon thousands shall have been added to that

ever-growing multitude. It will then constitute the ruling Family in the Kingdom of God. Eventually, all Israel and every human being who has ever lived will have had an opportunity for salvation. God is not willing that *any* should perish (II Peter 3:9).

Think of all the *billions* of people who have ever lived and realize that most of them will ultimately be added to the Kingdom of God. When it's all said and done, that Kingdom will finally *fill the earth!*

How appropriate is the parable of the tiny mustard seed that grows into a large shrub or bush in which the birds of heaven find shelter. That tiny seed produces a plant many thousands of times its own size — and so it will be with the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom like leaven

"Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33).

The fifth parable illustrates essentially the same point as the previous one, but by a different analogy. The entire parable is contained in Matthew 13:33.

Leaven is the substance used to make bread dough rise by expansion. Most homemakers will be familiar with its qualities. Even those who have not used yeast, have at least made cakes, biscuits, pancakes or a similar product with baking powder, which is also a type of leaven. A *little* leaven is all that is necessary to leaven the whole lump of dough (Galatians 5:9).

So it is with the Kingdom of God. What God has started with a comparative few at this time will ultimately result in the entire earth being blanketed with the knowledge of God. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [nation]: for the earth shall be *full* of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

The seed growing of itself

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should

Concerning the Mustard Tree

Critics have taken great exception to Jesus' mention of the mustard plant and its seed in a parable. Much of the problem is a result of a lack of understanding of what Jesus actually said.

Not only has Jesus' own intelligence and understanding been impugned, but also the entire veracity and reliability of the Word of God — all because people have read their own ideas and experience into the Palestinian background.

The mustard plant was not the largest of trees, they have said, not even a tree at all. Certainly birds could not build nests in it, and its seed is not the smallest of seeds. But they are missing the point.

Although various other identifications have been proposed, most modern commentators agree that the plant of Jesus' parables was the ordinary black mustard, *Brassica nigra*.

It is an annual herb that grows up rapidly each spring from a tiny seed and reaches a height of three or four,

or even at times 10 or 15, feet. The leaves are large, the flowers are yellow, and the small, blackish seeds grow in linear pods.

One must not overlook that Jesus was speaking of an agricultural plant and a seed that was sown, not a tree.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed" (Matt. 13:31). This should be further obvious by the context in Matthew 13. The mustard seed parable follows the parable of the sower and the seed and the parables of the tares sowed by the adversary.

Matthew and Mark describe the mustard plant as an *herb* (not a *tree* as we think of trees), and the word signifies a garden herb, a cultivated plant.

Mustard, of course, was cultivated for its seeds, which were ground up for commercial mustard and also for its oil. Of all *garden* seeds, its seeds were indeed the smallest, and of all *garden* annuals, the grown

mustard plant was the largest.

Even today in Palestine the mustard is a common weed seen projecting far above the heads of the grain and exceeding in height all others in the field.

In autumn the stems and branches become hard and rigid and have more than enough strength to bear the weight of the small birds that are attracted by their fondness for the edible seeds.

It is not necessary to suppose that these birds actually built nests in the branches, as translated in the Revised Standard Version. The word (rendered in the King James Version *ledge*) simply means *light upon*. (Note that Mark 4:32 reads "under the shadow of it.")

People have claimed to have seen nests, however, built either late in the season or in the spring in a dead skeleton of a previous year's plant. This tree-like plant with a stem the size of a man's arm could justifiably be regarded as a tree. — *By Lawson Briggs* □

spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:26-29).

We do not understand the precise mechanism by which the Word of God produces fruit in human lives. But we certainly can plainly see that it *does*!

God's ministers are very much like those who plant seed and then care for it while it comes to fruition. Paul made such an analogy when he referred to himself and Apollos: "*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6-7).

God causes each member of the Church to grow in grace, in knowledge and in character. This growth is brought about by God's Holy Spirit

working in each individual life — not by the minister (husbandman). It is also *God* who adds to the Church as a whole (compare John 6:44 and Acts 2:47). *He* increases it quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

Those who are called in this age are the "firstfruits" of that great harvest of lives (James 1:18). And it is God who will reap His own harvest in the end of this age of growth.

Summary

This completes the first six parables, which were given to the people without explanation. Later they were all explained to the disciples: "...and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples" (Mark 4:34).

The predominant theme of these particular parables is plainly the *Kingdom of God*.

By these parables Jesus showed that most people who are called pass through several stages. Those who endure to the end — continuing to bear the good fruit of God's Spirit —

will ultimately achieve salvation and glory for all eternity.

The rest will be cast into a lake of fire, which represents their second — and final — death. But the righteous and the sinner will have to live side by side in this society like the grain and the weeds — that is, until the final harvest of souls at the end of the world. Then Christ's angelic servants will make a separation.

Also, it is God who gives the growth in His Church — both numerically and spiritually. And the example of the lamp under the bushel teaches us that the Church of God *must* preach the Gospel of the Kingdom as a beacon of light shining in a world of darkness.

In addition, we have learned that what God is starting so small in us now will eventually fill the entire earth! The Kingdom will grow and flourish to become millions of times its starting size.

What profound truths these simple parables contain! What glory is revealed in them! □

MINI STUDY

How You Can Bear the Fruit of the Spirit

HOLY SPIRIT

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

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

The Bible clearly tells us that the presence of God's Spirit in one's mind, or the lack thereof, is the sole factor that determines whether or not an individual is really a Christian (Rom. 8:9). Therefore, it is imperative that we understand just *how* the Holy Spirit is manifested in a Christian's life.

1. Did Jesus Christ clearly indicate that a person is known by his "fruits," or works? Matt. 7:20. In what way did He characterize Himself, His Father and their followers? John 15:1-8. Does God expect Christians to bear only a little fruit? Verses 5, 8.

This is the reason Christ calls and chooses His disciples — *to bear fruit!* "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Jesus was talking about *spiritual* fruit!

Jesus was not talking about a momentary sensual thrill or experience, coupled with a testimony that proves you are one of His. You must be *led* by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's (Rom. 8:14) and *bear spiritual fruit*.

But what will God's Spirit lead and guide you to do? What spiritual fruit, or *results*, does the Holy Spirit produce in one who is striving to do the will of God?

Fruit is classified as the edible, usable portion of a plant or vine. Christ is the "vine," and we — if we are His Spirit-begotten children — are the "branches." Our fruit is what we produce as Christians that is usable to Jesus Christ.

Now the *good* we produce comes from the vine — from Christ. Let's understand. A vine produces grapes, not thorns. An apple tree produces apples, not thistles. The vine determines what fruit should be borne. By this simple analogy we see that it is Christ who determines what kind of fruit we should bear as Christians. That fruit is a result of having the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5) at work in us as made possible by the Spirit of God.

2. How did the apostle Paul, who was inspired of Christ, outline the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian? Gal. 5:22-23.

The Holy Spirit imparts to you the traits of God's character. If we lack these characteristics in our lives, then we are likely to be producing many of the opposite fruits called the "works of the flesh." These undesirable works are mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. They include strife, division and various objectionable states of mind. All the works of the flesh contribute to the general misery and unhappiness of the individual, being thoroughly unsatisfying and unfulfilling.

3. What is the first fruit Paul lists? Gal. 5:22. Also notice Romans 5:5. Is love the basic characteristic of God's nature? I John 4:16. Is it the greatest attribute God transmits to us by the Holy Spirit? I Cor. 13:13. Be sure to read all of chapter 13. (*Charity* in the King James Version is an old English word for *love*.)

The first and *most important* fruit of God's Spirit dwelling in the minds and hearts of converted human beings is *love*. It is not just another form of human love, but the divine love that comes directly from God!

4. Is this the same love that will enable us to fulfill — to obey — God's law? Rom. 13:10.

The love of God is imparted to human beings by the Holy Spirit. Metaphorically speaking, God's Spirit runs down the riverbed of His law —

MINI STUDY

the Ten Commandments. It is expressed first of all in adoration and worship of God and literal *obedience* to Him; and then in outgoing concern, compassion, kindness and service toward our fellowman (see Matt. 22:37-40).

The original Greek word translated *love* in Galatians 5:22 is *agape*. In context it means devotedness or kindly concern — an intense desire to serve God and man. John said: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*" (1 John 5:2-3).

5. What is one of the principle ways in which God's love manifests itself toward one's neighbor? Turn to Romans 13:10 once again.

Did you notice that? The kind of love imparted by God's Spirit works *no ill* to anybody! Rather, God's love is just the opposite — *a deep concern* and an intense desire to serve, help and encourage others.

When you receive the Holy Spirit, the love of God is the first fruit you should begin to show. You should think or work *no ill* toward anyone, but rather learn, develop, think on *and act on* a profound concern and a fervent desire to serve God and man.

At first that's a tall order! But over a period of time — not all at once — you will begin to notice this wonderful fruit in your life as you *exercise* and *use* God's Holy Spirit.

The other fruits of the Spirit, mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, and which we will now begin to cover, amplify this basic characteristic of God's nature — the divine love given to those whom God begets with His Holy Spirit.

6. What is the second fruit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22? Is it God's will that we be literally *filled* with joy? Rom. 15:13.

Some people think of joy as the end result of some kind of self-gratification — a new toy, new car, new home, new baby. Physically speaking, when things go your way, the emotion you feel is joy.

7. Does the Bible give rich, deep meaning to this vital fruit of God's Spirit? Luke 15:7, 10.

What causes the angels to have joy? Is it something personal they receive? Is it adding to or gratifying the self in some way? It is none of these. Their joy is in seeing *others* receive something good for them — in this case as a result of peoples' repentance, which eventually leads to eternal Sonship in God's Kingdom. The angels delight in seeing human beings begin to learn the

way of life that will result in the good, lasting, permanent blessings of God's Kingdom.

8. What kind of joy does Jesus Christ experience? Heb. 12:2.

Christ was willing to suffer in anticipation of the real joy He would experience afterward in seeing fellow heirs born into God's Kingdom. This was made possible *only* through the sacrifice of His life.

Joy received from personal gratification is only temporary. The car wears out, the ball game is over, the baby grows up, the stomach empties. None of these physical things — though perfectly all right to enjoy for the time — can ever bring permanent, lasting joy. Christ and the righteous angels receive joy from the *outgoing giving of themselves to God and others!* This kind of joy lasts for all eternity and does not require constant bolstering and rejuvenating with more and more objects and things.

9. What is the third fruit that God's Spirit will manifest in a Christian's life? Gal. 5:22.

Peace of mind is what everyone would like to have, but what so few really possess. Many vainly attempt to achieve peace of mind through escape into alcohol, other drugs, bizarre activities, etc. A person who truly has peace of mind has greater control over his emotions — even in trying circumstances. He enjoys greater tranquility and calm, quiet serenity, together with orderliness of mind.

10. Does peace of mind come from keeping the Ten Commandments? Ps. 119:165.

No one who consistently breaks God's law can have real peace of mind. He will have fears and frustrations, as well as a guilty conscience. Notice how David's words apply.

Does a thief have peace of mind when he sees a police car driving by? Is he calm and serene? If he is a good actor, he may appear to be outwardly, but inside he is a seething caldron, hotly activated by his adrenal glands. Always he has to be prepared to run and escape or cover up in some way. This man can never find *real peace* unless and until he repents of — *quits* — breaking God's Ten Commandments, especially the Eighth!

The person who keeps God's law *knows* he is doing the right thing. His goals and purposes are stabilized. His life isn't fraught with frustrations, and he is not plagued by a guilty conscience. He is *at peace* with God, with himself and with his neighbor. He has "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). (*This subject to be continued next issue.*) — Prepared by Richard H.

Sedliacik □



Her eyes were alive with excitement and her face, although somewhat flushed by a flurry of activity, was fresh and radiant as she greeted me with an enthusiastic, "Hi! How have you been?"

Her hurried planning was in preparation for a dinner honoring those responsible for Outreach, a program designed to help others.

Although I had not seen the young lady, a longtime friend, for a number of months, my mind reflected back over the years to when this same individual was partially responsible for my understanding a little more clearly what was meant in Proverbs 18:24, "A man that has friends must show himself friendly."

On that day after Sabbath services the congregation was milling about, the emanations from multiple conversations gently creating a happy, pleasing atmosphere.

My young friend, looking somewhat defensive, approached me and complained, "This is the most *unfriendly* church I have ever attended!" I was taken somewhat aback, for there was obvious rapport and warmth expressed by the numerous handfuls of brethren talking in small groups around the room.

"What is it about the brethren that causes you to feel this way?" I asked. "Do they ignore you when you approach them? Do they walk away from you? Say offensive things to you?"

"What is it that makes them *seem* unfriendly?"

The obvious beginnings of a pout directing her lips, she snapped: "I'm not the kind of person who just

walks up to others and begins a conversation! I just sit there in my seat, over in a corner, sort of out of the way, and wait for someone to come over and be friendly."

A man — or woman — who has friends must show himself friendly! I thought it, but didn't say it. She needed friends. We all do, and I began to hurt a little for her plight.

Calling her by name, I suggested that many of the brethren probably desired to meet her, to get to know her, but because of a consideration and respect for the privacy of others might hesitate to approach her, feeling that perhaps they would be infringing upon that privacy. That maybe she *wished* to be alone or would not otherwise be so.

My comments seemed of little solace. Her feelings were hurt by what she assumed to be the unfriendliness of others. Right at that moment words didn't mean much.

Has that ever happened to you?

Regardless of station in life, from corporate executive to low man on the proverbial totem pole of life, until we begin to consider our audience more important than self, regardless of the size of that audience, we will experience difficulty in having friends. As the apostle Paul stated, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10). Or as in the Phillips translation, "Let us have real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit."

Now some months later, here she was — bustling about to give, share and bring pleasure to others — an exciting example of one who

put into effect the proverb. She launched into a campaign to *be* friendly — bouncing from person to person, group to group, expressing interest in the joys and traumas of others — and was suddenly pleasantly surrounded by friends.

We were obviously all in need of dramatic changes in our respective lives when the great Creator made each of us His friends (John 15:14-15).

And He did it, not by sitting and waiting for us to come to Him, but rather by *showing Himself friendly*! Remember, Jesus Christ reminds us, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you . . ." (John 15:16).

He made the first move! He initiated the introductory action. And that same Spirit, which He *is*, can perform the same service in each of us.

My friend started to realize how all encompassing is the principle revealed in Matthew 23:35. She found that many in the congregation were hungry, spiritually, and she helped feed them. That some were thirsty, and she gave them drink. That many, aching to break through the tenacious bonds of self-pity, were literally strangers, and she took them in.

She saw the need for each of us to be made well, and she contributed to that healing. And she saw the need for visiting those who had not yet emerged from man's society to our new way of life.

My friend now has many friends, because she showed herself friendly.

And it all started with, "Hi! How have you been?" — and really wanting to know. — *By Bob Smith* □

Old Testament Personalities

RUTH

During the time of the Judges, a man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi left Israel to dwell in Moab because of a famine. They had two sons, Mahlon and Chilion.

Now God had preserved Moab from the armies of Israel in the days of Moses and Joshua, because Moab was the inheritance of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. And though King Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, still Israel didn't fight against them. The Moabites had long ago rejected the God of Abraham and Lot, how-

ever, and worshiped the false gods Chemosh and Baal.

But after Joshua's generation had died, Moab's fat King Eglon exacted tribute from Israel through military force (Judges 3). He and his army held the upper hand for 18 years, until God raised up Ehud to defeat them in battle (Judges 3:30) about 1350 B.C.

Now, once again, there was a degree of peace, and Elimelech was able to leave Bethlehem, Judah, and live in this neighboring country east of the Dead Sea without fear of ill

treatment from its inhabitants.

However, before long he died, leaving Naomi alone with her two teenage sons. And in spite of careful upbringing by Naomi, they fell in love and married Moabite girls, which was contrary to God's instructions for Israel. Mahlon married Ruth (meaning a 'woman friend'). Chilion married Orpah.

More family tragedy

But tragedy struck the family twice more. Both of the sons died.

Naomi, in her grief, decided she



Illustration by Mike Woodruff

should return to Bethlehem. For the family had been gone more than 10 years, and the famine was over.

In spite of hardships, Naomi had set her daughters-in-law a wonderful example of courage, faith and obedience to her God. They loved her dearly. And when she set out to leave, they were so concerned for her welfare they decided to go with her to Israel.

Naomi advised them to stay among their own people, saying she couldn't provide either of them with another son of marrying age, and they would surely find happiness with a new husband in Moab.

Ruth leaves her homeland

Finally, after much embracing and many tears, Orpah heeded her mother-in-law's advice and returned to her people and her gods. But Ruth wouldn't be persuaded. She spoke those now famous words that melted Naomi's heart: "... Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you: for wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, paraphrased).

Naomi saw Ruth's conviction and simply stopped trying to change the young woman's mind. They continued on to Bethlehem, intending to live together on the family parcel of land.

Once inside the city, the townsfolk could hardly believe their eyes. "Was this really Naomi?" Having left Bethlehem more than 10 years before, with a husband, two sons and some financial means, she now returned a weary, impoverished woman with a Moabite daughter-in-law. This was anything but a triumphant return.

She said, "Call me not Naomi [meaning *pleasant*], call me Mara [bitter]: for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty" (verses 20-21).

Gleaning barley

They had returned to Bethlehem about harvest time, and since they had no food, Ruth volunteered to go into the fields and glean grain. It was the law in Israel that some of the crop should be left by the

threshers in the field for the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10).

So she took her place with the poor, following after the reapers, stripping the kernels of barley off the scattered stalks left lying in the fields. By pure chance (or was it divine direction?), she entered a portion of land that belonged to Boaz, a relative of Elimelech.

Boaz was in Bethlehem at the time, but when he returned he immediately spotted her as a stranger and inquired of his foreman who she was.

Upon learning this was Naomi's daughter-in-law, and knowing of the hardships they had suffered, he went over and welcomed her to his field. In fact, he told her not to glean in any other field. He suggested she stay among his own workers for protection. She could drink from his well and glean all she wanted.

Bowing, she asked why such favor. And Boaz told her he had learned of her hardship, of her loyalty to Naomi and her courage in leaving her own people to become one of Israel. He also expressed his confidence that the God of Israel, whom she had come to trust, would reward her for her actions.

Ruth humbly thanked him for showing such kindness to a foreigner.

Then Boaz, without letting on that he was a near relative of her dead husband, invited her to eat the noon meal with his reapers. This unprecedented hospitality showed the workers that Ruth, though a poor widow, was someone special to Boaz.

She ate, but carefully saved a portion for Naomi. And when she returned to the field, Boaz instructed his reapers to purposely leave stalks of grain for her — even handfuls — and to let her glean among the sheaves if she chose.

Naomi gets an idea

Ruth worked until evening, then threshed out her grain — nearly a bushel! She took it home to Naomi, along with the food from lunch.

Surprised at Ruth's good fortune, Naomi asked where she had gleaned. And when told the field belonged to Boaz, she exclaimed: "May God bless him, for he had not forgotten to be kind to both the living and the

dead! ... the man is a relative to us, one who has the right to redeem" (Ruth 2:20). For in Israel, if a man died without legal male heirs, the next of kin had the first right to purchase (redeem) his dead relative's property to keep it in the family. If the relative left a widow and no male heirs, his close kinsman was expected to take the woman for his own wife and raise up a legal heir for his dead brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-6).

So Naomi, when she saw the special consideration Boaz had shown Ruth, began to sense that God was possibly working something out in their favor. She told Ruth to continue in the fields of Boaz, working alongside his maidens. She wanted him to get better acquainted with Ruth, to see that she was a hard-working, virtuous and physically attractive young woman.

Ruth, always careful to be a good pupil, followed Naomi's advice faithfully. She gleaned with the other women in Boaz's field continually until the reaping was over. They undoubtedly saw one another often, in the fields and at the noon meal.

A proposal for marriage

By the end of the harvest, Naomi was convinced Boaz had more than just a passing interest in Ruth. Yet, he had taken no action toward redeeming the property and wife of Mahlon, her dead son. Naomi probably reasoned that his age held him back. For Ruth was much younger. Boaz, being a considerate man, probably felt she deserved a younger husband.

Naomi, however, felt sure that with the proper encouragement Boaz wouldn't hesitate. She contrived a plan. She knew Boaz was working late at the threshing floor, and this might afford just the right opportunity to nudge him toward marriage.

She took Ruth aside and had a mother-daughter talk. She explained her concern for the young woman, telling her she should be married and have the security of a home, a family and children. She also told her how this might be accomplished, rehearsing for Ruth the laws of redemption in Israel. She had observed Ruth's great respect for Boaz over the past weeks and asked her what she thought of becoming his wife.

Ruth evidently had no objection.

Naomi told her to bathe, put on perfume and her best clothing and go to the threshing floor. There she was to remain hidden until Boaz had stopped his work and had finished his meal and wine. He would then make a place to sleep on the straw, for during the threshing season he worked long hours and didn't bother going home at night.

After he fell asleep, Ruth was to go and lie at his feet, covering herself with the edge of his blanket. Naomi assured her that this was symbolic of his rights as a near relative and was proper in every respect. Boaz would know what to do from there.

Ruth left and did all that Naomi said. She quietly slipped under the blanket at Boaz's feet, careful not to awaken him. He had drunk a good portion of wine and had gone to bed feeling merry after a long day's work. He was sleeping soundly.

About midnight, however, he awoke, frightened by the sudden realization that someone was sharing his bed. He gathered his thoughts and sat up. Then, peering at the form near his feet, he realized it was a woman.

"Who," he asked, "are you?"

Ruth replied, "I'm Ruth your humble servant: spread your protection over me as your husband, for that is your right as a next of kin" (Ruth 3:9).

Boaz was elated and deeply impressed. He said, "Blessed are you of the Eternal, young woman; you have shown more kindness now than at the beginning, for you haven't sought a husband among the young men." Boaz immediately recognized this was a request to raise up an heir for Naomi to keep the line of Elimelech alive in Israel, but he also knew it was a demonstration of Ruth's affection for him.

He told her, however, there was a relative of even closer relation to Elimelech, who had a greater right than himself. If that relative wouldn't exercise his right, then certainly Boaz would. He would settle the issue before the city elders, for they knew by her example that she was a virtuous woman.

He told her to lie at his feet and rest until early morning, then she should slip away before the workers

arrived to avoid possible gossip about a woman being at the threshing floor all night.

So at daybreak they arose. He gave her all the barley she could carry and sent her home to Naomi. He waited to instruct the workers about the day's chores, then left for Bethlehem to settle the business regarding the family of Elimelech.

Boaz buys a wife

Ruth was anxious, as you might well imagine. For she hadn't known about the other kinsman. Who was he? What kind of man was he? There was a possibility she might end the day married to a man she had never seen. But because of her fine character and concern for her mother-in-law, she was willing to do what was required to furnish the family an heir.

Naomi told her to sit down and relax. There was nothing to do but wait patiently. Boaz, she knew, wouldn't rest until the business was settled.

Now it was custom for the men of Israel to conduct such business inside the main city gate. Here, in the presence of respected witnesses, contracts were made, debts paid, proclamations delivered and important events discussed. Here is where Boaz waited, watching for the other near relative to Elimelech.

When he saw him, he hailed him and mentioned there was business to discuss. He also gathered 10 responsible men who sat down to witness the proceedings.

Then Boaz explained that Naomi, the widow of Elimelech, had no heirs and now wished to sell her land. The near kinsman had the first right, but if he chose not to exercise the privilege, Boaz would. The kinsman, however, was quick to want the purchase for his own family. Since Naomi was past the childbearing age, he supposed he wouldn't be obligated to father an heir in Elimelech's name. Then his own sons could inherit the land.

But Boaz continued, explaining that Naomi's sons had been heirs to the land but died without children, leaving Ruth, the Moabitess, a widow to raise up a son in the family name. Therefore, the kinsman must also take Ruth as a wife for that purpose.

At this bit of news, the kinsman

immediately changed his mind. Why should he pay for land that would revert back to the inheritance of another family, especially through a son that would be half his own blood and half Moabite? It simply didn't appeal to him. He had his reasons, of course, but they were primarily selfish ones.

Boaz then proclaimed before the witnesses that he would buy the land. As kinsman with the legal right, he would also take Ruth for a wife to raise up an heir for her dead husband. So the kinsman took off his shoe, a custom that acknowledged the agreement. The elders pronounced the matter finished and pronounced a blessing on Ruth, saying God should give her children who would be honorable to Boaz and all Bethlehem.

A son is born

Boaz was a happy man with a happy bride. And God blessed her with a firstborn son.

Naomi no longer felt the reproach of having no heir for her husband. She looked upon the child as her own, caring for him as a nurse.

The women of Bethlehem praised Naomi and her daughter-in-law and blessed the infant son, saying, "may his name become famous in Israel." They named him Obed, meaning *serving*.

And God did bless Obed. For he later had a son named Jesse, the father of King David. This was the line of Judah that formed the legal genealogy of Christ. It was preserved during this period of history by the marriage of Boaz to Ruth, a foreigner from Moab. Boaz himself was half Canaanite. His father was Salmon of Judah and his mother was Rahab, a woman of great faith who in her youth had been a harlot at Jericho (Joshua 6:25, Matthew 1:5).

Ruth, though a foreigner to Israel, was a beautiful example of virtue, humility and service to the true God. For these fine qualities, she has often been cited as a type of what God's Church ought to be like — willing to forsake idolatrous kindred and lands to embrace and serve the only true God. God, in turn, has repeatedly shown that His blessings for such faith and actions will surpass one's greatest expectations. — *By Art Ferdig* □

Bob Rice describes himself as a very ordinary man. But this ordinary man has been part of the Ambassador scene nearly as long as there has been an Ambassador College. His contact with the Work of God goes back even further.

Mr. Rice first heard Herbert Armstrong in 1945 when he was a young man working on the family farm in Oklahoma. A neighbor asked him to come over to his house to hear *The World Tomorrow* radio broadcast. (At the time he had no radio of his own.)

'This is it!'

Mr. Rice was not particularly interested in religion, but something about Mr. Armstrong's explanation of the prophecies of Daniel clicked. "If I ever got religious," he promised himself, "there is no doubt about it. This is it!"

Not long after, Mr. Rice did get religious. He was badly injured in an accident while breaking in a horse, and the doctors gave him only a few months to live. At a funeral for a neighbor who had been killed in a car accident, Mr. Rice was shaken up by the preacher's sermon. He remembered Mr. Armstrong and tried to get in contact. He wrote for the booklet on baptism, and in 1948 he was baptized.

A move to California

Shortly afterward, Mr. Rice went to California. His health problems were becoming severe, and he wanted to be anointed by Mr. Armstrong. But the college had closed for the

Close-Up

summer, and it was some weeks before he was able to see Mr. Armstrong.

By this time he had begun to put down roots in Southern California. He obtained a job as an antique restorer with Hulett Merritt, the millionaire who owned much of the present campus, including the building that is now Ambassador Hall. At this time, of course, the college owned only two buildings, the Library and what is now the Library Administration Building.

Mr. Rice worked in the building that is now the TV studio. Mr. Merritt's hobby was antique dealing, and he had several houses filled with antiques. Mansions such as Manor Del Mar were just storage houses, Mr. Rice remembers.

Employment at Ambassador

In his spare time, he would do odd jobs around Ambassador College and got to know many of the early students well. He remembers those first church services when Mr. Armstrong would preach on the ground floor of the Library Building.

On Sept. 1, 1961, Mr. Rice came to work for Ambassador College full-time, first of all as an upholsterer and later as a custodian. He has been continuously employed by the college ever since.

Mr. Rice enjoys his work as a custodian. "Some people might think that a custodian's job is boring," he says. "Well, it does have its routine moments, but it can also be very dramatic. Take for example the recent sit-in and the other activities during the recent crisis in the Work. That gave us plenty of extra work."

Even though Mr. Rice's hours are irregular and often long, he still finds time to help many of his friends in the Pasadena area. He is married and has five children, three daughters and two sons. His wife Betty was one of the first graduates of Imperial High School. His younger brother Richard is director of the Mail Processing Center.

Mr. Rice loves his work and would be happy to work for Ambassador for another 30 years.

"I have never thought of myself as being special," he says, "but I have had the wonderful opportunity to work in this beautiful place for most of my life. I have tried to make the most of it.

"You know what has become one of my favorite scriptures?" he adds, with a twinkle in his eye. "That one in Proverbs about the spider who takes hold with his hands and is in kings' palaces" (Prov. 30:28). "That's me — the ordinary guy from Oklahoma who works at God's headquarters."—By John Halford □

Photo by Roland Rees



Must Be Revealed

(Continued from page 3)

week, prior to the start of the Worldwide Church of God. As for me and my family, my beginning in God's service was almost nil financially. It was, indeed, a Work of FAITH. I trusted God in faith to supply the need. We paid \$5 per month house rent. I had to pay \$2.50 per week at the radio station — *in advance* — before every broadcast. God was supplying the need as He promised (Phil. 4:19).

One Sunday morning dawned without even the \$2.50 for the Sunday morning broadcast. My wife and I knelt in prayer, asking God to supply the need. I was aroused from prayer by a knock on the front door. A man at the door said, "Here's my tithe," and dashed off, saying he had to hurry for an appointment.

Another Sunday morning when I did not have the \$2.50 on hand, no one came to the front door. Yet, in faith, I started walking to the radio studio. On the way a man I did not know handed me the needed money.

I could give you the story of many other similar occurrences.

But after I was actively in God's Work, although it had to be carried on in living FAITH, we never again had to be hungry, without food — although we often did have to eat beans and the least costly food. It was a financial struggle from the beginning. After moving to Eugene, we rented a house costing \$7 per month rent.

After two years, I was able to add a second radio station in Portland, costing \$10 per broadcast. Once, on starting to drive to Portland for the Sunday afternoon broadcast I lacked the \$10 I had to pay in advance. I stopped at Salem, Ore., for a 35-cent lunch, and somebody — I do not now remember who — handed me the needed broadcast money.

I was still going with one pair of shoes and one suit of clothes. But no longer hungry.

Good advice for a young man

When I was 19 years of age, a multimillionaire called me to his office. He was starting me out as an employee of his corporation, entail-

ing some long-distance rail travel. He wanted to give a young man some good advice.

"When you travel, always (when you can afford it) travel in a Pullman car. Always stay at the best hotel, even though it is well that you take their minimum-priced room. This throws you among the more successful people, and everyone we contact has an influence on us.

But when I had to stay overnight in Portland, or a year later in Seattle, Wash., I could not afford the best-quality hotel, so I stayed at second or third best. I always tried to live within my means.

A newspaper writer, in a story about the Worldwide Church of God, said he had learned that when royalty or overseas VIPs visited us in Pasadena, I did not take them to McDonald's or Jack-in-the-Box for lunch or dinner, but to Perino's (Los Angeles' best restaurant).

But royalty is accustomed to the best in quality, and it would be virtually an insult to take people of that stature to a lowest-price restaurant. If I had to fast without food a few days in order to afford to take such guests to the quality place to which they are accustomed, I would do it. I do take such guests to the type place they expect to be taken.

What would I have done, when I had to go to the lowest-price places myself and had only one pair of shoes, and one threadbare suit of clothes? Well, I did not have royalty or VIPs visiting me in those days. I probably would have been forced to find some way to avoid having to host them at all.

God promises to supply needs

In train travel back in the 1920s, '30s and '40s, I traveled often in day coaches on trains and ate at low-priced lunch counters. But GOD has promised to supply all our need (Phil. 4:19), and in the Work of God in these days certain things are *necessary* in order to serve God — and He provides what is needed.

I have never engaged in extravagance. Extravagance is defined in the dictionary as: "*extravagant*: exceeding the limits of reason, or necessity, extremely or exceedingly elaborate, profuse or unreasonably high in price."

The best quality of things may be expensive, but not extravagant.

The house in Pasadena, in which I have lived for some 13 years and is college owned, cost the college \$17,500.

At this point let me inject a little current news. Some of the dissidents who brought this civil lawsuit on God's Church spread the rumor that in fact this was not a suit against me or against the Church, but against Mr. Stanley Rader.

Of course, that is not true, for every effort in their power was made to TAKE OVER AND CONFISCATE THE CHURCH PROPERTY — to turn all management of the Church over to the court-appointed receiver, and they told the press it was brought against us because they claimed that both I and Mr. Rader had been "siphoning off millions of dollars every year from Church funds."

That wild and false allegation is so utterly false I have not considered it necessary to dignify it with a denial. Our Church membership have PROVED by their loyalty and financial support and loving letters that they know well such a thing is impossible.

A couple days ago Mr. Rader went in person to the deputy attorneys general, told them of this persistent rumor, and offered that if they would dismiss all charges against me and the three corporations, he would hand them complete records of all transactions involving him, on a silver platter.

They know well their charges of stealing millions of dollars are utterly groundless. But they replied that they cannot now afford to "lose face," by the admission that it is THEY, not us, who are guilty of wrongdoing. They said it would leave them "emasculated" — using that very word! Now they are going to try to make me move to a lower-cost residence and insist I travel, when I do, at something like third-class accommodations, etc.

So I am going to see that they learn:

1) That I own absolutely NOTHING, except the property in which my wife and I now live in Tucson, Ariz., until it is safe for me to resume residence on the college campus in Pasadena.

It is doubtful whether any institution in human history started from as humble and small beginnings . . . when God starts something through humans, it usually, like the grain of mustard seed, starts the very smallest.

2) That the Pasadena property and all in it belong to Ambassador College and cost only \$17,500 of Church or college funds.

Example of God's blessings

The very purchase of that property is an example of how God has been blessing us and His Work. When the college bought that property, Dr. and Mrs. Hal Lisman wanted to move from San Pedro, Calif., to Pasadena. They wanted this particular property, said it could be bought for \$37,500 — a bargain of bargains at that time. They offered to put in the \$10,000 down payment. We agreed that \$5,000 of their down payment could pay for five years' rent and the other \$5,000 could be taken off their income tax as a contribution to the college.

At the end of five years, they paid another \$10,000 for another five years' rent. When Dr. Lisman died, Mrs. Lisman housed eight girl students. When neighbors complained that the property was not zoned for taking in roomers, we had to move them out. Mrs. Lisman felt it was too large a house for her to maintain alone.

That was when I decided to live there. After the Lismans had paid \$20,000 of the \$37,500, it remained for the college to pay only the \$17,500. There was a certain amount of repairing, which was done with our own labor.

My wife Loma and I lived there around two years before Loma's death. During the remainder of the night after her death, I remarked to my son Garner Ted that I planned to move into a small apartment, but said I didn't know how to use that home.

A student social center

"Dad," said Ted, "no other minister but you could live here. It seems to me we'll have to turn it into a student social center."

I agreed, that was the only possible

use. But then came the idea of having all senior students each year at a formal dinner. And, in doing that, I decided it would be better for me to live on there, keeping Rona Martin as housekeeper and cook. Many students yet today will say that the formal dinners they attended were the outstanding event of their four-year college career. Mrs. Armstrong had agreed to keep Rona for life.

That home has a bronze sign in front of the entrance, marked "PRIVATE — Student Social Center."

So, if the deputy attorneys general decide I must live elsewhere, what will become of the Student Social Center?

Dignitaries entertained

Among those who have been entertained in that house are King Leopold III and family, Judge Nagendra Singh, India's representative on the Court of International Justice at The Hague, Holland, and wife, Dr. Franz Josef Strauss, often called the "strong man of Europe," and wife, the president of Tokyo University and wife, officials from the State of Israel and others. Another guest was Gloria Swanson, the most glamorous star of Hollywood from the silent-movie days (she was lecturing at the college).

Of course, if these deputy attorneys general and these court judges demand that I move into some third- or fourth-rate shanty, it would not be a new experience for me. I did have to live in poorer circumstances than most of our Church brethren for many years, and I would feel right at home.

When we moved to Pasadena in 1947, I had been living on very meager income and continued to live as frugally as possible for several years.

WHY IS IT? I often wonder, that if a Hollywood movie star lives ostentatiously, that is EXPECTED — and they do nothing more of real value than entertain people. But if the servant of

the living GOD ministers to multiple thousands, leading many to ETERNAL LIFE, some people expect him to live like a tramp or pauper.

How did Jesus live?

How did Jesus live? We know little of that, but there is evidence that He owned His own property in Capernaum. He wore a robe that was of extra fine quality, for it was seamless. Even Jesus was accused of "extravagance," when a woman washed His feet with precious and expensive ointment. Jesus rebuked those who criticized this.

I know what it is to be POOR! I know what it is to go HUNGRY for lack of money for food. I have lived on as low a cost of living as my position in God's service allowed. And I would be willing to do it again — BUT I don't think the living Jesus Christ wants me to do that again, now. In the Kingdom of God there will be no paupers, tramps or the VERY poor. Our God has something better in store for us!

Led by Jesus Christ

For 52 years, now, since my conversion, I have tried to live simply, without extravagance, and to MAKE EVERY DOLLAR OF GOD'S TITHES GO AS FAR IN HIS WORK AS POSSIBLE! But the living Jesus Christ *does* guide His apostle and show me HOW HE WANTS HIS WORK MANAGED. Every dollar is made to go farther and more effectively than in any other work in the world — BECAUSE THIS WORK IS HEADED AND LED BY JESUS CHRIST:

And it will continue to be administered as Jesus Christ leads me — AND NOT AS SOME STATE OFFICIAL OR A COURT JUDGE WOULD MISmanage!

This is NOT the work of man's government, but THE WORK OF THE LIVING GOD! Attorney generals or court judges, who do NOT follow Christ, *shall not* manage or operate this precious Work of the LIVING GOD! □

BEWARE

(Continued from page 5)

among you, who privily shall *bring in* [to the Church] damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them [they were converted], and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *many* shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through *covetousness* shall they with feigned words [in sheep's clothing] make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" (II Pet. 2:1-3).

Everyone can make a mistake. But usually, true prophets become false prophets to receive for themselves the respect and contributions due to God's true representative. Wolves wear sheepskins to eat mutton. The prophet motive becomes the profit motive.

Why a following?

Peter said many would follow the wrong way. Why do false prophets have a following?

First, God says that the entire world is deceived (Rev. 12:9). The inhabitants of the earth are separated from God and don't know it. They are cut off from His law, from His mercy and from His Spirit. God will make all of those freely available to every human who ever lived. But not at this time. Only a few are called now. The rest are blinded to God's ways.

Many simply inherit their religion from their parents. They never question it deeply, just accept it as they do their name and nationality.

But a more basic reason is that most people prefer looking good to doing good. After telling Isaiah to "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins," God complains of their love of religiosity. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinance of justice; they take delight in approaching to God" (Isa. 58:1-2).

Many people want a religion that has all the trappings of godliness but

few of the constraints. Choirs and candles are pleasant. Sabbaths and tithes are not. Preachers that are innocuous are tolerated. Those who expect their congregations to conform to the Word of God will be asked to go.

False prophets have followers because many people want a religion more than they want God. You can choose from hundreds of different types of "Christianity." Some are very sober. Others are actually wild. Some are strict, others lenient. You can be soothed or shouted at, but you won't be "lost" if you attend regularly.

Or pick from the hundreds that never mention the name *Jesus Christ*. False prophets don't need to use His name. Marx and Mao didn't.

Converted members of the true Church can fall into the same trap. Paul wrote Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:2-4).

False prophets respond to the itching ears of wayward sheep. The wolves entice them away from life toward death.

Constantly, in Paul's writings, he records how often he had to contend with false prophets and false brethren. He wrote Timothy how to recognize them quickly.

"Anyone who teaches novelties and refuses to fall in with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine that tallies with godliness, is a conceited, ignorant creature with a morbid passion for *controversy* and *argument* which leads only to envy, dissension, insults, insinuations and *constant friction* between people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the Truth. They imagine religion is a paying concern" (I Tim. 6:3-5, James Moffatt translation).

Why does God permit false prophets?

Why does God allow wolves to have access to His flock? Why doesn't He expose them before they do any harm? He has His reasons!

The first and most basic scripture about false prophets explains why. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God *proveth you*, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 13:1-3).

God wants His flock to stay with Him and the truth no matter what. Those with "itching ears" desiring to turn away from or relax His law or overthrow the stewards He chose will have the opportunity to do so. Maybe, upon seeing the fruit of their own heart, some will acknowledge their wrong way and return to the flock.

He is confident the true sheep will not be led astray by false prophets. Referring to Himself as the shepherd of the sheep, He said: "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will *flee from him*: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:4-5).

His sheep acknowledge Him. They acknowledge His doctrine. "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that *sent* me. If any man will do *his* way, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16-17).

They would respect those whom Christ placed as leaders. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20).

Jesus warned, "For false Christs and false prophets shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, *if it were possible*, even the elect" (Mark 13:22).

The flock of God is certain to encounter many trials and tests — false prophets and treasonous pastors among them. But the true sheep of His pasture, who seek His leadership and His will, won't be led astray and devoured. Thankfully, it is just not possible. Christ's sheep will see the fake fleece and run! □

PROVE ALL THINGS

Be Ready Always to Give an Answer

"... be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

It was just a regular business luncheon on company expense, and Alec was sure he'd have no problem landing another big account. He was at his best. Sharp, witty and exuding just enough confidence to control the situation. Alec covered all the bases—the weather, sports—and then, never being at a loss for words, casually asked his prospect: "By the way, I'm Leo. What's your sign?"

"Uh, well, Pisces, I think, but I'm not really into astrology." Alec was smart and he knew better than to pursue this topic any further, but this once he couldn't resist.

"Why not?" he exclaimed. "Everybody I know is into astrology!"

Maybe Alec, the hotshot salesman, closed the deal, maybe not. But what makes this meeting particularly relevant to us is that Alec's client happened to be a Christian, one who not only believes in God, but believes and lives by what God says in His Word. If you were that businessman, how would you have answered Alec? Does astrology have any meaning in your life? Should it?

Astrology has become a multimillion dollar business and has never been more popular or had greater impact.

Supposedly astrology is the key to wealth, love, success and happiness. It can help you buy the car that's just right for you. It can help you beat the blues.

Everybody is "into" it! Everybody? Why even such intellectual giants as Galileo, Roger Bacon and Albert Einstein looked to the "stars."

Astrology, the ancient art of divining the fate and future of human beings from indications given by the position of the stars, was spawned among the ancient Babylonians about 3000 B.C. It quickly spread

throughout the entire world, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and it even influenced the cultures of the Far East.

"Kings and popes had their private astrologers to forecast the most favorable times for carrying out policies, and even battles were postponed for days so that Mars or Saturn might be in a better position in the heavens to aid the believing general" (*Civilization Past and Present*, Vol. 1, by T. Walter Wallbank and Alastair M. Taylor, c. 1949).

We're all familiar with the biblical account of how that great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, looked to "the astrologers, the Chaldeans [pagan priests] and the soothsayers" whenever burdened by the pressing problems of his day (Dan. 4:7; 5:7).

But the king had a lot to learn. Eventually, because of what Daniel said and did, Nebuchadnezzar received a powerful witness that: "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king.

"But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (Dan. 2:27-28).

Man has always sought knowledge, and there is that insatiable desire to know about the future. Other sources at times may have elements of truth, but the God of the Bible tells us humans, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5), and one particular area He reserves for Himself is foretelling the future. Note: *Unger's Bible Dictionary* in an article on divination:

"Divination as the art of obtaining secret knowledge, especially of the future, is a pagan counterpart of prophecy. Careful comparison of

scripture will reveal that inspirational divination is by demon power, whereas genuine prophecy is by the Spirit of God. The biblical attitude toward divination is distinctly hostile (Deut. 18:10-12) . . . Seeking knowledge of the future from any other source than the God of Israel was an insult to His holy Being and the revelation of Himself and His purpose for men." God is "jealous."

"Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven" (Jer. 10:1-2). Is it possible for people to live without their daily horoscope? Could this nation give up astrology and turn to God?

The Eternal God sounds out a warning to this end-time generation: "Go on with your spells! Practice all your magic arts! You have worn yourself out with them all: let the astrologers come forward now, let the star-gazers save you now, who calculate the future, month by month!

"They fare no better than the straw burned by a fire; they cannot save their own lives from the flames of war" (Isa. 47:12-14, James Moffatt translation).

There is beauty and grandeur in the heavens, and we ought not to ignore the stars. King David looked up on many a starlit night in the plains of Israel and was inspired to write, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). Also the prophet Isaiah tells us, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things" (Isa. 40:26).

While people like Alec search for the signs of the zodiac, a Christian will look up and see the great Creator God. — *By Val Aspenns* □

PERSONAL

(Continued from page 1)

but for a special service preparing for the Kingdom of God, as well.

After that 6,000 years expires, Christ will come again to earth, this time in SUPREME POWER AND GLORY, to set up GOD'S GOVERNMENT. Satan shall be banished. Then, during the seventh thousand years, God will call EVERYBODY then living.

And after the seventh millennium, God will resurrect to mortal life all the billions of people who had not been called for spiritual salvation.

Is God discriminating?

Those who *have been* called have had to overcome Satan. Those called later shall not.

WHY this difference? We might reason: Is God discriminating against us, who have to resist and overcome Satan, when all converted during the millennium will not? But there is no injustice with God. Yet there is a DIFFERENCE!

THINK ON THIS! God is calling ONLY a comparative FEW now. Is that an evil or a blessing? It is a tremendous blessing, for, referring to God's Church for this Church dispensation ONLY, Jesus says: "And he that overcometh [overcomes Satan and self and the world], and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . ." (Rev. 2:26-27), and, "To him that overcometh [Satan, the world and self] will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. 3:21).

Those promises pertain *only* to those called before Christ's return. So some wanting to accuse God might ask, "Isn't this UNFAIR to those not called NOW? They have no chance to know, now, the joys of God's Holy Spirit. And they have no promise of exalted position or power when they are 'saved' later!"

Absolutely NO! There is no injustice with God. I'm sure those NOT now called do not feel they are discriminated against. They *don't want* to be called. And as for high and glorified position, that is a responsibility, and I do not know of anyone uncalled who has any sense whatever of dissatisfaction because he may not have such exalted position in the world TOMORROW, ruled by the Kingdom of God.

But nevertheless, this is an interesting point. Those called now do have Satan, Satan's world and their own human nature to overcome — and that requires effort, self-denial and willpower, which most humans would not want to pay.

Highest positions already allotted

But what about those who *shall be* called for the first time, and converted, after Christ returns? Shall they not have any opportunity to inherit a high and lofty position?

Probably the highest and most lofty positions in both Church and State in the world to come already have been allotted.

We know that each of the original 12 apostles will be ruler over one of the 12 nations springing from the 12 tribes of Israel. We know that David will be king over them and those under them. We may well assume that Abraham will have even a higher position. Those are not only the highest honors — they are likewise the highest and most demanding responsibilities.

Probably the chief seats of authority in the world tomorrow ruled by the KINGDOM OF GOD will be already filled at Christ's coming. But, during the thousand years, population (human) will increase and new positions in government and in spiritual administration will increase. Also, in the Great White Throne Judgment later.

Called to more than salvation

But for us now, it is imperative that we understand that those CALLED and inducted by God into His Church NOW, have been called for MORE THAN JUST SPIRITUAL SALVATION AND THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE. We are called, every one of us, for a PART in preparing for the Kingdom of God!

For our part now, in this present "Philadelphia era," each of you is called for the mission of *loyally backing up* the GREAT COMMISSION of proclaiming the true Gospel to the whole world — and one important thing more: When Jesus comes to RULE, His Wife THE CHURCH will have made herself ready — to be holy and without blemish, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And we in the Church as a whole HAVE NOT ATTAINED FULLY TO THAT HOLY STATURE AS YET.

And our work is not finished until we

do allow God to bring us unitedly to that state — ready to leave this world of flesh and blood — and to enter an entirely NEW WORLD — the Church made immortal, composed of SPIRIT! Our job to which God has called us is far from finished!

In this connection, I have been thinking recently and coming to understand better WHY God brought me back to life, after both heart and breathing had totally ceased. If mouth-to-mouth resuscitation had not been successfully employed, I would have remained totally unconscious until the resurrection. Incidentally, regardless of number of days or years till the resurrection, it would have seemed the next second to me.

God's Church made ready

And in this train of thinking, I have had to ask myself, "What *has* Christ been doing with my life since I was brought back, in August, 1977? I know God called me to reestablish on earth His GOVERNMENT and the proclaiming worldwide of the GREAT COMMISSION — the now imminent KINGDOM OF GOD. All that has been my job since conversion in 1927 — and that job is not yet finished. (Although we have no way of knowing HOW FAR we must reach people in all parts of the world. God does not expect us to reach *every* human on earth with His message, and we may be closer to what He expects than we think.)

But my efforts as Christ's apostle, since the heart failure, have been almost wholly devoted to preparing God's Church — the spiritual temple to which Christ will come.

Repeatedly *The Good News* headlines have blared forth, "And NOW, CHRIST SETS (this, that and other thing) BACK ON THE TRACK."

The living Christ as HEAD of this Church has been using His chosen apostle to TURN HIS CHURCH AROUND — set it back on GOD's track!

I could write much more along this line, but I want to leave that thought with you now.

As we come to God's Feast of First-fruits (Pentecost), let us bear forcibly in mind we in God's Church must be MADE READY — for Christ is coming SOON — and we are NOT YET FULLY READY to be instantly changed and caught up to meet our Lord as He comes in clouds! □



NEWSTRENDS

Compiled in conjunction with the News Bureau of the Worldwide Church of God

- THE FIRST EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION, scheduled for mid-June, is stirring up increased interest. This will be the first time 180 million voters in the nine Common Market countries will be electing representatives directly to the expanded 410-member body. The elections will create a new fourth level of political expression in Europe beyond local, state and national strata. The New York Times reports that voters will be taking "their first concrete act as European citizens. The Community and the idea of Europe will gain a new legitimacy." The Parliament is sure to increase its powers over the old rubber-stamp body. If not, voters, reports one West German newspaper, "would realize only too clearly that their elected representatives had no say in anything."
- KEY U.S. BASES TURNED OVER: Look for the United States to further reduce its military profile in Asia. A significant development is the hoisting of the Republic of the Philippines flag over Clark Field and the Subic Bay Naval Base, ending 70 years of American control. Although American use of the facilities continues, Filipino officers assumed command. The flag hoisting was part of a new agreement that included an American pledge of \$500 million in economic aid and came at a time when anti-American feeling in the Philippines is higher than at any time since independence in 1946.
- LOCUSTS ON THE MARCH: Just 18 months after some experts predicted they would never again pose a serious threat, desert locusts are multiplying unchecked in Iran, the Yemens and parts of Ethiopia and Oman. Warfare and political upheaval there has led to a reduction in locust-control programs. The now-developing swarms are expected to strike around June or July. Their devastation could be felt as far away as North Africa and India, threatening millions with hunger and starvation. Just one swarm, experts claim, is capable of devouring some 400 metric tons of vegetation each day!
- DRUG-RESISTANT MICROBES INCREASING: Microbiologists and physicians are anxious about the increase of drug-resistant organisms around the world. One by one, antibiotics that were once effective against serious bacterial infections are being rendered impotent. Among the casualties are sulfonamides against meningococci, penicillin G and other synthetic penicillins against gonorrhea and certain staphylococci and certain commonly used drugs against intestinal diseases. Of great concern is the finding that some organisms pick up resistance from contact with bacteria resistant to several kinds of antibiotics. A spiraling increase in the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry alarms some health officials, although it is not known if they are compounding drug resistance to microbes in humans.
- STATE INTRUSIONS ALARM RELIGIONISTS: Totally apart from the Worldwide Church of God's church vs. state legal battles, an increasing number of religious leaders are worried that religion and government are on a collision course. Government bureaucracies are clashing more and more with churches because of their tendency to write rules that define and regulate legitimate religious regulations and accounting procedures of secular organizations, a process that encroaches on First Amendment rights. Conflicts about tax status, labor relations, race, sex discrimination, expression of political views and expenditures for various causes are only some of the issues that will probably have to be ruled on by the U.S. Supreme Court.



CHRISTIAN LIVING day by day

DON'T LET LIFE PASS YOU BY. A person's life is composed of precious moments. From our birth those moments pile higher and higher until life is no more. Time moves so swiftly.

Begin now to control every second and build the framework that will lead to productive, happy lives both now and for all eternity.

Learn the valuable secrets that Christ confided to His disciples and His general teachings that will

make it possible for you to have peace of mind, to be prosperous and to enjoy life to the full.

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